

The Civic Hour: a policy any workplace can adopt this month

The offer to your people, in one sentence: every member of this organization gets one paid (or freely scheduled) hour, plus reasonable flexibility for personal-leave requests, for civic participation between October 7 and 26, 2026 — no questions about how, no approval of what, no record of which.

What counts as civic participation is the member's own business: a neighbourhood conversation, an all-candidates meeting, helping an elder get to a poll, voting itself. The policy is **strictly nonpartisan by construction**: the hour attaches to the season, not to any candidate, cause, or organization — including whoever handed you this page. An employer who grants the hour endorses nothing except its people's standing in their own city.

Why an institution would do this: turnout in Toronto's last municipal election was 29%. The scheduling friction of ordinary life is a real, fixable part of that. A workplace that fixes its share of the friction — publicly, cheaply, once — buys more civic health per dollar than almost anything else it could do this fall, and its people notice.

How to adopt it this week:

1. Copy the one-sentence offer above into your own voice, on your own letterhead, under your own name. Change anything. It is yours.
2. Name the window (Oct 7–26), the mechanics (how to book the hour), and the privacy rule: nobody reports back what they did with it, and no list of who used it leaves the schedule.
3. Remind staff of the legal floor: an employee eligible to vote whose October 26 work hours would leave them without three consecutive free hours while polls are open (10 a.m.–8 p.m.) is entitled to **paid** time off sufficient to create that window — timed at the employer's convenience, with no pay deduction (Municipal Elections Act, 1996, s. 50). The Civic Hour is on top of that floor, not instead of it.
4. If you want it counted, say one aggregate sentence in public — “we adopted a civic hour for N people” — anywhere you like. A count of institutions and covered people may be published in aggregate; no institution is ever listed without saying so itself, publicly, first.

Kids welcome. Food shared. Nobody pays. — uniteTOlove.ca