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Form and Content of Petitions - Guidelines

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Introduction

Before a petition can be presented by a Member, it must be examined to confirm that it meets certain requirements established by the rules and practices of the House (described below). A Member wishing to present a petition must first submit the petition to the Clerk of Petitions for certification.

Recommended forms of petitions to the House of Commons are set out on the last pages of this guide.

Form of a Petition

Addressee

A petition must be addressed to one of the following:

- the House of Commons;
- the House of Commons in Parliament assembled;
- the Government of Canada;
- a Minister of the Crown; or
- a Member of the House of Commons.

Text

A petition must contain a request, sometimes also referred to as a prayer, for the addressee to take some action (or refrain from taking some action) to remedy a grievance.

A petition may also include a more detailed description of the grievance and/or a statement of opinion. However, a statement of grievance or opinion alone cannot be received as a petition.

The request should be clear and to the point.

The petition must not demand or insist that the addressee do something.

The petition may include a return address.

Written, Typewritten or Printed on Paper of Usual Size

measuring 21.5 cm x 28 cm (8 1/2 x 11 inches) or 21.5 cm x 35.5 cm (8 1/2 x 14 inches). A petition submitted on paper of irregular size, or on any other material, is not acceptable.

Language

A petition must be respectful, use temperate language, and not contain improper, disrespectful or unparliamentary language. In particular, there should be no disrespect shown to the Sovereign or charge made against the character or conduct of Parliament, the courts or any other duly constituted authority.

A petition must be written in one or both of the official languages.

Erasures or Interlineations

The text of a petition must not be altered either by erasing or crossing out words or by adding words or commentary. Any alteration will make the petition unacceptable.

Attachments, Appendices or Extraneous Material

A petition must be free of any other matter attached or appended to or written or printed on the petition, whether in the form of additional documents, maps, pictures, logos, news articles, explanatory or supporting statements, or requests for support. A petition printed on the reverse of a document (for example a newsletter or a Member's Householder or Ten Percenter) is not acceptable.

Subject-Matter Indicated on Every Sheet

If a petition is composed of more than one sheet of signatures and addresses, the subject-matter of the petition must be indicated on every sheet.

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Matters Within Federal Jurisdiction

A petition must concern a subject within the authority of the Parliament of Canada, the House of Commons or the Government of Canada. A petition must not concern a purely provincial or municipal matter or any matter which should be brought before a court of law or a tribunal.

Requesting Expenditure of Public Funds

A petition may include a request for the expenditure of public funds.

Signatures and Addresses

A petition must contain a minimum of 25 valid signatures with addresses.

A petition should contain signatures of residents of Canada only. Persons not resident in Canada cannot petition the House of Commons of Canada. A petition signed exclusively by non-resident persons is not acceptable.

There is no minimum age requirement for anyone signing a petition.

Each petitioner must sign, not print, his or her own name directly on the petition and must not sign for anyone else. If a petitioner cannot sign because of illness or a disability, this must be noted on the petition and the note signed by a witness.

A petition must contain original signatures written directly on the document and not pasted, taped, photocopied or otherwise transferred to it.

Some signatures and addresses must appear on the first sheet with the text of the petition. Signatures and addresses may appear on the reverse of the petition.

The address may either be the petitioner's full home address, or the city and province, or the province and postal code. As with the signature, the address must be written directly on the document and not pasted, taped, photocopied or otherwise transferred to it. The inclusion of other contact information (such as telephone numbers or email addresses) is permitted but not required.

A Member of the House of Commons may sign a petition, but should ask another Member to present that petition. The signatures of Members inscribed on a petition are not counted towards the required 25 signatures and addresses.

Public Petitions

Members of the public who wish to petition the House of Commons on a matter of public interest are advised to first submit a draft petition (without signatures) to a Member of Parliament to see whether it is correctly worded and whether the Member would agree to present it.

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