

How to write a petition

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A petition is a good tool for a straightforward issue that has widespread support.

There are fifteen minutes set aside daily in the House of Commons for petitions to be read. There is no debate following the reading of the petition, but the government is required to respond to your petition within 45 days. Your petition could spark interest on the part of Members of Parliament or it could influence a debate already occurring in the House of Commons.

Below are some tips for writing a petition and getting signatures.

General guidelines for writing a petition

- The petition statement should be **clear** and **concise**.
- Begin the statement with a phrase like: *We the undersigned hereby affirm. . .*
- Keep it as short as possible, while laying out your concerns.
- Start with general principles and progressively get more specific, ending with your requests.
- Make sure that the **petition statement appears on each page** of the petition.

If an MP is to read a petition in the House, she must first submit it to the Clerk of Petitions, who examines it to make sure that its form and content meet Parliamentary specifications. If it fails to meet them, it cannot be read for the record. It is therefore important to follow the [guidelines for an official petition to Parliament](#) [1]. You can also send a draft petition, before collecting signatures, to a Member of Parliament to ensure that it is correctly worded and to find out if she will be willing to read it in the House.

Guidelines for an official petition to Parliament

- Address it to the House of Commons (not the Prime Minister or any individual MP).
- Use a standard paper size (8 ½ x 11 inches or 8 ½ by 14 inches).
- Do not attach any other documents to the petition or print the petition on the reverse of another document.
- The petition must address an issue that is under federal jurisdiction and must ask the government to take or not take a specific action.
- It must contain a minimum of 25 Canadians' signatures. Each signature should be accompanied by the signatory's city and province of residence.
- There is no minimum age requirement for signing a petition.
- Note that certification usually takes three to five working days, and that petitions cannot be certified during an election period.

Other Tips

- **Bring** your petition to events where you expect there will be people who support it.

- [Follow-up](#) [2] is important because it demonstrates that there is real commitment behind the signatures. Encourage signatories to write, call, or visit MPs to explain why they signed the petition.
- **Any MP** can present a petition in the House on any topic. Some MPs have a policy of presenting any petition brought to them by constituents.
- The Government must respond to each petition **within 45 calendar days** of its presentation. If this fails to occur, the Member who presented the petition designates a committee of the House to look into the reasons why it was not responded to.

<http://www.cpj.ca/en/content/how-write-petition>