

# Guide to Initiative Petition Canvassing

## **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.

## **Do I have the right to 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.

## **Do I have the right to 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 a 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 online, by phoning 1-800-661-8683 or by visiting the Elections BC office. The voter must provide their former name and current name when updating their registration.

## **Voter FAQs**

### **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, residential 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?**

You will need to provide:

- your name,
- your residential address, and
- your signature.

You will also be asked to provide a phone number, but this is optional.

## **Why am I asked 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 also 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. You may update your voter registration online or by phoning 1-800-661-8683.

The address you provide on the initiative petition must match your address on the Provincial Voters List.

## **I'm a registered voter 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. You may update your voter registration online or by phoning 1-800-661-8683.

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](mailto:electionsbc@elections.bc.ca)  
**Website:** [www.elections.bc.ca](http://www.elections.bc.ca)



## Introduction

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

When an initiative petition is issued by the Chief Electoral Officer, the proponent has 90 days to collect signatures of 10% of the registered voters in every electoral district in British Columbia. The proponent may be helped by volunteers when canvassing for signatures.

After the petition sheets are submitted, the CEO has 42 days to verify that enough valid signatures have been collected. If the requirements are met, the CEO sends a copy of the petition and draft Bill to a Select Standing Committee of the Legislature.

The Committee must meet within 30 days of receiving the initiative petition and has 90 days to consider the proposal. The Committee must either recommend the draft Bill be introduced in the Legislature or refer it to the CEO for an initiative vote.

## Who may canvass for signatures

Canvassers must be registered voters in B.C.

To register to vote, you must be:

- a Canadian citizen,
- at least 18 years old, and
- a resident of B.C. for the past six months.

To become a canvasser, contact the proponent of the initiative petition. The proponent will coordinate recruitment of volunteers, manage the canvasser application process and forward canvasser applications to Elections BC.

### All canvassers must be approved by Elections BC prior to collecting signatures.

Signatures gathered by unregistered canvassers will not be accepted during the initiative verification process.

## Responsibilities of the canvasser

Canvassers **must**:

- witness every signature they collect
- be volunteers
- canvass only during the initiative period. Canvassing is not permitted after the close of the petition period, regardless of whether or not the full 90 days has elapsed.
- attach the petition cover sheet to the petition sheets while canvassing
- carry the identification card issued by Elections BC and produce it upon request
- inform signatories of the eligibility requirement. Signatories must be registered voters in the electoral district for which they sign a petition.
- ensure the petition sheets are signed in ink on the pre-printed side
- collect only residential addresses from signatories. Mailing addresses will not be accepted.
- submit only valid petition sheets with original signatures. Photocopies will not be accepted.

Canvassers **must not**:

- leave petition sheets unattended
- allow voters to sign a petition more than once
- alter, in any way, the cover sheet and petition sheets provided. Only signatures gathered on copies of the official petition sheets will be considered for petition verification purposes. Signatures gathered on other forms or sheets will not be accepted.
- knowingly make any false or misleading statements about the petition or the subject of the petition
- draw a diagonal line across the unsigned portion of a page or make any unnecessary lines or marks on petition sheets
- remove, cross out or interfere with a signature on a petition
- accept initiative contributions of money, goods or services unless appointed in writing as an assistant financial agent to the proponent
- make petition sheets and voters lists available for scrutiny by the public. These documents contain personal information and must be protected.
- use information obtained while canvassing for signatures for any purpose not authorized by the *Recall and Initiative Act* or any Regulation, including information contained in the voters list.

## 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, and
- the individual must sign the petition sheet for the electoral district in which they are registered at the time of signing.

## Canvasser FAQs

### 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.

### 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 be approved as a canvasser by Elections BC.

Contact the petition proponent to become a canvasser.

### 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 be approved as a canvasser with Elections BC.

### Can I canvass for more than one initiative petition?

Yes, but you will need to submit a separate canvasser application for each initiative petition. Contact the petition proponent to become a canvasser.

### 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.