

Newfoundland and Labrador Geographical Names Board

Department of Environment and Conservation
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

Activity Plan 2007-08



Table of Contents

1.0 Message from the Chair	2
2.0 Overview	4
2a. Mandate and Lines of Business	4
2b. Representation.....	4
3.0 Primary Clients.....	5
4.0 Vision	5
5.0 Mission	6
6.0 Values	6
7.0 Goals.....	7

1.0 Message from the Chair

The Newfoundland and Labrador Geographical Names Board [NLGNB] is appointed by the Minister of the Department of Environment and Conservation under the administration of the Director of Surveys and Mapping. The Board's work is supported by a *Toponymic*¹ *Information Officer* within the Surveys and Mapping Division, who also serves as provincial NLGNB secretary.

The NLGNB is a successor of the Nomenclature Board established in 1904 under the *Post and Telegraph Act*. The first Nomenclature Board was composed of leading clerics and educators of the day and concerned itself mostly with managing place name changes requested by postal officials, members of the House of Assembly on behalf of constituents, but very frequently clergymen. The Post Office proposed changes to avoid having settlements with the same name, but often changes were made simply because someone didn't like the names in use or deemed them offensive or inappropriate. Following Confederation, an amendment to the Act in 1951 named the Curator of the Museum and Deputy Minister of Public Works as ex-officio members, with the Curator as Chair. At this stage membership of the Board included the Premier and other members of the provincial cabinet. In 1959 the administration of the *Nomenclature Board Act* was placed under the Minister of Provincial Affairs with the Deputy Minister of Provincial Affairs as chair. In 1961 the Nomenclature Board included as members, The Honourable the Premier, J.R. Smallwood, the Attorney General, the Minister of Highways and the Minister of Health. Other prominent Board members of the 1960s included Professor E.R. Seary, A.B. Perlin, Michael Harrington, Dr. G.M. Story, Dr. Leslie Harris, E.B. Foran and F.M. O'Leary.

The present Board operates under the *Geographical Names Board Act*, an Act originally proclaimed in 1975 to replace the *Nomenclature Act* but amended in 1991 following the adoption of *Newfoundland and Labrador* as the official name of the province. Thus, in 1975 the operative title of the Board became *Geographical Names*. After 1975 also the Board became mainly involved in the collection and approval of names of all cultural and natural features in the province not just settled places. Comprehensive field surveys interviewing older local residents covering the eastern half of Newfoundland and the Sandwich Bay area of Labrador were conducted by Memorial University students under Board direction during the 1980s and early 1990s. In recent years field surveys using volunteer local residents have been extended to the South Coast, West Coast and Great Northern Peninsula regions of Newfoundland and into southern Labrador. These surveys added over 15,000 previously unrecorded geographical names, most of them established for generations in local oral usage but in great danger of being lost due to social, economic and demographic changes in rural areas of the province. The Board will continue to promote field research in hitherto unsurveyed areas over the next five years. The provincial geographical names database now contains about 30,000 official

¹ Derived from the word "toponymy" as the study of place names and natural geographical features.

entries. These names are currently managed and made available for public use by the *Toponymic Information Officer* on behalf of the Board.

The NLGNB is a category 3 government entity and as such must plan at an activity level. This plan was prepared with consideration of the strategic directions of the Minister. It includes the Board's goals for the fiscal year included in the plan. As Chairman of the Board, my signature below is indicative of the Board's accountability for the achievement of the goals outlined herein.



W.G. Handcock
Professor Emeritus in Geography
Chair

2.0 Overview

The Board is the main authority for recommending to government, through the Minister of Environment and Conservation, the proper status of and all changes related to the names of places and geographical features in the province.

The Board consists of the provincial secretary, a permanent staff member with the title *Toponymic Information Officer* assigned by the Department, and five (5) members appointed by the Minister. Members are appointed for a term of three (3) years. Board members are primarily voluntary.

The Board operates under the departmental budget.

2a. Mandate and Lines of Business

The main responsibility of the Board is to administer the *Geographical Names Board Act* (CHAPTER G-3; 1991 c29 s2). This involves recording locally used names of places and natural features; consulting with government and other agencies in the selection of new names, or the renaming of places and features; collaborating with the Geographical Names Board of Canada (formerly the Canada Permanent Committee on Geographical Names) on naming standards, practices and principles; holding public meetings or inviting submissions where disputes arise over names and naming practices; and recommending to the Minister for approval the official names of places and geographical features. The Act also empowers the Board through the Minister to be the final authority on the spelling and pronunciation of geographical names in the province.

In carrying out its mandate the board must consult with a variety of sources prior to making any recommendations. The input of local residents and various other government agencies is deemed essential to this process. Section 9 of this Act stipulates that where a provision is inconsistent or conflicts with a provision, term or condition of the *Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act*, the provision, term or condition of the *Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act* shall have precedence over the provision of this Act.

2b. Representation

At present there are no remuneration provisions for the board. All meetings are held in St. John's. With the exception of the Chair, all members of the board are public servants. Meetings are normally scheduled to coincide with times when the member for Labrador is in St. John's for other meetings.

Name	Role	Residence
Dr. W. Gordon Handcock	Chair	Mount Pearl, NL
Ms. Shelley Smith	Vice-Chair	St. John's, NL
Mr. Randy Hawkins	Secretary	St. John's, NL
Ms. Michele Wood	Member	Happy Valley-Goose Bay, NL
Mr. Stanley Clinton	Member	St. John's, NL
Mr. Gary Smith	Member	St. John's, NL

3.0 Primary Clients

The Board's primary clients are members of the general public, government departments and agencies, municipalities and other bodies or persons concerned with the selection of place names or the renaming of places and features. Another key partner is the Geographical Names Board of Canada, which maintains the Canadian Geographical Names Service, a database of all official geographical names in Canada. Newfoundland and Labrador has contributed approximately 30,000 official names to this database.

Other current government partners and agencies include:

- Parks Canada with respect to the names of geographical names in Terra Nova and Gros Morne National Parks.
- The Department of Fisheries and Oceans with regard to names of coastal and underwater features and fishing grounds around Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The provincial Department of Natural Resources in providing assistance in the collection and verification of geographical names in the southern Labrador area.
- The provincial Department of Transportation and Works in respect to names of geographical features along the route of the Labrador Highway.
- The provincial Department of Municipal Affairs in respect to names of incorporated towns and local service districts.
- The provincial Department of Tourism, Cultural and Recreation in respect to names of geographical features on tourist maps.
- The provincial Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs in respect to names of geographical features in the Land Claim areas.
- The Innu Nation in respect to names of geographical features in the Innu Land Claims area.

4.0 Vision

The vision of the Department of Environment and Conservation is a clean, sustainable environment and healthy, resilient ecosystems in perpetuity for the social, physical, cultural, biological and economic well-being of the Province. The *Geographical Names Board Act*, G-3, RSNL 1990 promotes the cultural aspect of this vision.

The vision of the Newfoundland and Labrador Geographical Names Board is to record and preserve the oral and written geographical names for functional use and as an

important part of our cultural heritage. These names are made official for use in all government correspondence and documents, published literature, research reports, newspapers and magazines, road signs, public buildings and maps and charts throughout the Province.

5.0 Mission

By 2011, The NLGNB will have made recommendations to Government in relation to any new geographical features and place names.

Performance Measure: Made recommendations to Government

Indicators:

- Processed naming recommendations from the general public and other stakeholders.

6.0 Values

The core values explain the character of the organization we promote. The strategic values ensure our core values are visible throughout the organization.

Value	Strategic Value Action Statements
Collaboration	Each individual will strive towards open collaboration with public and government agencies to achieve our desired goals.
Professionalism	Each individual will demonstrate excellence and high quality performance in carrying out duties of the Board.
Innovation	Each individual will promote innovative strategies for presentation and maintenance of data related to place names of the Province.
Communication	Each individual will strive to share information about the Board and its purpose and functions with stakeholders.

7.0 Goals

Issue 1: Data Integrity and Management

Goal 1: By March 31 2008, the NLGNB will have completed beta-testing of the newly restructured Canadian Geographical Names Service (CGNS) and uploaded the latest additions from the provincial geographical feature names dataset to the federal dataset.

Performance Measure: Completed beta-testing

Indicators:

- Tested application.
- Suggested design improvements.
- Implementation of new database fields.
- Documented results of beta-testing and communicated results to CGNS.
- New records uploaded.
- Coordinate revisions for pre-existing records uploaded.

Issue 2: Digital Delineation

Goal 2: By March 31 2008, the NLGNB will have participated in a working group to establish a national set of guidelines for digital delineation.

Performance Measure: Participated in national working group

Indicators:

- Presentation of proposed delineation guidelines to national board.

Issue 3: Internal Business Processes

Goal 3: By March 31 2008, the NLGNB will have reviewed and adjusted internal processes for Board operations.

Performance Measure: Adjusted business processes

Indicators:

- Membership issues addressed.
- Finalized policy on annual number of board meetings and meeting schedules.

Issue 4: Communication

Goal 4: By March 31, 2008, the NLGNB will have increased the visibility and profile of the Board.

Performance Measure: Increased visibility

Indicators:

- Web page created.
- Contact new informants in the interior of Labrador.
- Speaking engagements on the Board.