



canadianavalancheassociation

Brief to members on
Proposed 2020 bylaws changes
April 20, 2020

1. Introduction

The Canadian Avalanche Association board and staff have worked with the CAA's legal counsel to propose changes to the CAA's bylaws that meet the needs of the association as it evolves. At first glance, the volume of changes proposed to the bylaws in 2020 may be overwhelming to some members. The goal of this document is to summarize and describe those changes and their intent in plain language that is accessible to the CAA membership.

This summary is offered with an important caveat. With any summary, the representation of the actual item being described is a reduction or translation, and as such, subject to error. Please note: in cases where the reader finds a discrepancy between this summary and the proposed bylaws, the bylaws should be considered accurate rather than the summary provided here.

2. Specific changes

2.1 Society changed to Association

Before 2016, the CAA was registered under the BC and AB Societies Acts. At that time, "Society" was an appropriate term to describe the CAA. In 2016, the CAA was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*. Following that change, it was not correct to refer to the CAA as a "Society." After review, it has been recommended that all references to the CAA in the bylaws as a "Society" be changed to "Association." "Association" makes sense to all members, and does not conflict with terminology in the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*. This change affects 97 references in the bylaws.

2.2 Changes to support competency-based membership applications for Active and Professional members (multiple sections but mainly six and 12)

The CAA has been working towards competency-based membership for many years. In the most recent issue of [*The Avalanche Journal* \(Vol. 123\)](#), President Walter Bruns outlined the board's intent to seek bylaws changes that:

- Allow the board to define the coursework required of new applicants.
- Allow the board to define the requirements of a workplace portfolio.
- Recognize existing members who remain in good standing without the need to meet the new membership requirements.
- Set a date for the new application process to take effect.

For practicing professional members, the changes to Bylaw 6 a) and b) allow the board to set prerequisites (courses), the application process, and required documentation (including a workplace portfolio) to become a Professional member.

Changes to a) and b) of Bylaw 13 (proposed to be renumbered as 12) would allow the board to set the same prerequisites (courses), the application process, and required documentation (including a workplace portfolio) for Active members.

These changes do not affect existing members. A statement affirming this is found in each membership category. For instance, this is affirmed for Professional members at the end of Bylaw 6:

For greater certainty, those individuals who were Practicing Professional Members of the Association immediately before the effective date of these Bylaws shall remain Practicing Professional Members upon the effective date of these Bylaws.

A similar statement is be found in Bylaw 13 affirming the continuing membership of existing Active members.

Board discretion

The structure of the bylaws empowers the board with considerable discretion to set membership requirements. Given the new competency-based application process, this is warranted. If it is discovered that a specific provision of the application process is unwieldy, unfair to applicants, inefficient, or in some other manner not in the interests of the association, the board has the flexibility to change the process without seeking a bylaw change from the membership. The staff, contractors, membership committee, and volunteer applicants have worked together to create an excellent starting point for competency-based applications. Nevertheless, we understand that as more applicants apply for membership, we will learn things that require the process to be altered. The proposed bylaws allow the board to make changes in a nimble fashion. These changes will be recorded in board meetings following engagement of the appropriate committees and the membership where needed. To some degree, this additional oversight provides more governance than the current process, where administrative changes are made by staff from time to time.

The proposed bylaw changes enable the board to govern the proposed competency-based membership application process. The process itself is described by project manager Kathy McKay on page 12 of *The Avalanche Journal* (Vol. 123). For more detail, you can visit the current [voluntary competency-based application for active members](#) and [professional members](#).

2.3 Gender inclusive pronoun usage

The CAA has been working towards being more inclusive for several years. Bylaw 2a) has been changed to accept all genders. Pronoun references will use the non-gendered singular form of “they.” Approximately 40 references in the document have been changed to align with this change. For example, in instances where “his or her” was previously used, “their” is now used. [Meriam-Webster provides additional background about historic use of “they” as a singular pronoun reaching back to the 1300s.](#)

2.4 Non-practicing professional members added to voting members

Bylaw 4(a) lists member classes eligible to vote. In 2016, non-practicing professional members were removed from this class in error. This error is corrected by the insertion of Bylaw 4(a)ii. It is worth noting that non-practicing professional members must maintain currency in their continuing professional development.

2.5 Membership committee composition

Bylaw 66 (renumbered to 65 in the proposed bylaw changes) had limited the membership committee to four members in addition to the chair. This limit creates a variety of constraints for the committee. The proposed change allows the board to determine committee size and composition to respond to the needs of the committee without seeking additional changes from the membership.

2.6 Unnecessary text related to 2016 incorporation under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*

Bylaw 3 contains text that assisted the CAA’s transition to incorporation under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*. The text is no longer required. It is proposed that the text be removed to avoid confusion.

Questions

Members who have questions about these changes are encouraged to contact Executive Director Joe Obad, at jobad@avalancheassociation.ca or 250-814-8092.