

Province eliminates police record check fee for volunteers

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Volunteers in Ontario no longer need to pay to get police record checks.

As of April 1, the Ontario government has removed the fee for criminal record checks and judicial matters checks for volunteers as part of legislation passed last year.

The government said the removal of the fee will make it easier for Ontarians to support animal shelters, food banks, emergency response initiatives, and other organizations within their communities.

“Volunteers enrich our communities and making it free to get police record checks is a tangible way our government is making it easier for Ontarians to give back,” said Dufferin-Caledon MPP, Sylvia Jones. “Taking fees out of the equation will benefit charities and organizations that rely on the helping hands of volunteers, as well as senior volunteers with fixed incomes.”

Volunteer Dufferin, a web-based platform project of Headwaters Communities in Action (HCIA) that helps match volunteers with organizations, said they don't expect the province's removal of the fee to make a significant impact locally.

“The Dufferin OPP already waives the fee for volunteers seeking vulnerable sector screenings, and only charges if it is for a paid employment position, so there won't be a huge impact locally within the County,” said Jennifer Payne, acting coordinator for Volunteer Dufferin. “However, we are aware of volunteers crossing boundaries who have had different experiences in other jurisdictions, so it's great that this decision creates consistency across the province and removes the financial barrier for all volunteers.”

“Dufferin OPP has never charged for volunteer criminal record checks as we recognize that volunteers are the lifblood of many organizations. This is a great way of showing respect to volunteers and thanking them for giving their time to their community,” said Const. Jennifer Roach, community liaison for Dufferin OPP.

Volunteers will be able to receive up to five copies of the specified police record checks for free, which the province says will make it easier for volunteers to apply for multiple volunteer positions.

Fees will still be charged by police services for vulnerable sector checks, which are considered the most thorough type of police record checks requiring a comprehensive search of national and local police database. Dufferin OPP only charges a fee for vulnerable sector checks in cases of paid employment.