

Opponents and expenses limits

The opponent initiative petition expenses limit is shared between all the opponent groups. The overall limit is \$0.25 per registered voter in B.C. on the date the petition was issued. The \$0.25 will be adjusted for changes to the Consumer Price Index.

The initiative petition expenses limit is proportionately shared between all the opponent groups based on the number of opponent applicants in their group. Opponent groups, must be eligible for a share of at least 20 percent of the total expenses limit. Thus, the Act limits the number of opponent groups to five or less in order to ensure that the initiative petition expenses limit does not become overly divided when it is distributed between opponent groups.

Application Process for Initiative Petition Opponents

For more information contact

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Introduction

Other than registered initiative petition advertising sponsors, individuals or organizations who intend to incur expenses to oppose an initiative petition must apply to Elections BC to register as an opponent. Opponents can be individuals or organizations and there can be a maximum of five opponents.

An opponent application must meet several legislated requirements for the Chief Electoral Officer to grant approval. This guide is intended to clarify the application requirements for potential opponents to an initiative petition.

Applying to be an initiative petition opponent

Notice of approval in principle for an initiative petition application is published in the British Columbia Gazette. Potential opponents must apply to the Chief Electoral Officer within 30 days after the day on which this notice is published.

An opponent application package can be obtained from Elections BC and includes two application forms. The Initiative Petition Opponent Application – Individual (913) is intended for individuals wishing to register as opponents and the Initiative Petition Opponent Application – Organization (912) is intended for organizations. Applications must be completed in full.

Potential opponents must also propose an individual to act as their financial agent. Opponent applicants who are individuals may propose themselves to act as their own financial agent. An Application for Financial Agent (914) is included in the opponent application package.

It is important to note that a fully completed application form does not guarantee that the opponent will be registered by the Chief Electoral Officer. It is the process of designating financial agents that determines which opponents will be registered.

Designating financial agents

Elections BC examines all opponent application packages for completeness. After the end of the 30 day application period, the Chief Electoral Officer designates financial agents in accordance with the *Recall and Initiative Act*.

If one financial agent is proposed by 50 percent or more of opponent applicants, the Chief Electoral Officer appoints that person as financial agent for those opponent applicants who proposed them.

If two or more financial agents are proposed by 20 percent or more of opponent applicants, the Chief Electoral Officer appoints those financial agents to the opponent applicants who proposed them.

If no financial agents are designated according to the above criteria, all applicants are notified by Elections BC and provided with contact information for the other opponent applicants. They may then propose an alternate financial agent within 29 days after the end of the original 30 day application period. The new proposed financial agent may be the same person who was proposed originally, or it may be a financial agent proposed by another applicant.

After the 29 day period, Elections BC repeats the process of designating financial agents as described above.

Any applicants who are not designated a financial agent during this process will not be registered as an initiative petition opponent.

Notice to opponents

After financial agents are designated, Elections BC notifies each successful applicant that they are a registered opponent. The notification also specifies the expenses limit for the opponent group. An applicant must not act as an opponent until they receive this notice.

Those applicants for whom a financial agent was not designated are notified that they are not opponents of the initiative petition. They must not spend any money or use any goods or services to oppose, directly or indirectly, the petition.

Unsuccessful opponent applicants may apply to become registered initiative advertising sponsors, however their activities must be limited to sponsoring initiative advertising, with a maximum value of \$5,000 or a higher amount established by regulation.