

Important Information for GAC® Section and Division Executive Members

This document summarizes key information regarding the responsible operation of the Sections and Divisions of the Geological Association of Canada. These groups represent an integral part of GAC and are vital to the success of the organization. However, unfortunate events such as an injury sustained during a field trip could have serious consequences for GAC as a whole. Council has therefore developed policies and guidelines that should help to minimize risk associated with Section and Division activities. It is the responsibility of executive members to be aware of and follow current procedures, and to provide input on any policy areas that may be in need of improvement.

This summary highlights both general and ‘need to know’ information. It is not intended as a substitute for [GAC’s Risk Management Policy](#). Section and Division executive members should also read this document. You should also be familiar with the Constitution and By-Laws of your Section or Division.

Insurance

GAC carries both Commercial General Liability insurance and Directors and Officers insurance. The latter protects headquarters staff, GAC executives and councillors, and Section and Division executives in the event that legal action is brought against GAC. The insurance provides coverage both for legal costs incurred and for damages awarded by a court. The policy currently does not provide coverage for personal injury to individuals who participate in GAC activities.

Sections or Divisions that hold an event in conjunction with another organization (such as another professional society) should inform GAC headquarters of this fact when initially reporting the event (see below). Note that depending on circumstances, the other organization may be asked to provide proof of adequate insurance in order to minimize GAC’s liability associated with the event.

Our current insurance policy only provides coverage for GAC events held in Canada and the United States.

Membership

All executive members of Sections and Divisions must be GAC members. Jointly sponsored Divisions provide the only exception – in this case a minimum of the President, Treasurer, and one other executive member must be GAC members. These requirements are to ensure that an adequate reporting and communications structure is in place for GAC as a whole.

All Division members must be GAC members. For jointly sponsored Divisions, members must be members in good standing of at least one of the sponsoring societies. For Sections, membership can include non-GAC persons, but GAC membership should be encouraged.

Serving Members

Section and Division executive members must provide or arrange to provide their membership with some services during the year. Key activities include organizing an annual business meeting (normally held at the GAC-MAC meeting in May), electing new executive members and/or councilors, and publishing an annual newsletter or some other form of communication that members will value. Many Sections and Divisions regularly accomplish more than this which is highly encouraged by GAC. The most successful Sections and Divisions tend to have a critical mass of both executive and regular members who can share workloads when organizing events. Active Sections and Divisions also tend to be financially healthy which allows for a greater choice of activities.

Planning a Field Trip

Field trips are a popular annual activity of many Section and Divisions. These trips may or may not be associated with the GAC-MAC Annual General Meeting. Although such activities are encouraged, Section and Division executive members must ensure that a planned field trip is well organized and complies with the [GAC & MAC Field Trips Safety Policy and Program](#). A portion of this document outlines the particular responsibilities of Section and Division Chairs.

To help ensure familiarity with GAC practices, field trip leaders must also be GAC members. If necessary, the Section or Division sponsoring the field trip will organize this membership fee to be paid from the field trip budget, and will ensure that the field trip leader or leaders are familiar with the guidelines described in this section. In particular, it is incumbent on the field trip leaders to assess the physical risks involved in advance of the trip, and to take all appropriate efforts to reduce these to an acceptable level. The leaders should use the GAC & MAC Field Trips Safety Policy and Program documents to accomplish this task.

Please note that the [Field Trip Planning Information Form](#) should be submitted to GAC Headquarters **at least one month** before the trip departure date. This provides Headquarters with time to notify GAC's insurer of the event and for any special insurance needs to be arranged. For more detailed insurance information, see the Field Trip Planning Information Form.

It is the policy of GAC to use professional transportation services for all GAC-sponsored field trips. This option may be pricier, but typically provides greater safety and

comfort, and shifts liability to the provider should an accident occur. In order for this coverage to be fully realized, the provider should be asked to add GAC as a co-insured on its insurance policy.

If this is not an option, cars, vans, or trucks valued at \$40,000 or less may be rented in the name of GAC as long as the driver of the vehicle is 25 years of age or older and is a GAC member. Use of 'car pooling' to transport field trip participants is not allowed as GAC's insurance provides no coverage in this instance.

A FIELD TRIP CHECKLIST:

Complete the Field Trip Planning Information Form at least one month prior to your trip and send it to Headquarters to ensure proper insurance coverage is in place;

Ensure that the organizers/leaders are GAC National Members and understand GAC field trip policies and procedures;

Read the GAC® and MAC Field Trip Safety Policy and Program documents, and download the safety forms provided as appendices;

Have participants sign the appropriate forms and keep them in a safe place;

Call Headquarters at 709-737-7660 if you have any questions or concerns.

TEAM UP TO SAFETY!

Planning an Event (social function, special meeting, etc.)

The reporting and planning structure described above for field trips should be followed. Inform GAC Headquarters of the event at least one month in advance, ensure that the event organizers are GAC members, evaluate any potential risks or safety hazards associated with the event and ways to mitigate them, and consider the use of professional services.

For social functions involving alcohol consumption, GAC strongly recommends that a professional bartending service be used to serve alcohol. Arrange for the service provider to add GAC as a co-insured on its liability insurance contract. Taxi vouchers represent another means of minimizing risk for social functions where alcohol is served.

Annual Reporting

GAC Sections and Divisions are required to report financial and other information to Headquarters on an annual basis. This information allows council to stay informed of Section and Division activities, issues, and financial status. Section and Division financial data are also provided to GAC's tax auditors, as required by law.

Annual reports are submitted early in the calendar year, typically in early to mid-February, and report on the previous calendar year's activities. The Section and Division Liason will announce the report due-date each year. Information is provided below to assist in the preparation of annual reports and to ensure that all required information is included.

At all times of the year, Sections and Divisions are encouraged to inform Headquarters staff and/or the Sections and Divisions Liason of any significant developments, activities, or issues. This must be done **as soon as possible** in the event of a reportable incident such as an injury sustained on a field trip.

SECTION & DIVISION ANNUAL REPORTS

Reports are normally submitted to the Sections & Divisions Coordinator in early to mid-February. Please provide the following information:

- a very brief introduction to your Section/Division.
- the names of Executive Members (and Councilors if applicable)
- a summary of activities completed during the reporting year (Jan. 1 to Dec. 31).
- a summary of activities planned for the current year.
- a preliminary or final financial statement (this is a requirement imposed on GAC by the Canada Corporations Act). The statement should include beginning and end-of-year account balances, and income and expenditures for the reporting period. For groups with more than \$30,000 in the bank at year-end, an audited financial statement is required and should be sent to GAC Headquarters when completed. However, please provide unaudited financial information in your annual report.
- a summary of any issues or concerns (e.g., a safety-related issue or occurrence).
- any other relevant information.