

Citizen Initiative Act – Summary of Changes

July 4, 2025

Summary of amendments to the *Citizen Initiative Act* contained in Bill 54: *Election Statutes Amendment Act*.

Terminology changes

- Signature sheet definition adjusted to reflect changes to sections 3 and 9, which removed the different thresholds for legislative or policy proposals and constitutional referendum proposals (s.1).

Application for issuance of initiative petition

- A citizen initiative proposal cannot be the same or substantially similar to a proposal determined to be the subject of an unsuccessful referendum or unsuccessful citizen initiative vote in the previous 5 years (s.2(5)(a)). The remainder of section 2(5) is unchanged.
- Sections 2(10) and 2(11) removed regarding questions to the Court and replaced with s.2.1(1).

Question to the Court

- The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) may, in considering a citizen initiative application, state a question in the form of a special case to the Court seeking the opinion of the Court as to whether the proposal conforms with the requirements of section 2(3), being an application with respect to a legislation proposal must not exceed the jurisdiction of the Legislature, and section 2(4), being an initiative petition proposal must not contravene section 1 to 35.1 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* (s.2.1(1)).
- The CEO will provide written notice to the applicant and to the Minister of Justice within 7 days of stating the question, and the clerk of the Court will set the hearing date to be within 10 days (s.2.1(2)).
- The applicant may appear and participate in the proceeding (s.2.1(3)).
- The CEO must state a question no more than 30 days after the elector applied for the initiative petition (s.2.1(4)).

Determination period

- No later than 30 days after the date on which an elector applied or on which the Court gives its decision, if the requirements above have been met, the CEO must determine if the requirements in section 2 have been met. (s.2.2).

Issuance of initiative petition

- If the CEO is not satisfied the requirements have been met, the CEO will reject the application and notify the applicant of the rejection and the reasons for the rejection (s.3(1)).
- If the CEO is satisfied the requirements have been met, the CEO will notify the proponent within 7 days of the date of determination and publish a notice of initiative petition to be issued on the Elections Alberta website. This notice will include the application and statement provided by the proponent (s.3(2)).
- If the CEO is satisfied the requirements for a chief financial officer have been met, the CEO will issue the initiative petition 7 days after the date on which the notice of initiative petition is published (was previously 30 days) (s.3(3)).
- The CEO will issue an initiative petition and signature sheets for use in obtaining electors' signatures (s.3(4)).
- The CEO will publish the total number of signatures required for an initiative petition to succeed (s.3(5)).

Eligibility to sign an initiative petition

- All signatures must be collected within the 120-day initiative petition signature period (was previously 90 days) (s.4(4)).

Submitting signature sheets, threshold requirements

- For the petition to be successful, the applicant must collect signatures equal to at least 10% of the total number of votes cast in the previous provincial general election (was previously 10% of the total number of electors on the post-election day list of electors for a legislative or policy proposal, and at least 20% of the total number of electors on the post-election day list of electors, with the 20% threshold met in at least 2/3 of electoral divisions for a constitutional referendum proposal) (s.6(2)).

Continuation if an electoral division is disestablished or changed

- Removed, as votes and number of electors in individual electoral divisions no longer part of the required signatures calculations.

Determination, time limit

- The CEO must verify the petition within 21 days of the date the petition was submitted. (was previously 60 days) (s.10).

Unsuccessful initiative petition

- The CEO may publish the actual or estimate total number of votes cast in the previous general election and whether the number is actual or estimated (s.11(3)(b)).

Successful initiative petition

- The CEO may publish the actual or estimate total number of votes cast in the previous general election and whether the number is actual or estimated (s.12(2)(b)).

Duties re policy proposal

- A referendum must be held on or before the fixed date of the next provincial general election. If that date is less than one year after the date the report recommending the referendum is tabled for policy proposals, the referendum must be held before the general election following the general election. (s.15).

Duties re constitutional proposal

- A referendum must be held on or before the fixed date of the next provincial general election. If that date is less than one year after the date on which the Minister receives a copy of the constitutional referendum proposal, the referendum must be held before the provincial general election following the next provincial general election. (s.16).

Initiative vote

- The provisions of the *Election Act* governing general elections apply to the conduct of an initiative vote, except as specified by order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council and subject to any regulations made under this Act (s.18(3)).
- An initiative vote must be held on or before the fixed date of the next provincial general election. If that date is less than one year after the date the initiative vote recommendation report is tabled, the referendum must be held before the provincial general election following the next provincial general election (s.18(3.1 and 3.2)).

Contributions and expenses

- Contributions can only be accepted from individuals ordinarily resident in Alberta, a corporation other than a prohibited corporation, or an Alberta trade union or Alberta employee organization (was previously only persons ordinarily resident in Alberta) (s.20(2)).
- Contribution limits to a proponent apply to individuals and organizations (s.20(3)).

Regulations – initiative petition contributions and finances

- The Lieutenant Governor may make regulations prescribing the total amount of all contributions by a person or organization to a proponent or related to initiative petition (s.23(2)(e)).

Judicial review

- The *Election Act* and *Election Finances and Contributions Act* apply with respect to an application for judicial review, subject to this section and the regulations (s.53.(1)).

Administrative penalties

- The *Election Act* and *Election Finances and Contributions Act* apply with respect to administrative penalties, subject to this section and the regulations (s.66.(0.1)).



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