

How to build a petition

Why build a petition?

Petitions are highly effective tools for demonstrating that not just one, but *many people* have the same concerns as you. Gathering signatures validates your grievance because they provide evidence to elected officials that others in your community share an interest and support your cause. Petitions are one of the few methods to ensure direct communication with Ministers of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) as they can be entered into the record when they are presented to the Legislative Assembly.

In order to ensure you're prepared the moment you want to build a petition, the SEIU-West Political Action and Education Department has developed an easy-to-read process for creating your own petition. Creating a petition might seem a bit overwhelming but the steps below will help guide you through the rules that must be followed for your petition to be taken seriously. If you think of a petition as a letter, it can be helpful.

1. Include the address

Make all petitions addressed to one of the following:

- a) The Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan
- b) The Government of Saskatchewan
- c) A Minister of the Crown
- d) A Member of the Assembly

Example:

To the Honourable Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

2. Outline your cause

Start by writing: *We, the undersigned residents of the Province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following:*

Then, in a short paragraph, explain why you are petitioning. Try to summarize into a few sentences the reason for your cause – include any background information that will assist you. *'That'* is the perfect way to start each sentence of your explanation.

Example:

We, the undersigned residents of the Province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following:

That many aspects of long term care are deteriorating under this government;

That the government is failing to fix the basics in long term care, including rejecting the further

*urgent requests from long term care facilities for increased and needed staffing levels;
That the government has removed the regulations requiring a minimum standard of care for residents, resulting in neglect;*

3. Remedy

In Saskatchewan, this part of the petition is called the 'Prayer' which allows you to address what actions (or non-actions) you want to see to fix the problem you are bringing up in your *cause*. If you are seeking a policy change, this is where you write it down. There is also a format you should use: *We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to...*

Example:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to restore and enforce safe minimum staff-to-resident ratios within long-term care.

4. Rules and Guidelines

- a. Petitions must be written **respectfully and clearly**.
- b. Be sure that your **cause is related to the Provincial government**; otherwise it will be ruled out of order and not received.
- c. Petitions **cannot be altered** once they have been submitted in order to ensure the signatures concur with the language of the petition.
- d. **The address, outlined cause, and remedy must be written on every petition sheet**. That means if there is only room for five signatures on your petition, all petitions must be handed in with the space for five signatures.

You are not allowed to attach sheets filled with signatures unless they outline all the wording in your petition.

- e. Keep in mind, **every petition must have space for at least 3 signatures** who are residents of Saskatchewan.
- f. Every signature **must have an address**.
- g. The petition **must be an original** – no copies allowed (that means you cannot scan or email the petitions – they must be mailed or hand-delivered).
- h. There is **no minimum age requirement for signatures**.
- i. The petition **must be written in English or French**.
- j. Individuals do not have the right to address the Assembly directly. Rather, **petitions must be dated, signed, and presented by a Member of the Legislative Assembly**.

5. Tips and Tools for gathering signatures

- a. Location, Location, Location! Finding the right spot to gather signatures makes a huge difference. Here are few ideas to get you started:
 - Community events
 - The park
 - The grocery store/farmer's market
 - At work
 - Appropriately themed public gatherings (Parades, Rallies, Outdoor concerts.)
 - The library
 - Friends' gatherings
- b. Create a 'hook'
 - Try to come up with 3-5 short, snappy one-sentence "hooks" to grab people's attention. The goal is to ask a question that would 1) open a conversation, 2) communicate the gist of your issue, and 3) let others know that supporting your cause is really easy.
 - Example: "Have a minute? I have a petition to promote the safety of residents and care providers in long term care."
- c. Have fun!
 - While there will certainly be people who ignore or disagree with you, remember that you're doing great work and don't give up! There is bound to be way more interesting and supportive people that you meet.
 - Bring a friend! If you're feeling nervous about talking with new people, a friend will help.
- d. What to bring
 - Clipboard, pens, comfy shoes and lots of petitions!

6. Common Questions

- a. What if someone asks a question and I don't know the answer?

Share what relevant information you do know and encourage them to visit seiuwest.ca for more information. You can also offer to take their contact information and get back to them later.

- b. What if someone says they're not interested in signing?

That's ok! Some people may be busy and/or not interested. Either way, remain polite and refrain from debating the issue too much. A lot of potential petition signers could pass by!

- c. What if someone doesn't want to fill in all their information?

Some people may not wish to provide all the information requested. At very least, aim to have their full name and postal code filled in.

