

# For the Record: Volunteer Canada's Views on the Canada Student Service Grant Program

Volunteer Canada recognizes the support that has been provided to Canadians and the good intentions to support students, who are experiencing financial distress, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. After the Government of Canada's announcement of the Canada Student Service Grant program, we convened our regular calls with stakeholders in the non-profit and charitable sector to discuss the volunteering landscape within the context of the pandemic and were able to gather insights and questions about the program.

At the end of April, we shared the following issues with the office of the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, in order to support efforts to make the program successful:

1. Not equating numbers of hours to the amount of financial support. There were concerns about paying an hourly rate for community service that is below minimum wage and that being called volunteering. This could create the wrong message about volunteering and potentially undermine volunteer engagement, in the future;
2. The importance of having a range of community service opportunities (not only COVID-19 response roles), to make the program accessible to a range of organizations and students;
3. The capacity of organizations to engage students and to carry out appropriate screening particularly in roles involving vulnerable populations;
4. The availability of large numbers of service opportunities and the potential pressure on organizations to create placements in order to support students;
5. The importance of building on existing social infrastructure, such as community-based, opportunity platforms in local volunteer centres and provincial/territorial associations.

Volunteer Canada has no knowledge or opinion of the process for selecting WE Charity nor were we hoping to be contracted to administer the program. We were contacted by WE Charity, as they were developing the program, within the government's framework, asking us to assist with the program. We shared the issues listed above and when it did not appear that there was flexibility to respond to them, Volunteer Canada let WE know that we would

not be involved.

Volunteer Canada continues to work in collaboration with more than 200 [local volunteer centres](#) to support volunteer engagement. We respect the autonomy of each organization to decide for themselves what is right for them and their communities. Many have supported the program.

We have created special [resources for COVID-19](#) on volunteering safely, virtual volunteering, screening, and governance that are available on our site. We are also focusing on exploring the [role of volunteering in promoting social inclusion, diversity, and equity](#) in order to contribute to anti-racism and social justice issues in Canada.

