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## **Referral of Initiative to a Select Standing Committee**

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If the verification shows that sufficient signatures are on the petition, and the financing requirements have been met by the proponent, the Chief Electoral Officer will send a copy of the initiative petition and draft Bill to the Select Standing Committee on Legislative Initiatives.

The Select Standing Committee must meet within 30 days of receipt of the petition and draft Bill. From their first meeting, the Committee has 90 days to consider the legislative proposal and either table a report recommending introduction of the draft Bill, or refer the initiative to the Chief Electoral Officer for an initiative vote.

After a Bill is introduced in the Legislature, the requirements of the *Recall and Initiative Act* have been satisfied, and any subsequent readings, amendments and passage of the Bill will proceed as with any other Bill.

## **Initiative Vote**

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If an initiative vote is required, a vote will be held on September 27, 2008, and on the last Saturday of September in every third year after that date. If more than 50 percent of the total number of registered voters in B.C. and more than 50 percent of the total number of registered voters in at least two-thirds of the electoral districts in the province vote in favor of the initiative, the government must introduce the Bill at the earliest practicable opportunity.

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## **Financing and Advertising**

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There are detailed provisions in the *Recall and Initiative Act* regarding the disclosure and limits of expenditures and financial contributions permitted during the initiative petition process and during an initiative vote.

Contributions to initiative proponents and opponents are not eligible for income tax receipts.

Initiative advertising can only be conducted by a proponent, registered opponent, or a registered initiative advertising sponsor.

It is very important that participants comply with the legislation. Non-compliance can result in significant penalties.

*For more information*

### **Elections BC**

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# **The Initiative Process in British Columbia**



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## Overview

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The *Recall and Initiative Act* allows voters to petition to have a proposed new law or an amendment to an existing law introduced in the Legislative Assembly.

A legislative proposal (or draft Bill) can be on any matter within the jurisdiction of the Legislature of B.C.

## The Application Process

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A registered voter who wants to start an initiative petition must obtain an application from the Chief Electoral Officer. A completed application consists of a fully completed and signed application form, a copy of the draft Bill, and a non-refundable \$50 processing fee. The draft Bill must be written in a clear manner.

## Approval in Principle

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If the application and draft Bill meet the requirements of the *Recall and Initiative Act*, the Chief Electoral Officer notifies the applicant (the “proponent”) that approval in principle will be granted and that a petition will be issued 60 days later. Approval in principle of an application is officially granted at the time a Notice of Petition is published in the British Columbia Gazette. Notice is also published in daily newspapers throughout the province.

## Opponent Registration

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An individual or organization who wishes to oppose an initiative may apply to the Chief Electoral Officer within 30 days after the day on which notice is published in the Gazette.

The Chief Electoral Officer appoints the financial agent for opponents and opponent groups from the names they propose. An opponent or opponent group must not act as such until given notice by the Chief Electoral Officer that they are registered and that an individual has been appointed as financial agent.

## Initiative Petition

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Sixty days after notice is published in the Gazette, the Chief Electoral Officer issues to the proponent a cover sheet and an original petition sheet for each electoral district. An initiative petition must be signed within 90 days from the date on which it is issued.

## Canvasser Registration

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A proponent may be helped by volunteers to gather signatures. The volunteers are called “canvassers.” Canvassers must be registered voters and must have been a resident of British Columbia for at least six months before the date on which they intend to begin canvassing. Registered voters may apply to be canvassers any time after the petition application has been submitted to the Chief Electoral Officer.

## Collecting Signatures on the Petition

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The *Recall and Initiative Act* requires that an initiative petition be signed by 10 percent of the registered voters in each of the electoral districts of the province.

An initiative petition can only be signed by a registered voter who was registered to vote on the date the petition was issued. A person may only sign the petition signature sheet for the electoral district in which they are a registered voter at the time of signing. A signature on the petition must be accompanied by the residential address of the individual who signed and must be witnessed by the individual who canvassed the signature (a registered canvasser). Individuals may only sign an initiative petition once.

## Submitting Petitions

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The proponent must submit, at one time, all of the signed petition sheets to the Chief Electoral Officer. The petition period ends when the proponent submits the petition to the Chief Electoral Officer, regardless of whether the full 90 days have elapsed. If the petition is not submitted within 90 days, it fails.

## Petition Verification

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When a petition is submitted, the Chief Electoral Officer has 42 days to complete the verification process. The registration status of the voters who signed the petition is verified to ensure that the people who signed the petition were entitled to do so. Petition lines that do not include the residential address of the voter who signed the petition will not be counted. The registration status of canvassers is also verified to ensure that signatures were gathered by authorized individuals. Voters who signed the petition may also be contacted by Elections BC during the verification process to ensure the validity of the signatures.