

Volunteers

– The Lifeblood of Our Organization

I have an odd admission to make. One of my favorite pastimes is to discover peoples' passions. It is a magical moment when you are talking to someone, and they get that glint in their eye that confirms they are speaking from the heart. And I can't tell you how many times I've seen that glint during my years interacting with volunteers at PGO.

Now, some might claim that they are not passionate about geoscience or public service. Rather, they feel a duty to contribute, to give back to the community, to build a strong and reputable profession. Call it what they may, I see the passion in the language they use and in their actions. It is these passionate people that are the lifeblood of PGO!

In a self-regulatory profession like ours, volunteers are not just the lifeblood of the organization – they are the stewards of public trust. The decisions made at committees and Council shape standards, uphold ethics and help ensure that the PGO and the profession act in the public interest. Every hour they give, every insight they share, strengthens the foundation of accountability on which our regulatory system rests.

PGO's success is measured by the public confidence we sustain. That confidence is earned daily, through the work of volunteers who uphold our shared commitment to integrity, competence, and public safety.



If you know of someone worthy of recognition, nominate them for an award by following this link [PGO Awards](#)

Public Service

Volunteering is the time you give to strengthen your community and improve others' quality of life, as well as your own. There can be a misperception that individuals are primarily motivated by self-interest. Perhaps they seek awards or recognition from their peers. There are certainly those that are unquestionably worthy of these awards. Among these are the recipients of the PGO Award of Merit which has, since 2016, honored P.Geo.s that have made significant contributions to the geoscience profession. However, from my experience, those that have received the highest awards for their service are precisely the individuals least likely to be motivated by self-interest. That is unless you count a genuine enjoyment of their time spent in pursuit of contributing to the practice and profession of geoscience.

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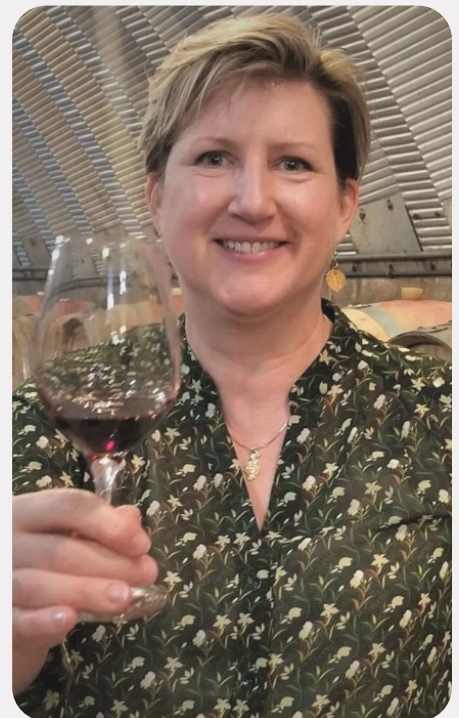
After I got my P.Ge. registration in 2001, I was quite proud. A few years later, I started hearing talk amongst folks in the environmental consulting field that getting the P.Ge. registration is easy; after 10 years' experience it's "basically automatic." That really turned my crank, so I started sending emails expressing my concern to the APGO* Executive Director (ED). By 2004, I think the ED was tired of reading my emails, so he called me one day and invited me to be a member of the Registration Committee so I could see first-hand the process for reviewing applications and registering P.Ge.s. I started volunteering later that year. I was impressed by the care and diligence that committee members were taking in reviewing applications, and in running the APGO itself.

Following the transition years of 2000 to 2003, 2004 was the first year of full operation of APGO. I didn't know about the struggles to get the organization established; I had just immigrated to Ontario in the late 90s. I was recruited to run for election to Council and became Councillor-at-Large in 2005. It was a very rewarding experience, and I learned a lot about governance. That helped me in moving up the ladder at work into more responsible management roles. I met people I never would have met and expanded my understanding of the profession. I went on to hold the Council positions of Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President, President, and Past President, also serving on committees including Finance, Governance and Enforcement & Compliance. I later served as a volunteer director for 10 years on the Board of the APGO Education Foundation, a charitable organization with a mission to promote geoscience awareness among the public, and to fund geoscience education for future professionals.

The people I have met through my time volunteering with APGO are some of my closest friends today. Now that I'm retired, I still enjoy volunteering for PGO, on the Symposium Committee, and the 25th Anniversary Celebration Committee. I'm also helping to launch an expanded and improved mentoring program as a volunteer working with the Professional Practice Committee. I highly recommend volunteering to anyone. You can go on the PGO web site and look up volunteer opportunities on committees or run for Council election. You don't have to start with an email campaign like I did, but look what it got me? Years of fun and fulfillment!

-Kristin Hanson, P.Ge. (non-practising)

I am not saying that PGO volunteers don't benefit from public service. On the contrary, most report that they have benefited from the professional connections made and the insights gained into other geoscience disciplines. They say they have developed business skills beyond those they would be exposed to in their employment. Not to mention the auspicious feeling of knowing they have contributed to building something important!



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* The Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario (APGO) was granted its regulatory role by the Professional Geoscientists Act, 2000. In 2019, Professional Geoscientists Ontario (PGO) was adopted as the business name for use in day-to-day communications and activities.

Invaluable Resource

PGO volunteers are indispensable within the organization. They make up Council and committees and support PGO's public-facing initiatives. Marilen Miguel, PGO Director of Internal and External Affairs, is the first point of contact for volunteers. She explains the importance of volunteer contributions to the formation and the continued growth of PGO. *"When I first joined PGO in 2013, volunteer leadership was visibly at the heart of the organization. Volunteers played a pivotal role in statutory and standing committees, outreach initiatives, continuing professional development (CPD) events, and regional engagement activities. Their dedication shaped PGO and laid the foundation for what it has become today. The strength of PGO today stands on that foundation. While current efforts are important, they do not stand alone—PGO's success is a cumulative achievement of past and present volunteers who have shaped its governance, upheld professional standards, and built a thriving geoscience community with public protection as its core and guiding principle. Recognizing their contributions is not just about honoring the past; it is about acknowledging the legacy that drives progress and ensures continued public protection."*



My role as a volunteer with PGO began in 2013 when the Mentoring Program was rolled out at the Annual General Meeting. Several mentors took part that day and it was deemed a successful way to engage with young geoscientists. Fast forward to 2025 and I'm still involved with the Mentoring Program, having seen numerous mentee careers flourish – providing both proof and justification of the program's importance.

From the outset, I was hooked! The mentoring program was so enjoyable, I decided to run in Council elections. In 2015, I was elected to my first term as Councillor-At-Large and eventually became the Regional Councillor for Southwestern Ontario for my second and third terms. Throughout my time on Council, as a volunteer with student outreach programs, short course instructor and various PGO committees, there's never been a dull moment – there's always something new to learn which is an invaluable reward itself.

Public service is often a very personal matter as to why people become involved. For myself, it's combining a lifelong passion of geology and geochemistry with a lifelong commitment to volunteering. For anyone considering becoming a volunteer with PGO, I have just this to say – do it! I have never met anyone who has regretted their time with PGO. In fact, it was a former boss of mine who served on Council who encouraged me to get involved – and here I am some 10 years later in the same role encouraging others to get involved.

Become a PGO volunteer – it's worth everyone's time!

-David Leng, P.Geo.

PGO will soon be launching an updated mentoring program.

Watch for an upcoming announcement describing expanded opportunities for building mentoring relationships between aspiring and professional geoscientists. Follow this link to learn more [PGO Mentoring Program](#)

Short term volunteer opportunities are also available. Eilidh Lewis, PGO Registrar, speaks of the impact of P.Geos sharing their professional experience at PGO events. *"The student outreach program has expanded over the last few years to include volunteers who provide insight into their careers and provide students with different pathways into geoscience. We have also hosted mentoring events, where students and registrants come together to discuss their career pathways, and the skills needed to succeed in the geoscience profession. None of this would be possible without the support of PGO volunteers and registrants who are willing to volunteer their time to help mentor the next generation of*

geoscientists. Feedback from students and young professionals has been extremely positive. The thing that they enjoy the most is hearing about different career paths and the experiences of our more senior professionals. A lot of students don't realize the opportunities that are available to them, so these conversations are a great way to introduce them into the geoscience profession." These events would not have the same level of impact for students and young professionals without the involvement of P.Geos willing to share their experience and expertise gained from their many years in the industry.



For those interested in joining the ranks, getting started is not as daunting as one might think. It is as simple as completing an Expression of Interest to identify how your volunteer interests align with the organization's needs. If you are interested in finding out more about PGO volunteer opportunities follow this link [Volunteer Opportunities](#)

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I did not start by wanting to be a volunteer with professional organizations, but early in my career, I was voluntold to join a provincial groundwater committee because my employer thought it would be a good experience. And it was! Although there are times when I wonder why I am up early on a weekend spending a few hours researching environmental regulation and governance, I have never regretted becoming a PGO volunteer.

Volunteer experiences can vary enormously, depending on the role and the group. Some people prefer being on boards or Councils, which bring with them visibility, but I have always preferred committee work. The committees are where you get a chance to delve into real problems facing the profession, and in doing so, shape its future and how it interacts with the public and the environment. The good committees are also where you will find passionate individuals. In my opinion, problem solving with passionate people benefits all through the sharing of experience.

There will be times in a career when you are better able to volunteer than others. Good times can be when you feel stuck and need an outlet for your creative energy, or when you have experience or a unique perspective that would be valuable to share. But there are other times, when you will be busy with life and work, when volunteering can be too much, and you might want to step back.

For most people, a career will span decades, giving you a chance to drop into and out of volunteer roles. Choose the times that suit you best but do volunteer. If council work or committee work seem too daunting, think about a one-off task such as presenting or moderating at a professional symposium, or participating in events with early career professionals. Volunteering will not only help separate you from the crowd but give you a chance to get to know some amazing individuals.

-Simon Gautrey, P.Geo.



There are currently 144 PGO volunteers that support the organization in a variety of roles. Robert Hearst, PGO President, expresses his appreciation for the many contributions of PGO volunteers. *“The unwavering dedication of our volunteers is at the heart of our organization’s ability to fulfill its regulatory responsibilities. PGO volunteers selflessly contribute their time, expertise, and experience to our statutory and standing committees, ensuring we remain on course to meet our goals. Councillors play a pivotal role in guiding the strategic direction of the organization, and we are deeply grateful for their leadership. Time and again, we hear from students, GITs, and early career professionals about the profound impact PGO volunteers have had on their growth through outreach and mentoring events. It is with immense gratitude and respect that I extend my heartfelt thanks to our volunteers for the invaluable support and contributions they bring to our organization.”*

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About

This article was prepared by a committee of volunteers from Professional Geoscientists Ontario (PGO) working to plan a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Professional Geoscientists Act on June 6, 2025, in Toronto. The thoughts and opinions expressed are those of the dedicated PGO volunteers and authors who gave their time and professional input to this endeavor, not of the PGO. The committee would like to extend thanks to the following authors.

Lead Author:

Melanie Siewert, P.Geo.(Limited) is a Principal Environmental Geoscientist with WSP. She has been a PGO registrant since 2009. In her over 25 years of environmental consulting experience, she has designed, directed, and implemented environmental assessment and remediation programs at over 500 sites across Canada. In 2019, Melanie was elected to PGO Council as a Councillor-at-Large. Since this time, she has been an active member of the Discipline and Governance Committees, chaired the Readiness Assessment Working Group, and held the positions of Vice President, President, and Past President on Council. When she is not supporting her passion of geoscience, Melanie pursues her other passion of rowing. She has been a volunteer with the Ottawa Rowing Club since 2008 and recently joined the board as Treasurer.



Contributing Authors:

Kristin Hanson, P.Geo.(non-practising) retired from her career in the environmental consulting industry in 2020. Over her 30+ year career as a hydrogeologist, she investigated, remediated and reclaimed contaminated lands to return them to beneficial use, led multidisciplinary teams to win large-scale infrastructure projects, and oversaw environmental and engineering operations as Senior Vice President for one of Canada's largest consulting engineering companies. She is now living the dream in Niagara wine country and stays busy volunteering for the PGO and the Niagara Bruce Trail Club, while working part time in her favourite winery, Malivoire. At Malivoire, Kristin educates customers on the influence of geology on wine. Proving old dogs can learn new tricks, she earned her WSET2 certification in wine from the Wine and Spirit Education Trust in 2024. Kristin has been an active contributor to PGO committees since 2004 and held positions on PGO Council from 2005 to 2013, including serving as President in 2011/12.

David Leng, P.Geo. is President and CEO of RGCI. David is a professional geoscientist with more than 25 years of mining industry experience. David has held technical roles involving geochemical exploration, project evaluation and financing with several reporting issuers. David holds an honours degree in Geology from McMaster University, is a professional geoscientist with the Professional Geoscientists of Ontario, and is also a member of the Association of Applied Geochemists. David has been a PGO volunteer since 2013. He was an elected PGO Councillor from 2015 to 2023 during which time he chaired the Governance Committee, was an active participant in PGO's mentoring program, regularly hosted PGO short courses, and attended many student outreach events.

Simon Gautrey, P.Geo. has been a PGO registrant since 2002 and is currently a Senior Technical Director in Hydrogeology with WSP and the team lead for WSP's mine hydrogeology group in eastern Canada. Simon has a MSc in hydrogeology from the University of Waterloo, an MBA from Sir Wilfrid Laurier University, and is a fellow of Geoscience Canada. Simon's work at WSP focusses on providing groundwater support for mining and tunneling projects, primarily in Ontario, but also across North America, in South America and Australia. In addition to his work as a consultant, Simon is also active in the professional geoscientist community in Ontario, serving on the OWWA groundwater and source water protection committees and the PGO Environment Subcommittee and Sustainability and Climate Change Committee. Simon has also participated in several government consultation groups, including the Ontario MECP Water Quantity Protection External Working Group as co-chair, and the MECP GUDI Terms of Reference Stakeholder Working Group.

Robert Hearst, P.Geo. is a Consulting Geophysicist at GeoFizX Consulting. During his over 40 years in exploration geophysics, Robert has worked on all sides of the exploration business, from contracting, start-ups, junior miners to major mining companies and as a consultant. He is a member of PDAC, SEG, CSEG, ASEG, EAGE, CIM, TGDG and KEGS (past President) and is a registered Professional Geophysicist with PGO, APEGS, APEGA and NAPEG. Robert has served on PGO Council since 2019 as a Councillor-at-large, Central Region Councillor, Vice President, and is currently President and Chair of Council. He has also contributed to various PGO Committees including Complaints, Registration, and Symposium Planning.

Eilidh Lewis, P.Geo. Eilidh completed her B.Sc. in Earth Sciences from the University of Glasgow in 2006, and moved to Canada where she completed her M.Sc. in Geology at Laurentian University. Her career before entering the world of professional regulation was in the exploration and mining sector, where she held various positions in field work, underground mining operations, open pit operations and as a Professor of Structural Geology at Cambrian College. Eilidh started work with PGO in 2019 as the Assistant Registrar, and was appointed Registrar in 2023. In this role, she continues to uphold the mandate of PGO of protecting the public by governing the practice of professional geoscience in Ontario.

Marilen Miguel , CAE. is the Director of Internal and External Affairs at Professional Geoscientists Ontario (PGO). Since joining PGO in 2013, she has held progressively senior roles supporting Continuing Professional Development (CPD), governance, stakeholder engagement, and communications. A Certified Association Executive (CAE) with over 25 years of experience in the not-for-profit and regulatory sectors, her leadership is defined by a strategic and collaborative approach that fosters connection and facilitates meaningful knowledge exchange. While her leadership often takes place behind the scenes, Marilen plays a key role in advancing PGO's object to maintain and develop standards of knowledge and skill among registrants. She specializes in identifying and engaging subject matter experts to deliver high-quality CPD programming that supports professional competence and ethical practice. Marilen works alongside staff and volunteers to keep PGO grounded and focused on its public protection mandate.