



ELECTRONIC PETITIONS – GUIDE FOR SIGNATORIES

HOUSE OF COMMONS • CANADA

A “signatory” is a resident of Canada or a citizen of Canada living either in Canada or abroad, who indicates agreement with the ideas and proposals set out in a petition. In the case of a paper petition, this requires a physical signature; in the case of electronic petitions, the “signature” consists of providing and confirming some basic contact information. If you wish to sign an electronic petition, or you are considering it and would like more information, please read on.

What is a Petition?

A petition is used to draw attention to an issue of public interest or concern and to request that the House of Commons, the Government of Canada, a Minister of the Crown, or a Member of the House of Commons take some action. A person preparing and submitting such a request is known as a **petitioner**.

An **electronic petition** (“**e-petition**”) consists of a text of no more than 250 words addressed to the House of Commons (sometimes addressed as “the House of Commons in Parliament assembled”), the Government of Canada, a Minister of the Crown, or a Member of the House of Commons.

It contains a clear request (not a demand), also called a “prayer”, for some concrete action (either to do something or to refrain from doing something) in order to remedy a grievance. A petition must concern a subject that is within the authority of the Parliament of Canada, the House of Commons, or the Government of Canada.

This guide focuses on what is involved in **signing an e-petition**. To learn more about **creating** an e-petition, or about **supporting** an e-petition before it is published, see the guides entitled *Electronic Petitions – Guide to Creating and Submitting a Petition* and *Electronic Petitions – Guide for Supporters*. For paper petitions, see the guide entitled *Paper Petitions – Guide for the Public*.

Preliminary Steps before an E-petition Is Made Available for Signature

Once an e-petition has been drafted by a petitioner and has received the electronic support of at least five initial signatories, called **supporters**, it must be **sponsored** by a Member of Parliament (MP). The e-petition is then examined by the Clerk of Petitions (a non-partisan House of Commons employee) for conformity to the rules and practices of the House of Commons and is made available to the public to be signed on the House of Commons e-petitions website.

To Be a Signatory:

- You must be a resident of Canada or a citizen of Canada.
- You may not use an e-mail address or a device with an IP address associated with the Government or the Parliament of Canada to sign an e-petition.
- You must provide certain basic information to validate your identity.
- There is no minimum age requirement in order to sign an e-petition.

Process of Signing an E-petition

- You can search for a petition that is of interest to you by going to the e-petitions website and searching by keyword, subject, or, if you know this information, by the petition number (in the format “e-123”) or by the name of the MP who has agreed to sponsor it.
- Once you have located the e-petition that is of interest to you, you can click on “Sign the Petition” at the bottom of the petition’s web page. This will bring you to a page where you can sign by accepting the *Terms of Use* and providing some basic information:
 - name;
 - unique e-mail address (i.e. an e-mail address may only be associated with one signatory);
 - country;
 - if within Canada, province or territory and postal code; and
 - telephone number.
- After providing this basic contact information, you will receive an automated e-mail prompting you to confirm your signature. This confirmation must be provided in order for your signature to be counted.
- You may only sign a given e-petition once.

Subsequent Steps

An e-petition will remain open for signatures for 120 days. To receive final certification and be presented in the House of Commons, an e-petition must receive a minimum of 500 valid signatures during this period. If an e-petition has not garnered the minimum number of valid signatures by then, it will proceed no further, but will remain visible online. A general breakdown of signatures by province or territory appears on the e-petitions website along with each petition.

You will receive an e-mail advising you if and when the e-petition is presented in the House of Commons, and once the government’s official response to it has been presented, if applicable.

Data Management

Under no circumstances is the personal information of signatories made available to the petitioner, to the MP who acts as sponsor, or to the general public. Signatories’ contact information is made available to the Clerk of Petitions and to his or her delegates, in order to validate signatories’ identities and protect the integrity of the petition process. Data may also be used by the Clerk of Petitions for statistical purposes. Personal information gathered from signatories through the e-petition website is destroyed at regular intervals.

Use of Cookies

The House of Commons uses cookies, a feature offered by web browsers, to collect anonymous data and track the browsing habits of users who visit its website. More specifically, when a user visits the e-petition web page and wants to create a user account or to initiate, support, or sign an electronic petition, the website automatically recognizes the domain name, IP address, web browser version, operating system, and other relevant data about the user’s computer and the site the user visited that linked to our site.

Most browsers are configured to use cookies as a default setting. Users can reconfigure their browser options to block cookies, or to receive a notification when cookies are used. However, users who have chosen to disable cookies will not have access to some features of our website.

For further information:

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