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# Petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Residents of the Province of Ontario have the right to petition their legislators at Queen's Park.

A petition is a request that the Parliament of Ontario take some specific action (or refrain from taking some action) to redress a public grievance. The action requested must be within the scope of jurisdiction of the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and the request must be clear, temperate, proper and respectful.

## Form and Content

A petition must be addressed to either the Parliament, Legislature or Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Petitions addressed to the Government of Ontario or to a particular minister cannot be accepted.

Petitions must be written, typewritten or printed, and it is recommended that the paper be standard letter or legal size.

**If a petition consists of more than one sheet of signatures, the text of the petition must appear at the top of every sheet.** Each person petitioning the Parliament of Ontario must print his or her name and address and sign his or her name under the text of the petition.

A petition must contain original signatures only, written directly on the face of the petition and not pasted or transferred to it. Petitions must be free of erasures or insertions. Petitioners must be residents of the Province of Ontario; it is acceptable for petitioners to be under the age of majority.

## Presentation

A petition may only be presented by a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it must comply with the requirements above before the member may present it.

It is not the practice in the Ontario Legislature for the Speaker or a minister of the Crown to present a petition. Petitions received by a minister of the Crown are usually presented by the Chief Government Whip.

A petition may be presented in 2 ways:

- at any time during a Session by an M.P.P. filing it with the Clerk of the House (for such

purposes; a letter should be sent to the Clerk by the M.P.P. filing the petition requesting that the enclosed original petition, with the M.P.P.'s signature affixed to it, be filed);

- by an M.P.P. from his or her place in the House during Routine Proceedings under the proceeding "Petitions". The M.P.P. may make a brief statement only, summarizing the contents of the petition and indicating the number of signatures attached to the petition.

No debate is allowed on the presentation of the petition. The proceeding "Petitions" is limited to 15 minutes on any sitting day.

The petition will be numbered and recorded as a sessional paper and the subject-matter of the petition, and the name of the M.P.P. who presented it, will be printed in the Votes and Proceedings. If the House is not meeting on the day on which the petition is presented the petition will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings of the next day on which the House meets.

Within 24 sitting days of the day on which the presentation of the petition is recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*, the government is required to file a response to the petition with the Clerk of the House and to provide a copy of the response to the M.P.P. who presented the petition. The response of the government is also noted in the Votes and Proceedings.

The signature of an M.P.P. who presents a petition must be on the front sheet of the petition. It is recommended that the M.P.P.'s signature appear in the top left corner of the front sheet of the petition.

It is the responsibility of the petitioner(s) to arrange for a Member of the Legislative Assembly to present a petition; an M.P.P. cannot be compelled to present a petition, and presentation of a petition by an M.P.P. does not imply that he or she endorses the contents of the petition.

For further information, contact:

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## **Standing Order 38 of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario**

## **Petitions**

### **Presentation by filing with Clerk**

38. (a) A petition to the House may be presented at any time during the Session by a member filing it with the Clerk of the House or in the manner set out in clause (b).

### **Presentation in House**

#### **Member to summarize contents**

b) A member may present a petition in the House during Routine Proceedings under the proceeding "Petitions". The member may make a brief statement summarizing the contents of the petition and indicating the number of signatures attached thereto.

### **Petitions to be certified as to form**

(c) No member may seek to present unless it has previously been given to the Clerk of the Assembly who has examined it and certified that it is correct as to form and content.

### **Same**

d) In order to be certified by the Clerk, every petition shall:

#### *Form of address*

(i) be addressed to the Parliament, Legislature or Legislative Assembly of Ontario;

#### *Request for action*

(ii) contain a clear, proper and respectful request that the House take some action within its authority;

#### *No erasures or insertions*

(iii) be written, typewritten or printed, without erasures or insertions;

#### *Contents*

(iv) have its request appear at the top of every sheet, if it consists of more than one sheet of signatures; and

#### *Petitioners*

(v) contain the names, addresses and original signatures written directly on the face of the petition and not pasted thereon or otherwise transferred to it.

### **Members responsible for contents**

(e) Every member presenting a petition shall ensure that the petition conforms with the Standing Orders.

## Signature of member required

(f) The signature of every member presenting a petition shall be affixed to the petition.

## No debate on presentation

(g) No debate shall be allowed on the presentation of a petition.

## Duration

(h) The period for "Petitions" shall be limited to 15 minutes.

## Response by government

(i) Within 24 sitting days of its presentation, the government shall file a response to a petition with the Clerk of the House and shall provide a copy of the response to the member who presented the petition.

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## Sample Petition

It is recommended that petitions be on 8-1/2" x 11"; or 8-1/2" x 14" paper and be in the following form:

<p><b><u>PETITION</u></b></p> <p>TO The Parliament / Legislature / Legislative Assembly (<b>CHOOSE ONE</b>) of Ontario:-</p> <p>WHEREAS <i>[here briefly summarize the problem or grievance and outline the request for the intervention or action that the Legislative Assembly is being asked to make, or to refrain from making.]</i></p> <p>I / WE (<b>CHOOSE ONE</b>) the undersigned petition the Parliament / Legislature / Legislative Assembly (<b>CHOOSE ONE TO CORRESPOND WITH THE FORM OF ADDRESS CHOSEN ABOVE</b>) of Ontario as follows:-</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>[insert text of petition here]</b></p>
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