

A new era of volunteer recognition that just might get you a job

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The role of volunteer experience is especially critical for those trying to break into the workforce, such as newcomers who require Canadian experience or youth with little, if any, work history.

Thanks to a new era of skills-based volunteer recognition dawning in Ontario organizations can now attract more people to volunteer to help them seek employment because with the newly launched [PREB Ontario system](#) volunteers will have a credible, skills-based certificate they can present that highlights their skills with language that is meaningful to employers. This certificate can also make volunteering a more enticing option for youth who are looking to make a stronger case for admission into post-secondary education or training programs, or when applying for bursaries and scholarships.

Volunteers across the province can now earn [PREB certificates](#) that outline their experience including the tasks performed and the skills demonstrated. This documentation assists people who are interested in turning their volunteer work into paid employment.

Youth, newcomers to Canada and people making career changes are among those expected to benefit most.

[Voluntary organizations](#) now have a new tool to attract volunteers, and at the same time, business and education officials have gained a clear, consistent means to assess a candidate's volunteer experience.

What prompted the provincial government's investment in the voluntary sector was the coming Pan Am / Parapan Am Games in Toronto that is expected to be powered by approximately 23,000 volunteers. It's anticipated that many of those volunteers will be interested in using their games volunteer experience as a type of reference for post-games opportunities.

Taking this need into account, it made sense to present the volunteers with PREB certificates. As a legacy of the games, an upgraded PREB system will then be developed for continued use by organizations across Ontario.

Anyone who uses any skills that can be transferable to paid employment or as a stepping stone to educational opportunities can earn a PREB certificate. The intent is to help volunteers be able to make the case for why they stand out in a crowd of candidates.

If your organization seeks more volunteers, is looking to take its volunteer recognition up a notch or both, it should consider [getting some staff trained on the PREB Ontario system](#). That's as easy as contacting your local Volunteer Centre and investing a couple hours of your time. Then you'll be ready to start presenting PREB certificates to your volunteers.

If your organization is not yet a member of your [local Volunteer Centre](#), this is a great reason to explore becoming one. Access to the PREB Ontario system can provide your membership even more value.

The first set of PREB certificates go out in September to the TO2015 Games volunteers followed by all the certificates prepared by voluntary organizations. From that point onwards, organizations can create and present them on demand.

Get involved now so your volunteers can be among the first to receive this skills-based volunteer recognition!

Cody began his experience in the volunteer sector at the age of 7, when he would volunteer alongside his parents during the annual Niagara Wine Festival. Since that time, he has gone on to continue his work with the Niagara Wine Festival annually, as well as volunteering with Ontario March of Dimes, Kids Help Phone and the Independent Order of Foresters. Cody completed his BA and BEd at Brock University in St Catharines, and is currently completing a MEd in Administration & Leadership. In 2012, he began working at Information Niagara with the ChangeTheWorld-Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge. This role soon expanded to include coordinating the Volunteer Connections program. Volunteerism is where his passion lies and he is currently the PREB-Ontario Project Manager for PREB-Ontario, a project sponsored by the Government of Ontario as part of the Pan/Parapan Am Games Legacy Initiative.

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