

The One-Hour Commitment

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What young Canadians learn and how they are learning is important to their development. Experience matters, but how do Canadian youth incorporate experience to develop and sustain their political consciousness¹ during a pandemic? A study in 2018 regarding the engagement of diverse Canadian youth in youth developmental programs acknowledged that positive surroundings and development settings were key to a young person's community engagement and political participation (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Heather et al., 2018). A young person needs to build a sense of *sociopolitical empowerment*- belonging and support- and this means becoming engaged in their communities. When they are supported and experience a sense of belonging (also known as *sociopolitical control*), a young person perceives that they have the "ability to influence policy decisions in an organization or community" (Peterson et al., 2011, p. 594).

During this Covid-19 pandemic, digital media and digital tools can be leveraged for community engagement as well as peer socialization, which will support high school students in obtaining their volunteer hours required for graduation. As a response to the importance of meaningful community engagement, especially during the time of a global pandemic, the Youth Council Coalition of Canada (YCC) is presenting an initiative called The One-Hour Commitment. This initiative seeks to encourage organizations and municipalities to provide one-hour volunteer compensation for high school students who partake in activities such as virtual town hall meetings, webinars provided by organizations, and participating in surveys. The students may be asked to write about their volunteer experience, prepare questions for the webinar they registered for, or participate in discussion groups that follow their virtual one-hour

commitments. The YCC can help promote municipalities and organizations that join The One-Hour Commitment by promoting their volunteer opportunities through social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

Pending review, the YCC hopes to partner with local school boards to endorse The One-Hour Commitment, all while connecting young Canadians with their communities. This initiative means to provide time commitment that is minimal to Canadian youth who may only be able to devote little of their day to volunteer work, all while trying to navigate their secondary careers during difficult times. The goal of the initiative is to ultimately encourage meaningful community engagement that can lead to longevity in volunteering. An additional benefit to this initiative is the promotion of peer socialization, which boosts the grit needed in Canadian youth to change political thought into political action.

References

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¹ Refers to someone who is politically aware, cares about political matters, and seeks out methods to politically participate to promote change (Zugman, 2003).