

Introduction

Initiative is a process that allows registered voters to propose new laws or change existing laws.

The initiative petition period begins on the day a petition application is approved in principle, and ends either 90 days after the petition is issued, or when the proponent submits the signed petition sheets to the Chief Electoral Officer, if earlier. The Chief Electoral Officer then has 42 days to verify the petition.

Who may canvass for signatures

Canvassers must register with Elections BC prior to canvassing for signatures.

Signatures gathered by unregistered canvassers will not be accepted during the initiative verification process. Canvassers must be registered voters.

Who may sign an initiative petition

In order to sign the petition:

- an individual must be a registered voter in British Columbia on the date the initiative petition is issued
- the individual must sign the petition sheet for the electoral district in which they are registered at the time of signing

An initiative petition must be signed by at least 10% of registered voters in each electoral district in the province.

Responsibilities of the canvasser

The following rules must be observed:

- The cover sheet and petition sheets provided must not be altered in any way. Only signatures gathered on copies of the official petition sheet will be considered for petition verification purposes. Signatures gathered on other forms or sheets will not be accepted.
- Carry the identification issued by Elections BC and produce it upon request.
- Ensure that signatories are aware of the eligibility requirements to sign the petition.
- Canvassers must not knowingly make any false or misleading statements about a petition or the subject of a petition.
- Ensure the petition cover sheet is attached to the petition sheets while being circulated for signatures.
- The petition sheets must be signed in ink on the pre-printed side. No unnecessary lines or marks should be made on petition sheets. Do not draw a diagonal line across the unsigned portion of a page.
- Ensure that a person only signs a petition once.
- Only one voter's name, residential address, phone number and signature should appear on each line of the petition sheet.
- Canvassers must witness every signature they collect; do not leave petition sheets unattended.
- Canvassers must not remove, cross out or interfere with a signature on a petition.
- Do not use personal information obtained in canvassing for any other purpose.
- Petition sheets contain personal information. Please ensure they are secured and not left unattended.
- Canvassers must not accept initiative contributions of money, goods or services unless appointed in writing as an assistant financial agent.
- Canvassers must be volunteers, and must not accept pay or any other inducement for canvassing for signatures on a petition.
- Ensure that residential addresses - not mailing addresses - are provided by voters.
- Registered canvassers must abide by the initiative legislation. There are significant penalties for committing an offence.

Canvasser – Frequently asked questions

How much time is allowed for collection of signatures?

The proponent is allowed 90 days from the issue date of the petition to collect signatures.

How do I become a canvasser?

Contact the proponent of the initiative petition. Once an initiative petition application is submitted to Elections BC for approval, proponents can start recruiting canvassers. The proponent will coordinate recruitment of volunteers, manage the canvasser application process and forward canvasser applications to Elections BC for processing.

Who can register as a canvasser?

Canvassers must be registered voters. Voter qualifications are:

- a Canadian citizen,
- at least 18 years old, and
- have lived in B.C. for the past six months.

I was not a registered voter when the petition was issued. Can I still canvass?

Yes - but only if you register first. In order to canvass, you must register to vote and you must also register as a canvasser with Elections BC. Canvassers who register to vote after the petition is issued are not eligible to sign the petition.

Can I sign and witness my own signature on a petition sheet?

No, you can only sign a petition administered by another canvasser in your electoral district.

Can a proponent be a canvasser?

Yes, but the proponent must register as a canvasser.

Can I canvass for more than one initiative petition?

Yes. A separate canvasser application must be completed for each initiative petition.

Who can sign a petition?

An individual who was registered to vote on the date the petition was issued may sign a petition. A person may only sign a petition signature sheet for the electoral district in which they are a registered voter at the time of signing. Signatures must be signed in the presence of the canvasser.

Who is responsible to determine if a voter is eligible to sign a petition?

A voter is responsible to know if they are eligible to sign a petition. A voter who is uncertain about their eligibility should contact Elections BC.

Can I demand access to apartment buildings or strata properties to collect signatures?

No. Canvassers are not guaranteed access to rental or strata properties. Access may be granted at the discretion of the landlord or property owner.

Can I demand access to malls and recreation centres, etc., to collect signatures?

No. The *Recall and Initiative Act* does not require a landlord or owner to provide access to canvassers. Permission must be obtained from the property owner or manager.

If an individual has signed the petition with their new legal name, but their previous legal name appears on the provincial voters list, how do they ensure their signature is counted during the verification process?

Before the petition is submitted to Elections BC, the voter must update their registration. That can be done online through Elections BC's website or phoning 1-800-661-8683 or

by visiting the Elections BC office or any Service BC Government Agent location. The voter must provide their former name and current name when updating their registration.

Voter – Frequently asked questions

When the petition was issued I was not a registered voter, can I sign the petition?

No, only individuals who were registered as a voter at the time the petition was issued are eligible to sign the petition.

If I sign a petition, will my personal information be made public?

If a voter signs a petition, their name, address, signature and phone number will be available for public inspection at the office of the Chief Electoral Officer. The voter may request that their residential address and phone number be obscured from public inspection by checking the box next to their signature on the petition.

Can I remove my signature from a petition? If so, how?

Canvassers or Elections BC cannot remove signatures from a petition. If asked, a proponent may agree to remove a signature from a petition before it is submitted, but proponents are not required to do so.

What information do I have to provide when I sign an initiative petition?

Every signature on an initiative petition must be accompanied by the residential address of the individual who signed. Postal addresses, such as P.O. Box numbers, are not acceptable. Signatures not accompanied by a residential address will not be counted. You will also be asked to provide a phone number.

Why do I have to provide my phone number when I sign the petition?

Although providing your phone number is voluntary, it is important to the initiative process.

You may be called by Elections BC to confirm that you signed the petition, or the proponent may need to contact you to ensure your information is correct so that your signature can be counted. You can provide a work or personal number. You can request to have your address and phone number obscured on the public inspection copy of the petition. Simply check the box to the right of your signature line.

My street has two names, which should I use?

You should use the street name you normally use. Elections BC maintains a list of common alternate street names. If you are concerned that Elections BC may not be aware of alternate names for your street, please contact Elections BC.

I haven't moved, but local authorities have changed the name of my street (or given us a house number). I've signed the petition with the new address information. Will my signature still be counted?

Your signature will be counted if you contact Elections BC to update your voter registration before the petition is submitted for verification.

I'm registered, but I've moved (or changed my name) since the petition was issued. Is that okay?

Yes. Be sure to update your voter registration with Elections BC before the petition is submitted for verification.

For more information contact

Elections BC

Mailing Address:
PO Box 9275 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9J6

Phone: 250-387-5305
Toll-free: 1-800-661-8683
TTY: 1-888-456-5448
Fax: 250-387-3578
Toll-free Fax: 1-866-466-0665

Email: electionsbc@elections.bc.ca
Website: www.elections.bc.ca

Initiative Petition Canvasser Guide



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