

Canadian Association of Geographers – Membership Task Force

Report – 2023-2024

Committee members:

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In response to a declining number of members, the Executive of the Canadian Association of Geographers struck a Membership Task Force (MTF) in 2021 to consult with members on the future of their organisation. The original MTF concluded that among the many reasons for the decline, one central theme was that members felt that the current organisation was not meeting all their requirements for an academic or professional association.

The current MTF has taken this report and was tasked with bringing recommendations to the Executive on potential pathways forward to increase membership and ensure that the organization is meeting the needs of our members.

Problems with memberships decreasing have been recognized for a long time. There are many factors that motivate geographers to join the association and it is not the purpose of this report to belabour points made in past reports. The CAG-ACG must reflect the broader context of Canadian geography including ensuring that there are no barriers to participation. We also appreciate that the Executive should consider past reports of this task force and other reports (e.g. Virtual Tour of geography departments of French Speaking Canadian Universities – 2021) that have outlined moves that the association could make to better serve the membership.

Focus on the following areas:

Inclusivity:

If there is one overarching point that has been made over the past 20 years, it is that our association does not adequately reflect the group of people that would normally identify as geographers. This includes the feeling of exclusion that many French-Speaking geographers feel when their language requirements are considered secondary or inconvenient. The recognition of these challenges overlay all subsequent recommendations – it is understood by the MTF that all recommendations would include an integrated French component from the outset. The CAG has also formed committees on EDIA and Decolonizing and Indigenizing to address concerns of inclusivity.

The exclusion of physical geographers and those focusing on geospatial methods is also problematic. The association is seen as being one that supports human geography. Efforts to include all forms of geographical pursuit would enhance membership experience. We recognize that these are long-term challenges with histories that are beyond the scope of any task force. The path forward must be an inclusive one where diversity is celebrated and supported.

As an association, moving forward requires building an association that embraces our diversity and ensures that we are the home for Canadian geographers. In our opinion, this includes building an association that delivers on the objective of providing resources for our membership that makes being a part of the CAG-AGC attractive and high-value.

Career Advancement:

- Regional networking opportunities with focus on professional and academic pathways.
- National mentorship program (Academic and Professional).
- Free or low-cost online and in-person professional development workshops.
- Social mingle events at national meetings.
- Job postings online (job link on student page to CAGLIST is not working – move to web-based)

Lifelong Learning

- Short-courses and online learning opportunities.
- Skill development workshops (GIS, qualitative data analysis, etc).
- Career development workshops (job interview skills, career success).
- Reduced charges for open access publishing.
- Encourage French publication in CG.
- Certification programs.
- Virtual events during the year (thematic conversation/invited lectures/working group presentations).

Other Benefits

- Pay it forward opportunities for senior members (senior members purchase memberships for students).
- Resources
 - EDIA and other critical resources
 - Ethics
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Student highlights (student blog last entry – 2019)

Institutional Membership

This idea has been circulating for several years. The CAG-ACG should further consider a model that would permit departments/institutions/companies a membership. These memberships would enable all participants within this umbrella to access membership benefits (including students) for a nominal charge on top of the institutional membership. Various models need to be investigated. We believe that this sort of membership could expand the membership and enhance our mission by reducing the financial barrier to joining.