

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Volunteers deserve help to keep making their contributions

Before the Ontario legislature recessed for the summer, the government introduced Bill 113 ? the Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015.

I was pleased to see the introduction of Bill 113, as it will ensure police record checks are appropriately used by both organizations and individuals, by establishing standards for the different types of police record checks in the province. However, Bill 113 does not assist volunteers who want to help multiple organizations without the burden of unnecessary costs or duplication of service.

As you know, volunteers play an important role in our communities; volunteering at a school or hospital or for the numerous community organizations that assist our elderly and children, our communities depend on committed and engaged volunteers.

Statistics show that half of Canadians volunteer, and almost half of those volunteer with multiple organizations.

This is very impressive and shows that volunteerism runs deep in each and every one of us. We should be proud of that. I hope to see those numbers continue to grow, and I encourage everyone to volunteer, as there are many benefits for doing so.

There is no cookie-cutter approach to volunteering, and there are many ways for someone to volunteer. For instance, raising money and putting on events are the two most common ways for an individual to volunteer. Nearly half of volunteers in 2010 were involved in fundraising and almost as many participated in organizing and supervising events. Many others volunteer their time by sitting on a committee or board; collecting or serving or delivering food; or coaching.

Volunteering is an amazing opportunity and experience, but individuals may face barriers to participating, such as competing demands on their time or not knowing where to start. Another barrier is the financial cost of volunteering. Many organizations require volunteers to obtain a criminal record check before they can participate. While most individuals are willing to pay for this important precaution, if the volunteer is willing to give back to multiple organizations, it can become costly because a criminal record check must be prepared for each organization that requests it.

In many cases volunteers have to pay out of pocket for a criminal record check or the organization has to fundraise to underwrite the cost of the record check.

That is why I introduced my private member's bill, Bill 79 ? the Helping Volunteers Give Back Act, 2015.

My private member's bill would allow volunteers to pay for a criminal record check once per year, yet distribute up to five copies of their record check to multiple organizations at no additional cost to the volunteers or organization. This will enable individuals to volunteer with multiple organizations without feeling the unnecessary financial burden.

Volunteerism is important to communities and without volunteers our schools, hospitals and community groups would suffer, so I encourage you to write or email the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services at ynaqvi.mpp@liberal.ola.org, encouraging him to incorporate my private member's bill into Bill 113. I would appreciate a copy of your letter to the Minister at sylvia.jonesco@pc.ola.org, so I can use your support to convince committee members and the Minister to support an amendment to Bill 113.

If you are interested in reading my private member's bill or have any questions, please visit www.sylviajonesmpp.ca

