

THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN



PETITIONS – PRACTICAL GUIDE

June 2009

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1. Introduction

Each year, a variety of petitions addressing public policy issues or personal grievances are presented to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. A petition is a request from an individual or a group of individuals to a parliament or legislature for some action. Petitioning a parliament is an ancient right first exercised in England that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan inherited along with the parliamentary system of government.

This guide is intended to summarize the practices and procedures that must be followed when exercising the right to petition the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

2. Form of a Petition

There is a prescribed form to a petition, containing traditional language and phrases.

- **Sample petition**

A model petition is outlined below and can be found in Appendix 2 of *The Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*.

Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan		
We, the undersigned residents of the Province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following:		
<i>(Briefly summarize the problem or grievance and any necessary background information)</i>		
We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan:		
<i>(Outline the action the Legislative Assembly is being asked to take or not to take)</i>		
Dated: _____		
Name (print)	Address (print)	Signature
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Please note: The name and address of the persons who sign this petition may be made available to the public if the petition is in proper form to be presented to the Legislative Assembly.

- **Addressee**

Petitions must be addressed to one of the following:

- the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan;
- the Government of Saskatchewan;
- a Minister of the Crown; or
- a Member of the Assembly.

- **Text**

Grievance

- The petition should contain a paragraph(s) setting out the reasons why the petitioner(s) is (are) petitioning the Assembly.
- This section may be used to briefly summarize the problem or grievance that the petition wishes to address. It is common to include any background information that is necessary or useful in understanding why the petition is being made. The format for the grievance is outlined below:

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

(Briefly summarize the problem or grievance and any necessary background information).

- The above example provides the new plain language format for outlining a grievance. The example below outlines the previously used formalized language that is no longer required:

To the Honourable Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in legislature assembled:
The Petition of the undersigned citizens of the Province of Saskatchewan humbly sheweth:
That *(here, state the object desired by the petitioner)*.

Prayer

- The petition should be clearly and respectfully addressed.
- The subject matter of the petition must be expressed in temperate language. Offensive or inflammatory language will not be accepted.
- The purpose of the prayer is to seek various reliefs for the petitioner, to have an amendment made to a law or to obtain a change in government policy. In other words, a petition seeks action in response to a grievance.
- The petition should conclude with a prayer which sets out the action that the petitioner(s) desires the Assembly to take or to not take. The format for the prayer is outlined in the example below:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to (cause the government to enact legislation to...).

- The above example provides the new plain language format for the “prayer”. The example below outlines the previously used formalized language that is no longer required:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to
(outline what action is recommended).

And, as in duty bound, your petitioner will ever pray.

3. Content

- The petition should contain a clear request for a remedy that is within the legislative competence of the Assembly or that is within the jurisdiction of the Province of Saskatchewan to grant.
- Petitions that address matters within the purview of the federal government or which have been delegated to another body will be ruled out of order and not received.
- The petition may call for the expenditure or grant of public funds or for a charge on the public revenue.
- There can be no additions, alterations or erasures on the petition. This is to ensure that the text of the petition is not altered after the signatures have been inscribed, thereby ensuring that the petitioners are in agreement with the terms of the petition.
- The subject matter and prayer are required to be on every sheet if there are more than one sheet of signatures and addresses.

Signatures

- The petition **must contain only original signatures and addresses** written directly onto the petition – a photocopy, a facsimile or an electronic version is not acceptable.
- The petition must contain at least **three signatures from persons** other than Members of the Legislative Assembly who are residents of the Province of Saskatchewan. Additional signatures shall not be pasted or otherwise attached or transferred to the petition.
- There is no minimum age requirement for anyone signing a petition.

Language

- The petition may be in either official language (English or French).

Paper

- Petitions may be written, typed or printed on paper of usual size. What matters most is that the petition is legible.

4. Petitions Presented to the Assembly

- Various conditions govern the presentation of petitions. A petition must contain at least three signatures from residents of Saskatchewan. A petition signed exclusively by non-Saskatchewan residents is not acceptable.
- Individuals do not possess the right to address the Assembly directly. Instead, their petitions must be dated, endorsed (i.e. signed) and presented by a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Members of the Legislative Assembly

- Members are not required to present a petition on someone's behalf and no recourse exists against a Member who refuses to do so.
- Presenting a petition does not necessarily indicate that a Member supports it as there are instances where Members have presented petitions with which they have disagreed. However the Member is responsible for ensuring that the petition does not contain any impertinent or improper matters.
- Members may choose to present a petition in one of two ways.
 - i. The Member may wish to **orally** present the petition during the period of time provided for this during Routine Proceedings. In doing so, the Member may read the prayer and then briefly indicate the localities from which the petitioners come.
 - ii. A Member may present a petition simply by forwarding it to a Clerk-at-the-Table in the Assembly during any sitting.

Conditions for Presenting Petitions

- The period for presenting petitions cannot exceed one hour.
- Debate is not permitted on any matter on or in relation to the petition.
- A Member will be recognized once to present a petition.
- No more than one petition on a subject may be presented orally per day.

Endorsement by Member

- Every Member that presents a petition must sign the front page of the petition.

Reading and Receiving Petitions

- Once a petition has been presented, it will be reviewed by the Clerks-at-the-Table. If it is found to be in order, it will be formally recorded "read and received" the following day in the *Votes and Proceeding* (official record of the Assembly). During Routine Proceedings, the Assembly will be orally advised of any petition that is found to be irregular. Petitions that are found to be irregular in form or content, or is a breach of the privileges of the Assembly, will be rejected and the Assembly so advised. Petitions that are rejected are returned to the Member who presented them.

Government may Respond to a Petition

- The government may respond to any petition that has been read and received.
- Responses to petitions shall be tabled at the designated time after Routine Proceedings.

Petitions are Public Documents

- Petitions that have been read and received become a sessional paper and are considered public documents.

Examination of Petitions

- All petitions that have been received, including the names of those who have signed them, may be examined by the public in the Office of the Clerk. Please contact (306) 787-2279.

Historical Records

- A petition will be retained in the sessional records of the Legislative Assembly and subsequently form part of the historical archives of the Province.
- Petitions that are not “read and received” by reason of the prorogation or dissolution of the Assembly will not be included as part of the public record.

5. Extract from *The Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*

Filing of petitions	16(1) A petition to the Assembly may be submitted by a Member at any time during the sitting of the Assembly by filing it at the Table.
Oral presentation	16(2) Any Member desiring to present a petition from his or her place in the Assembly may do so during Routine Proceedings at the period designated Presenting Petitions.
No debate permitted	16(3) The period for Presenting Petitions is subject to the following conditions: (a) The period is not to exceed one hour. (b) No debate on any matter on or in relation to the petitions is permitted. (c) A Member will be recognized only once to present a petition. (d) No more than one petition on a subject may be presented during the period.
Form of petition	16(4) The form and content of every petition shall: (a) be addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, the Government of Saskatchewan, a Minister of the Crown or a Member of the Assembly; (b) contain a clear, proper and respectful prayer in reference to matters within the legislative competence of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan or the jurisdiction of the Government of Saskatchewan, (c) be proper for the prayer to call for the expenditure of public funds; (d) be written, typewritten or printed on paper of usual size; (e) be free of alterations and interlineations in its text; (f) have its subject matter and prayer indicated on every sheet if it consists of more than one sheet of signatures and addresses; (g) contain only original signatures and addresses written directly onto the petition and not pasted thereon or otherwise transferred to it; and (h) contain at least three signatures from persons other than Members of the Legislative Assembly who are residents of the Province of Saskatchewan and, where the signatories have a fixed place of residence, their addresses.
Responsibility for content	16(5) Members who present or file a petition shall be answerable that they do not contain impertinent or improper matter.
Endorsement of petitions	16(6) Every Member presenting a petition shall endorse his or her name thereon.
Reading and receiving	16(7) The Clerk shall examine the form and content of all petitions. On the sitting day following the presentation or filing of a petition, the Clerk shall report on the same if it is irregular or contains a matter in breach of the privileges of the Assembly. If no such report be made, the petition shall then be deemed to be permitted to be read and received.
Recording of petitions	16(8) Petitions that are read and received shall be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings as a sessional paper.
Government may respond to petition	17(1) The government may provide a written response to any petition that has been read and received. A response to a petition may be made on any sitting day during the session that the petition is read and received.
Response to be tabled and recorded in Votes and Proceedings	17(2) Responses to petitions shall be laid on the Table at the designated time after Routine Proceedings. The response shall be recorded as part of the sessional record in the Votes and Proceedings.

6. Sample petitions

Sample #1

Petition to the Government of Saskatchewan

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

The citizens of Saskatchewan are concerned with the potentially dangerous situation arising in our health care system as a result of the shortage of doctors and nurses.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan:

To take the necessary steps and actions to improve timely access to medical treatment .

Dated: _____

Name (print)

Address (print)

Signature

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Sample #2

Petition to the Government of Saskatchewan

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

The state of highways in Saskatchewan.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan:

To take the necessary steps and actions to improve the highways in Saskatchewan.

Dated: _____

Name (print)

Address (print)

Signature

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____