

# WHAT IS THE APGO EDUCATION FOUNDATION, AND WHY SHOULD P.GEO.S SUPPORT IT?

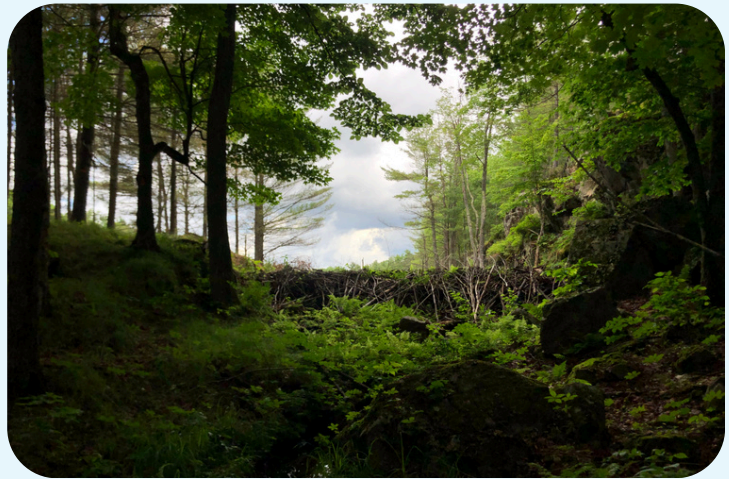
Article By Dr. Bill Pearson, P.Geo., FGC, Chair APGO Education Foundation and Founding President Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario

The 6th Object under the Professional Geoscientists Act, 2000 is “To promote public awareness of the role of the Association.” The Professional Engineers Act under Additional Objects (4) 4. has the exact same phrase. In the past this tended to be viewed as a mechanism to explain what the geoscience or engineering profession does and why this work is important to the public. In recent years, however, governments have moved away from this interpretation to ensure that the primary focus of professional self-regulatory bodies is regulation of the profession, which is the reason they exist.

Although the membership is interested in having the professional association out in the public domain advocating for the profession, this is not why governments establish legislation to regulate professions. In the engineering community this precipitated the split within PEO to form the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers in 2000 whose focus is as an advocacy organization to elevate the profile of engineering by advocating to governments as well as providing services to members. A similar process is currently underway this year in BC with the formation of the BC Society of Engineering and Geoscience (BCSEG) arising from the major change in legislation for Engineers and Geoscientists BC (EGBC). This distinction between advocacy and member services was the motivation for APGO in 2019 to drop the “A” and become PGO to emphasize its regulatory function.



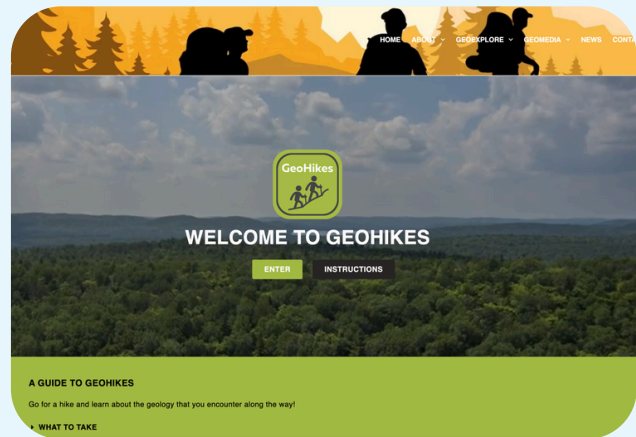
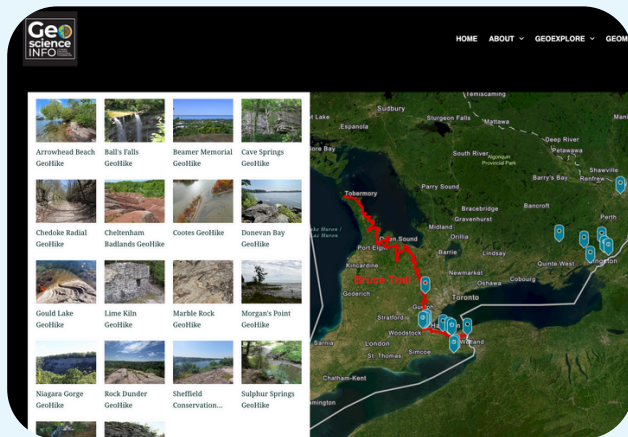
So why the [APGO Education Foundation](#)? I felt after the Professional Geoscientists Act 2000 passed and APGO had grown to be a well functioning professional organization by the late 2000s, that we needed a separate vehicle to educate the public about geoscience and highlight the importance of the work of professional geoscientists.



Indeed I have always argued that geoscience affects almost everyone every day of their life from the mineral resources we use, the water we drink, geo-hazards that affect us such as floods and slides as well as risks to public health such as contaminated groundwater. Geoscientists are on the front lines in all of these important areas; however, much of this important work we are doing is not usually very visible to the public as it largely takes place in remote areas, hence we lack public visibility, a problem that needed addressing.

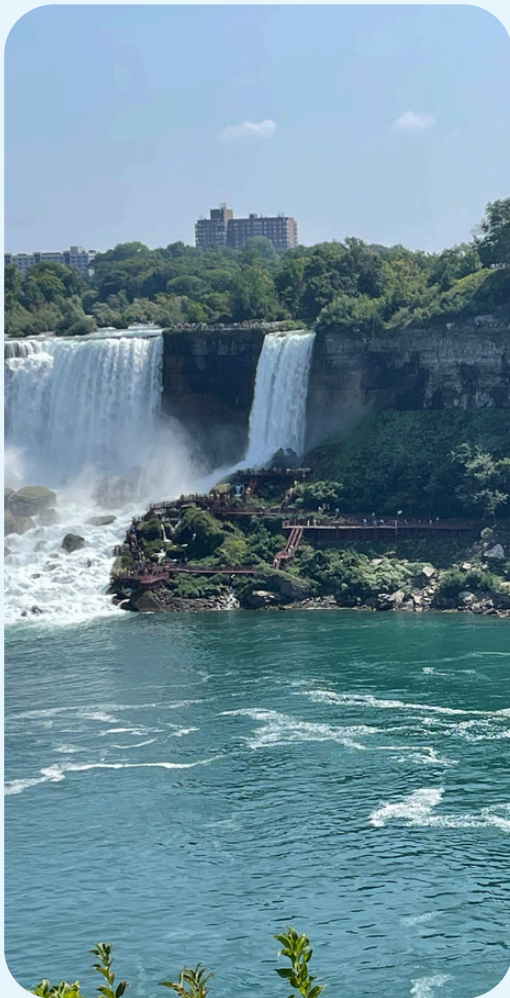
In 2009 when I served as the Ontario Representative for APGO on the Canadian Council of Professional Geoscientists (now Geoscientists Canada), I met with then President Maureen Jensen, P.Ge. and sought her support to form a charity to educate the public about geoscience rather than an advocacy group which I didn't feel was the best approach. It was a long process, for which I provided much of the initial funding, as the federal government was changing the regulations for charities to be much more specific about objects. We were finally granted charitable status on October 8, 2014 and began operations early the next year. Support from APGO (now PGO) was very important in helping get us off the ground. Our initial focus was largely providing scholarships for 3rd year students and bursaries to support internationally trained geoscientists, but while scholarships and bursaries got us started, the vision was always to have a major drive toward educating the public about geoscience.

Available online resources had some information on geology but were usually too technical for the public and were limited technologically. In June 2017 we launched [GeoscienceINFO.com](http://GeoscienceINFO.com) with the concept of developing virtual field trips (GeoHikes, GeoWalks, GeoRoutes, etc.) in key geological locations across Ontario that can be experienced live, or virtually on cell phones, tablets or laptops. Our first GeoRoute which was at Niagara Falls was unveiled at the APGO Annual meeting that year. From those first baby steps GeoscienceINFO.com has grown exponentially to become a one-stop destination for information on all aspects of geoscience with virtual field trips across much of Ontario. During the pandemic when field work was impossible to do, we focused on upgrading our technology, moving our products to ESRI's ArcGIS™ and StoryMaps™. All our virtual products will soon be in StoryMaps™ which is an excellent format for telling our geoscience stories. Dr. Deana Schwarz, P.Geo. our GeoscienceINFO Manager does a tremendous job assembling all our marvelous virtual field trips. Our webmaster Bernard Kradjian completed a major upgrade of our website this past summer and the functionality of the site has never been better.



Today, 7 years after the launch of [GeoscienceINFO.com](http://GeoscienceINFO.com), our site is packed with lots of interesting information about the earth beneath your feet. We now have partnerships with seven major earth science departments across Ontario (McMaster, Queen's, U of T, Western, Carleton, U of Ottawa and Laurentian) which have substantially expanded our reach. We have been supported by funding from Mitacs Accelerate and the Canadian Geological Foundation for field programs. Students are involved in working on these virtual field trips, and they learn a lot about the geology and environment of selected field sites as well as gaining experience in the use of high end technology such as LiDAR to tell the geological story. They also learn how to prepare writeups that are technically accurate but at the same time understandable to the public. This is a very important skill to learn as the need to communicate to the public the importance of what we do as geoscientists has never been more critical.

We are very pleased to be working with the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) to bring the exciting geological history of the Niagara Escarpment to BTC members and the public. Led by Dr. Carolyn Eyles, P.Geo. (non-practicing), Professor Emerita at McMaster who joined our Board in January 2019, this project has expanded considerably over the past two years. We now have 21 GeoHikes completed and in development that cover the entire length of the Bruce Trail from Niagara to Tobermory. These GeoHikes will all be issued by the spring of 2025. Next summer we plan to fill-in additional coverage in the central and northern parts of the Bruce Trail.



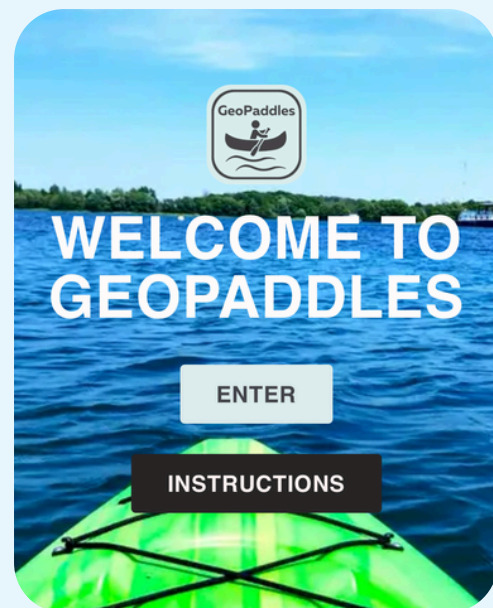
This summer we were pleased to assist the [Niagara Aspiring Global Geopark](#) on the visit by the UNESCO evaluation team. Currently we have 10 GeoHikes completed and in progress on the proposed Geopark which covers the entire Niagara Peninsula. For example, if you go to Ball's Falls you can scan QR codes with your phone that take you directly to the stops on our GeoHike, and at Wainfleet Wetlands you can visit a beautifully preserved mid-Devonian coral reef all described in detail by expert paleontologist Dr. Daniel Dick on our GeoHike. Dr. Eyles and her team of students at McMaster are working on completing an exciting Wine GeoRoute across the Niagara wine region to bring the fascinating subject of "terroir" that has so much influence on the type of grape grown and on the flavour of the wine produced. Board member Kristin Hanson, P.Geo. (non-practicing) who does tours at Malivore Winery part time has added her considerable hands-on experience to creating this GeoRoute.

With Dr. Heidi Daxberger’s team at University of Toronto (U of T) and supported by the Canadian Geological Foundation, we developed a Toronto Urban GeoWalk that showcases the fascinating building stones from Union Station to the Royal Ontario Museum with a particularly detailed tour of the historic U of T campus. This Urban GeoWalk not only tells you about the stone you are looking at but also highlights which quarries the stones originally came from. This summer we shifted focus to the green areas of Toronto. We have an excellent Urban GeoWalk nearing completion in the Mud Creek – Evergreen Brickworks area which will be released later this year. People will be very surprised at how much interesting geology there is to see right in the middle of the largest metropolitan area in Canada.



Our partnership with Queen’s University in Kingston, and in Ottawa with Carleton University and University of Ottawa, has led to the development of seven GeoHikes in the Kingston and Ottawa areas which will we be adding to in coming years. We have excellent Urban GeoWalks in both Kingston and Ottawa. The team at Queen’s developed our first GeoPaddle at Wolfe Island, a concept that we want to expand on next summer and take to other areas of the province.

Currently we are moving all our GeoRoutes in Northern Ontario to the StoryMap™ format and will be working with partner Laurentian University to upgrade and expand our coverage. In Sudbury, we have an excellent Urban GeoWalk that was developed for the GAC-MAC Meeting held there in May 2023. The Laurentian University GeoWalk introduces you to the fascinating geological history of the Sudbury Impact Structure that you can view firsthand on a pleasant walk around the campus like the Apollo astronauts did many years ago.



Over the past few years we have substantially increased our presence at public events across the province, many of which we do in partnership with Mining Matters. Shows include Science Rendezvous in Kingston, Bancroft Rockhound Gemboree, Ottawa Rock N' Gem Show, GAC-MAC 2023 in Sudbury, London Gem and Mineral Show and the PDAC Convention in Toronto. We also support innovative geoscience-focused education projects including QR codes for Metcalfe Geoheritage Park near Ottawa, the Augmented Reality Sandbox in the Miller Museum at Queen's and purchase of a microscope and LED TV for the Arkona Museum. Finally, we have the Beneath Your Feet Blog and Podcast managed by Laurentian Science Communications graduate Veronica Klassen which brings interesting stories and experiences from geoscientists on a range of topics. We are also very active on social media with some 5,000 followers on Instagram. Recent videos "Fossils with Dan" on Tik Tok have over 300,000 views. Our GeoVideo on Volcanoes has over 100,000 views.



# DISCOVER GEOSCIENCE



NEWLY RELEASED:  
WOLFE ISLAND  
GEO-PADDLE



Support from PGO members has been very important for us and your contributions have helped the APGO Education Foundation grow. I strongly believe that we are making a difference and that the best is yet to come. Many thanks for your support and please continue to help us on this important journey to raise the understanding of the public about the importance of geoscience and the critical work that professional geoscientists deliver to provide everyone with clean water, fuels, mineral resources and materials, support infrastructure construction, and help protect against hazards such as floods, slides, and contaminated soil, air and water. Geoscientists are on the front lines in all these important areas. Thank you for all you do in your work and thank you for supporting ours.

## THANK YOU!



APGO  
education  
foundation

