



Geographic Names

Ontario Geographic Names Board

Community Naming Guidelines for Ontario

June 2007

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Definition

1. For the purposes of this document, a community is defined as a populated, unincorporated area within either the organized or unorganized portions of Ontario. Communities are found commonly in both municipalities and in areas that do not have municipal organization.

General Guidelines

1. Consider the financial implications to government, business and the general public and the advantages and disadvantages of new community naming including: cost of address changes; cost to make changes to maps and documents; cost of public consultation; costs to life and property and inefficiencies if existing referencing systems cause confusion due to duplicate names, overlapping jurisdictional boundaries, etc.
2. Should not conflict with civic addressing already established for 911 emergency management/response.
3. Ideally should avoid changing the boundaries of existing communities, where these boundaries are well documented and recognized.
4. If change is needed, use extensive, open, public consultation throughout the process. Establishing boundaries that are not already well known or documented is an integral part of the consultation process.
5. Minimize public impact.

Specific Guidelines

1. Ideally one set of community areas within the boundaries of a municipality should be developed for use by all levels of government and all levels of government services to avoid confusion. Within a municipality, avoid establishing named areas with multiple/overlapping sets of boundaries for different purposes.
2. Ideally use established names having well-documented boundaries.
3. Use names rather than codes or numbers. Established names are generally associated with specific areas of the landscape and are easier for people to use, remember and communicate.
4. Use unique names if possible and avoid partial duplication even if local residents have no problem with them, e.g., community “X” and community “X Village” may not confuse locals but usually this kind of partial duplication creates considerable confusion for tourists and other visitors to a municipality.

(Over please)

1. To avoid confusion avoid using “false” generics in community names, e.g., an unincorporated community known as “Y Town”.

2. Avoid using names where confusion with nearby geographic feature names or man-made feature names may occur (naming a community after a lake may not cause confusion, but naming after a land or a man-made feature such as a valley or a railway station may lead to considerable confusion).
3. Avoid unnecessarily long or cumbersome names.
4. Do not use names that may be deemed derogatory or offensive to groups or individuals who live within or around the municipality or to those who may visit it.
5. Avoid using names that are no longer applicable in an area or are already established in other areas for other purposes, e.g., rural route civic addressing that contains the name of a nearby municipality has less relevance for a new municipality and can create considerable confusion for both municipal administrations and their tax-payers.
6. Avoid community within community naming unless the names and hierarchies are well-established and in current local use.
7. If open public consultation supports expanded boundaries for some well-established communities, minimize expansion of the boundaries and avoid expanded boundaries for minor foci such as those with a few homes at an intersection, e.g., community of "Z" Corners.
8. Avoid changing names that are in well-established current local use.

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