

PETITIONING THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

I. DRAFTING A PETITION

A petition cannot be presented to the House of Commons unless it has first been submitted by a Member of Parliament to the Clerk of Petitions for certification. In order to be certified, the petition must meet certain requirements established by the rules and practices of the House. The following list sets out guidelines for drafting petitions on matters of public concern.

General requirements

- The petition must be handwritten, typed, printed or photocopied on sheets of paper of usual size, i.e. 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).
- The words "To the House of Commons" or "To the House of Commons in Parliament assembled" must appear at the beginning of the petition. Petitions to the Government of Canada, the Prime Minister, a Minister, or an individual Member of Parliament are not acceptable.
- The petition must be respectful and use temperate language.
- The text of the petition must not be altered either by erasing or crossing out words or by adding words.
- No other matter is to be attached or appended to or written on the petition, whether in the form of additional documents, maps, pictures, news articles, explanatory or supporting statements, or requests for support. A return address is allowed.
- The petition must concern a subject within the authority of the Parliament of Canada. The 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.

Prayer

- The petition must contain a request, called a "prayer", for Parliament to take some action (or refrain from taking some action) to remedy a grievance. A statement of grievance or a statement of opinion alone cannot be received as a petition. The petition must not, however, demand or insist that Parliament do something.
- The "prayer" should be clear and to the point. Details which the petitioners think important may be included in the statement of grievance.

Signatures and addresses

- Some signatures and addresses should, if possible, appear on the first sheet with the "prayer". The

subject-matter of the petition must be indicated on each of the other sheets containing signatures and addresses.

- The petition must contain a minimum of 25 valid signatures, each with the address of the petitioner. The signature of a Member of Parliament is not counted.
- Each petitioner must sign his or her own name directly on the petition and must not sign for anyone else. Names should be signed, not printed. Signatures cannot be attached to a sheet (taped or pasted on) or photocopied onto it. 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.
- The petitioner's address must be written directly on the petition and not pasted on or reproduced. The petitioner may give his or her full home address or simply the city and province.
- Aliens not resident in Canada cannot petition the House of Commons of Canada.

Form of a petition

- The recommended form of a petition to the House of Commons is set out on the last page of this guide. Below is a fictitious model petition.

PETITION

TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED

We, the undersigned residents of Canada, draw the attention of the House to the following:

THAT incidents of X are becoming more and more frequent;

THAT each incident of X harms the public; and

THAT there would be fewer such incidents if certain legislative measures were taken

THEREFORE, your petitioners call upon Parliament to enact legislation against X.

- On the other sheets of signatures and addresses, the subject-matter of this fictitious petition could be shown as follows: *PETITION ASKING PARLIAMENT TO ENACT LEGISLATION AGAINST X.*

II. SUBMITTING A PETITION TO THE HOUSE

- Only a Member of Parliament can present a petition to the House of Commons. The petitioners must send their petition to a Member with a request to present it to the House. Any Member of Parliament may be asked to present the petition even if he or she does not represent the petitioners.
- Nothing in the rules or practices of the House of Commons requires a Member to present a petition he or she has received. The Member may even ask another Member to present the petition.
- 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.

- A Member may present a petition to the House in either of two ways: by making a brief statement in the House regarding the origin and subject of the petition, or by filing the petition with the Clerk of the House while the House is sitting. The act of presenting a petition does not necessarily mean that the Member supports it.
- If a Member makes a statement in the House when presenting a petition, the statement is reproduced in *Hansard*, the official record of the debates. A record of each petition presented, whether or not a statement is made, appears in the *Journals* for that day.
- Once the petition has been presented, it is sent to the Government, which must table a response in the House within 45 days.

Clerk of Petitions
 Private Members' Business Office
 Room 131-N
 Centre Block
 House of Commons
 ((613) 992-9511
 Fax (613) 947-7626

FORM OF A PETITION

The recommended form of a petition to the House of Commons is set out below. Do not write your petition on this sheet.

**PETITION
 TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
 IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED**

We, the undersigned

Here identify, in general terms, who the petitioners are, for example

- *citizens (or residents) of Canada*
- *electors of (name of electoral district)*
- *residents of the Province of...*
- *residents of the City (or Village or Township, etc.) of...*

draw the attention of the House to the following:

THAT

Here briefly state the reasons underlying the request for the intervention of the House by outlining the grievance or problem or by summarizing the facts which the petitioners wish the House to consider.

THEREFORE, your petitioners

Request that Parliament

or

Here set out the "prayer" or request by stating succinctly what action the petitioners wish Parliament to take or what action it should refrain from taking.

call upon Parliament to

	Signatures		Addresses
	(Sign your own name. Do not print)		(Give your full home address or your city and province)

THEREFORE, your petitioners *Here repeat the "prayer" from the first page of the petition.*

	Signatures		Addresses
	(Sign your own name. Do not print)		(Give your full home address or your city and province)

Petition concerning *Here state the subject matter of the petition.*

	Signatures		Addresses
	(Sign your own name. Do not print)		(Give your full home address or your city and province)