



ELECTRONIC PETITIONS – GUIDE FOR SUPPORTERS

HOUSE OF COMMONS • CANADA

A “supporter” is a resident of Canada or a citizen of Canada living either in Canada or abroad, who indicates support for the ideas and proposals set out in a petition prior to its being sent to a Member of Parliament to be sponsored and then released for signature online to the general public. In the case of electronic petitions, the “signature” consists of providing some basic contact information. If you have been asked to support a petition, 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**.

Petitioners cannot directly present a petition to the House of Commons; only a Member of Parliament is able to do so. In order to have a petition posted on the House of Commons e-petition website and eventually presented in the House, it must be sponsored by a Member.

A petition must also meet certain requirements established by the rules and practices of the House. The Clerk of Petitions, a non-partisan House of Commons employee, holds the authority to certify that these requirements have been met.

This guide focuses on what is involved in **supporting an electronic petition (“e-petition”)** prior to its publication on the e-petitions website. To learn more about **creating and submitting** an e-petition, or about **signing** an e-petition that has been published, see the guides entitled *Electronic Petitions – Guide for Creating and Submitting a Petition* and *Electronic Petitions – Guide for Signatories*. For paper petitions, see the guide entitled *Paper Petitions – Guide for the Public*.

Form and Content of a Petition

An 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 must contain 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 be written in English or French, must be respectful, use temperate language, and may not contain improper or unparliamentary language. In particular, it should not contain disrespectful or offensive language with respect to the Crown, Parliament, or the courts. It may not include charges made against the character or conduct of Parliament, the courts, or any other duly-constituted authority. An e-petition must concern a subject that is within the authority of the Parliament of Canada, the House of Commons, or the Government of Canada. It may not concern a purely provincial or municipal matter, or any matter that is *sub judice*, i.e. a matter that is the subject of legal proceedings or currently before the courts.

Role of a Supporter

Once a petitioner has submitted a draft e-petition, it can only proceed through the subsequent steps if it obtains the electronic support of five eligible signatories, known as **supporters**.

To Be a Supporter

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

Process of Supporting a Petition

- A petitioner may identify you as a potential supporter when he or she is creating an e-petition (for instance, if you are a friend, acquaintance, colleague, or neighbour of the petitioner). The petitioner will enter your name and e-mail address on the e-petitions website. An e-mail will automatically be sent to you to confirm your support.
- If you wish to help the petition move forward, simply click on the link in the e-mail. You will be prompted to accept the *Terms of Use* and to add some additional information (telephone number, country and province/territory, and postal code) in order to validate your identity, and you will then be added as a supporter.
- If you do not wish to support the petition, simply ignore the e-mail. No further steps are required.

Subsequent Steps

- Once a petition has received support from five individuals, it will be sent to an MP inviting them to be a sponsor. A petitioner may have asked more than five individuals to act as supporters. In such cases, only the first five individuals to answer favourably will be considered supporters. Others will have to wait until the e-petition is published on the website to become **signatories**.
- Once the MP has agreed to act as a sponsor, the text of the petition will be examined by the Clerk of Petitions and then published on the e-petitions website, thus making it available online to be signed by the general public.
- Once the e-petition has been published online, you will be automatically added as a signatory.
- 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 when the petition reaches different stages, such as: if and when five people have agreed to support the petition; when a Member of Parliament accepts or declines to sponsor it, together with any comments he or she may have; when the Clerk of Petitions approves or rejects it, together with any comments; if and when the petition is presented in the House of Commons; and once the government's official response to the petition has been presented.

Data Management

Under no circumstances is the personal information of supporters or signatories made available to the petitioner, to the MP who acts as sponsor or to the general public. Supporters and signatories' contact information is made available to the Clerk of Petitions 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 about supporters collected 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.

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