

GENERAL PETITION GUIDELINES FOR PRESENTING TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

A general petition (differing from a petition for a private bill) may be prepared and brought to the attention of the Legislative Assembly by either a private individual(s) or organization. It should be noted however, that any petition intended to be presented to the Legislative Assembly **must** be presented by one of its elected Members (MLA).

The right of petitioning the Manitoba Legislative Assembly does not extend to non-residents of Manitoba.

A petition must be drafted to conform to several provisions in order to be accepted by the Legislative Assembly (refer to Rule 132 of the *Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceeding of the Legislative Assembly* and chapter 22 – Public Petitions of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*). If even one of these conditions is not met, the petition will be ruled out of order.

In order to ensure that the petition is drafted and presented in an acceptable form, it is **essential** that the provisions and guidelines governing the preparation and presentation of any such petition be strictly adhered to. These provisions and guidelines are set out below to assist those wishing to present petitions.

PREPARATION OF PETITIONS

Form and Format:

A specific format must be followed in preparing a petition (see Appendix "A"). A petition consists of three basic components: the "address", the "body" and the "request". In particular, the following should be carefully noted (see example attached):

- (a) petitions must be addressed, "To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba", and these words are to appear as the beginning line of the petition;
- (b) the "body" should consist of paragraph(s) (worded in the third party), briefly summarizing the problem or grievance and any necessary background information as are necessary for the petition;
- (c) the "request", is the **remedy** or **action** sought by the petitioners. A simple declaration, address of thanks or listing of grievances is unacceptable.

The form of a petition may be:

- (a) handwritten;
- (b) typewritten; or
- (c) printed.

Whatever form is utilized, it **must** be free from erasures, insertions or deletions. There may be no attachments to the petition, whether in the shape of a letter, affidavit or any other document. Information contained in any such document, which a petitioner(s) desires be made known, should be contained in the "body".

Content:

Of more significance however, is the content of the information and action sought. A petition may not contain any impertinent or improper material. In particular, a petition may not:

- (a) use disrespectful language, contain any disrespect to the Queen or offensive imputations to the Legislative Assembly, the Courts or any other constituted authority;
- (b) express any opinion regarding the House, the Government or positions taken by MLAs;
- (c) contain statements which constitute charges of a strong nature against a Minister or any senior official;
- (d) deal with a matter over which the Legislative Assembly has no jurisdiction;
- (e) consider matters that have been delegated to another body by the Legislative Assembly; or
- (f) under any circumstances, call for the direct expenditure of money.

To avoid confusion in determining whether a petition may be unacceptable for any of the above reasons, the "body" and "request" should be worded as concisely and clearly as possible.

Execution:

Finally, the petition must be signed properly. A minimum of 15 signatures is required for the completion of the petition. The following is a list of acceptable criteria's:

- (a) all names and addresses must be legible;
- (b) if more than one page is required for signatures of petitioners, the subject matter of the petition must be indicated on each page;
- (c) the reverse side of petitions can be used for signatures, provided that the action the Legislative Assembly is being asked to take or not take appears on the top of the reverse side of the page.
- (d) check marks, ditto marks or similar wording are acceptable for address designations;

As to the signatures themselves, they must be original and not copied, pasted or otherwise transferred, and no one person may sign on behalf of another or on behalf of a group.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

MLA must Sponsor:

Citizens may not petition the House directly – their petition must be presented by an MLA. It should be noted that the Speaker is precluded from presenting petitions (in order to avoid any conflict between constituents and having to rule a petition unacceptable). The Speaker may, however, recommend the services of another MLA.

The MLA designated to present the petition to the Legislative Assembly must sign at the top corner the front page and not as an additional petition signature.

Presentation and Reading:

The process for presentation to the Legislative Assembly is as follows:

- (a) The petition must be filed with the Clerk or the Journals Clerk at least **24 hours** before the MLA wishes to present it.
- (b) An MLA may present only **one** petition each day to the House.
- (c) The Speaker will examine each petition to ensure that it complies with these Rules and conforms to the practices and privileges of the House. If the Speaker is satisfied, the MLA's name will be printed on the next day's Order Paper under "PETITIONS". If the Speaker is not satisfied, the petition will be returned to the MLA.

NOTE: If the guidelines for preparing the petition are carefully followed, no difficulty will be encountered.

- (d) On the day on which the petition is to be presented, it will be placed on the MLA's desk in the House with an "instructional script" attached.
- (e) When the Speaker calls that item during Routine Proceedings, the MLA may present the petition from his or her place in the House by reading the full text of the petition and the names of the first three petitioners.

NOTE: When the MLA reads the petition, it is deemed to be received by the House.

- (f) There is no debate on a petition.