



# THE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY COMMISSION

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## THE IBC TODAY

Today the IBC, under international treaty, maintains the 8,891-kilometre (5,525-mile) boundary shown on 256 official boundary maps. It inspects, maintains, and re-establishes more than 8,000 monuments and reference points and 1,000 survey control sites, and it keeps a 3-metre (10-foot) wide clear vista along each side of the land boundary line.

The Commission is made up of two commissioners: one appointed in the United States and one in Canada, each with their own staff, equipment, and budget. The American Commissioner is appointed by the President and reports to the

Secretary of State. The Canadian Commissioner is appointed by Order-in-Council and reports to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada.

The IBC operates through collaboration between the Canadian and American sections. The Canadian Section and the Canadian Commissioner are located within Natural Resources Canada to provide access to boundary professional and technical resources, but responsibility for treaty and policy issues falls within the purview of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada.



*Maintaining a peaceful boundary for more than a century*







### MORE THAN JUST A LINE

The Canada-United States boundary is more than just a line drawn between two friendly nations. It represents over 100 years of collaboration to maintain the longest shared border in the world, from sea (Atlantic), to sea (Pacific), to sea (Arctic).

The proper definition and demarcation of that boundary is as essential today as it has been throughout history for law enforcement, land administration, customs and immigration, and the management of trans-boundary resources.

The International Boundary Commission (IBC) supports the commitment of Canada and the United States to ensure that the border is safe and secure but still open to tourism and trade.

Furthermore, a well-marked boundary helps prevent local misunderstandings; in cases where disputes do arise along the border, the IBC works to resolve them.

The story of defining the boundary starts with the Treaty of Paris in 1783, which described the border between British North America and the American states. Over the succeeding years, Canada and the United States appointed a series of temporary commissions to oversee boundary surveys, mapping, and general maintenance.

In 1794, the Jay Treaty created a commission to determine the location and source of the St. Croix River. An 1858 commission was mandated to survey the border west of the Rocky Mountains, and in 1872 a commission was set up to survey the border west of Lake of the Woods.

Over the years, 20 agreements, conventions, and treaties between four sovereign nations (the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Russia) have been negotiated to define the border as people moved westward and then north.

### ESTABLISHING THE IBC

On June 4, 1908, a treaty was signed between the United States and the United Kingdom (on behalf of Canada) to create the International Boundary Commission as we know it. The two countries agreed to each appoint an expert geographer or surveyor to serve as a commissioner. Their roles were to more accurately define and mark the border, and any disagreements were to be referred to the governments of the United States and Canada.

A second treaty in 1925 between the United States and Canada ratified the arrangement and empowered the two commissioners to maintain an effective boundary line and to determine the location of any point on the boundary line as required. The Canadian Commissioner is further guided by the *International Boundary Commission Act*, enacted in 1960, that echoes the treaty's purpose of maintaining an effective boundary between the two countries.

