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## REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

### Office of the Chief Electoral Officer File No.:

ECRS-RFI-16-0395

#### Title:

Special Ballot Voting  
Enhancement (SBVE)

#### Date:

February 3, 2017

#### Closing Date and Time:

February 20, 2017 – 2:00 P.M. EST

### ENQUIRIES

[supplier@elections.ca](mailto:supplier@elections.ca)

#### Attention:

**Ron Shaheen**  
Team Leader  
Procurement and Contracting  
Services

#### Tel No.

819-939-1489

### RESPONSES

SUBMIT RESPONSE VIA EMAIL TO:

[supplier@elections.ca](mailto:supplier@elections.ca)

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**Annex A – Questions and Response template**

## REQUEST FOR INFORMATION Special Ballot Voting Enhancement (SBVE)

### PART 1. Background and Purpose

#### 1.1. Background

The 42nd general election was successfully delivered in much the same manner as elections for the past century. Embracing the spirit of continuous improvement and innovation, Elections Canada seeks opportunities to improve service to Canadian electors. To this end, Elections Canada has created the Voting Services Modernization (VSM) project to improve voting services. The launching of this project is contingent upon amendments to the *Canada Elections Act*. The scope of the project includes streamlining processes and leveraging technology that could be employed when an elector seeks to cast their vote.

VSM is considering the following areas of focus:

- (a) The “In-Person” voting experience at Polling Stations
- (b) The voting experience for absentee voters under Special Voting Rules (SVR) legislation
- (c) Future voting technologies

Elections Canada, in order to enhance the voting experience for absentee voters under Special Voting Rules (SVR), is exploring solutions for the design and development of electronic ballot delivery for absentee voters. The Chief Electoral Officer tabled a recommendation report in September 2016 proposing to allow for electronic ballot delivery<sup>1</sup>. As previously stated, this would require amending the *Canada Elections Act*. Therefore, as a preliminary fact-finding activity, Elections Canada is interested in obtaining information regarding the technology, procedures, instructions and processes suppliers have to offer for the electronic delivery of absentee ballots.

VSM is an appropriate response to a changing world. With technology changing our daily lives and expectations, there is an opportunity to improve the election experience for all stakeholders.

#### 1.2. Purpose

Elections Canada is seeking feedback from suppliers on solutions to potentially implement an electronic ballot delivery solution for absentee voters.

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<sup>1</sup> SBVE requires enabling legislation that is dependent on the adoption of the A19 recommendation included in the CEO recommendation report tabled in September 2016: “Notably, it is recommended that electors who apply online for their special ballot be permitted to download an electronic copy of the ballot, which they could print, complete, insert in a double envelope and return to Elections Canada for counting. This would mean that these electors would not have to wait for a special ballot kit by mail, thereby increasing the likelihood that their ballots will reach Elections Canada on time to be counted”.

Elections Canada is issuing this RFI to:

- A. Provide an equal opportunity for suppliers that may be interested in supplier engagement with Elections Canada;
- B. Validate solution concepts that could assist Elections Canada in further defining requirements;
- C. Identify requirements/strategy, and should legislation be enabled, develop planning, and solicitation documents;
- D. Refine the procurement strategy, project structure, timelines, requirements definition, and other aspects of the requirement; and
- E. Become a more "informed buyer" with an enhanced understanding of supplier goods and service offerings.

### **1.3. EC Mandate**

Elections Canada, headed by the Chief Electoral Officer, an agent of Parliament, is an independent, non-partisan agency with unique organizational features that reports directly to Parliament. Elections Canada exercises general direction and supervision over the conduct of elections and referendums at the federal level. Its mandate is to:

- a) be prepared at all times to conduct a federal general election, by-election or referendum;
- b) administer the political financing provisions of the *Canada Elections Act*;
- c) monitor compliance with electoral legislation;
- d) conduct public information campaigns on voter registration, voting and becoming a candidate;
- e) conduct education programs for students on the electoral process;
- f) provide support to the independent commissions in charge of adjusting the boundaries of federal electoral districts following each decennial census;
- g) carry out studies on alternative voting methods and, with the approval of parliamentarians, test alternative voting processes for future use during electoral events; and
- h) provide assistance and cooperation in electoral matters to electoral agencies in other countries or to international organizations.

## **PART 2. Nature of Request for Information**

This is not a solicitation. This RFI will not result in the award of any contract and no source list will be created. As a result, potential suppliers of any goods or services described in this RFI should not reserve stock or facilities, nor allocate resources, as a result of any information contained in this RFI. Therefore, whether or not any potential supplier responds to this RFI, it will not preclude that supplier from participating in any future procurement. Also, the procurement of any of the goods and services described in this RFI will not necessarily follow this RFI. This RFI is simply intended to solicit feedback from industry with respect to the subject matter described herein and should not be considered as an authorization to undertake any work that would result in costs being charged to Elections Canada. Elections Canada reserves the right to accept or reject any or all comments received. Further respondent engagement may be conducted by Elections Canada which may include, but is not limited

to, supplier engagement days, one-on-one meetings, product demonstrations, vendor presentations, requesting additional information from respondents, etc.

### **PART 3. Nature and Format of Responses Requested**

Respondents are requested to provide their comments, concerns and, where applicable, alternative recommendations regarding how the requirements or objectives described in this RFI could be satisfied. Respondents are also invited to provide comments regarding the content, format and/or organization of any draft documents included in this RFI. Respondents should explain any assumptions they make in their responses.

### **PART 4. Response Costs**

Elections Canada will not reimburse any respondent for any overhead costs or expenses incurred in responding to this RFI.

### **PART 5. Treatment of Responses**

#### **5.1. Use of Responses**

Responses will not be formally evaluated. However, the responses received, may be used by Elections Canada to develop or modify procurement strategies or any draft documents contained in the planned RFP. Elections Canada will review only responses that have been received by the RFI closing date. Elections Canada may, at its discretion, review responses received after the RFI closing date.

#### **5.2. Review Team**

A review team composed of representatives from Elections Canada will review the responses. Elections Canada reserves the right to hire any independent consultant, or use any government resources that it considers necessary to review any response. Not all members of the review team will necessarily review all responses.

#### **5.3. Confidentiality**

Respondents should indicate any portions of their response that they consider proprietary or confidential. Elections Canada will handle the responses in accordance with the Access to Information Act.

#### **5.4. Follow-Up Activity**

Elections Canada may, at its discretion, contact any respondents to follow up with additional questions or for clarification of any aspect of a response or for one-on-one meetings.

### **PART 6. Official Languages**

Responses to this RFI may be submitted in either of the official languages of Canada, French or English.

## **PART 7. Information Requested by Elections Canada**

### **7.1. Responses to Questions to Industry**

This RFI includes an attached Annex A that consists of questions which respondents can respond to. Respondents are invited to provide information by populating sections in the table in Annex A where they wish to provide a response to. Respondents are not obligated to completing all sections in the table; only those they choose to respond to.

Additional supporting documents may be sent to [supplier@elections.ca](mailto:supplier@elections.ca) by the closing date and time identified on the cover page of this document.

The content of this RFI is at a preliminary stage and respondents should not assume that new clauses or requirements will not be added to any solicitation that may ultimately be published by Elections Canada. Nor should respondents assume that none of the clauses or requirements will be deleted or revised.

## **PART 8. Volumetric Data**

The data is being provided to respondents purely for information purposes and may not form part of any contract resulting from any procurement process related to this RFI, as the case may be. Although it represents the best information currently available, Elections Canada does not guarantee that the data is complete or free from error. Respondents may decide in their sole discretion whether or not to take this information into consideration in preparation for their responses. Respondents may also decide in their sole discretion how to interpret and use this information during their response preparation. Consequently, Elections Canada is not responsible or liable in any way for the accuracy and integrity of such data.

## **PART 9. Format of Responses**

Respondents are invited to complete any or all sections of Annex A of the RFI with details of products and services that could be of interest. For additional or supporting documents sent by email, please respond as follows:

### **9.1. Cover Page**

If the response includes multiple volumes, respondents are invited to indicate on the front cover page of the response the title of the response, the RFI number, the number of volumes and the full legal name of the respondent.

### **9.2. Title Page**

The first page of each volume of the response should be the title page, which should contain:

- a) the title of the respondent's response and the volume number;
- b) the Legal name and address of the respondent;
- c) the name, address, telephone number and email address of the respondent's contact;
- d) the date; and
- e) the RFI number.

### 9.3. Numbering System

Respondents are requested to prepare their response using a numbering system corresponding to the one in this RFI. All references to descriptive material, technical manuals and brochures included as part of the response should be referenced accordingly.

## PART 10. Enquiries

This is not a solicitation, therefore Elections Canada will not necessarily respond to enquiries. However, respondents with questions regarding this RFI may direct their enquiries to the Contracting Authority via the email address identified on the cover page of this document.

## PART 11. Submission of Responses

### 11.1. Time and Place for Submission of Responses

Respondents interested in providing a response should complete any or all sections of Annex A with details of products and services that could be of interest and submit any additional or supporting documents to the Contracting Authority via the email address and by the closing date and time identified on the cover page of this document.

### 11.2. Responsibility for Timely Delivery

Each respondent is solely responsible for ensuring its response is delivered on time to the correct location, and to the correct email address (if applicable).

### 11.3. Identification of Response

Each respondent should ensure that its Legal name, contact address and email address, the RFI number and the closing date of this RFI are included in their response.

## PART 12. Business Vision

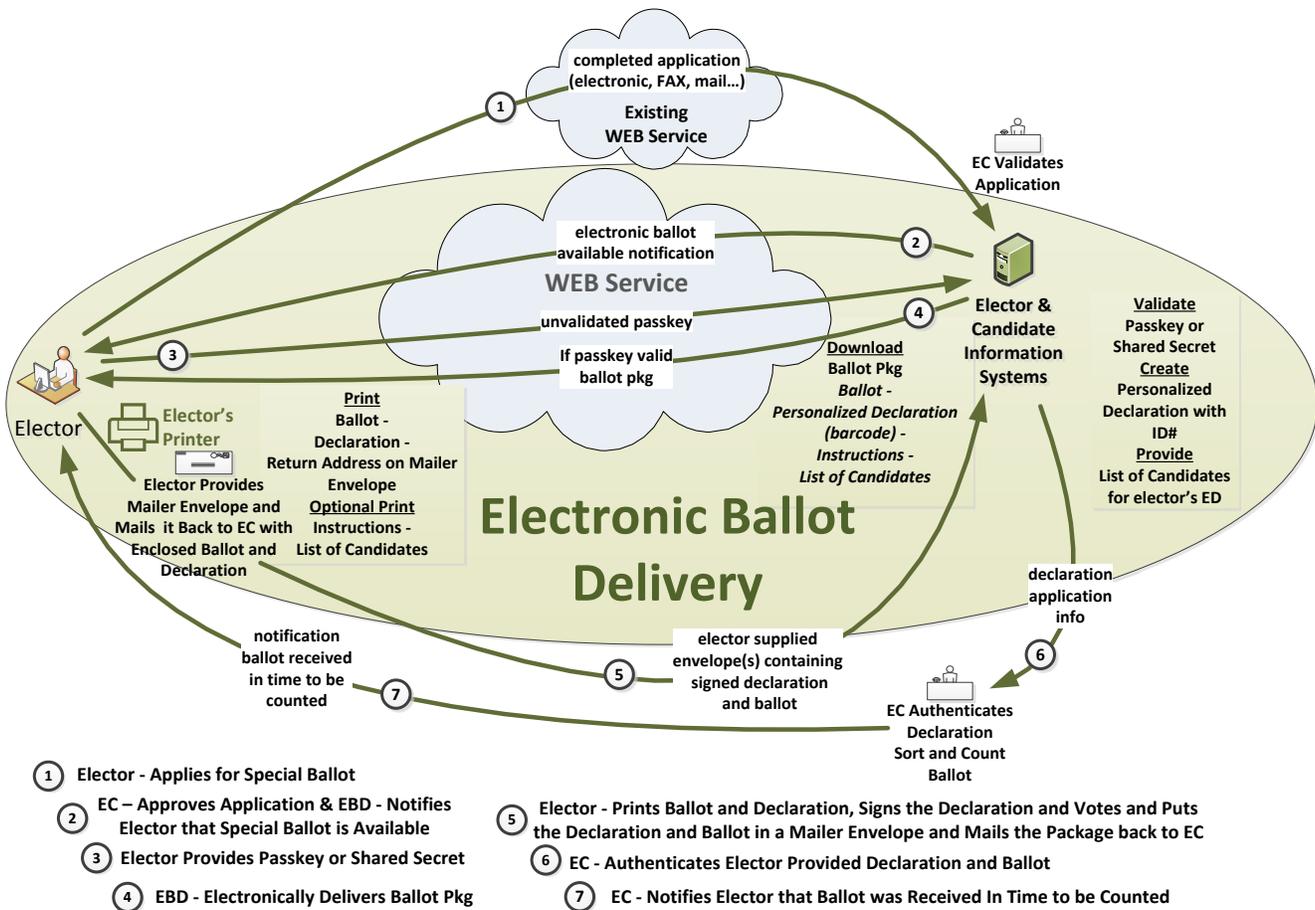
As part of the Voting Service Modernisation, the Special Ballot Voting Enhancement (SBVE) project will improve the delivery of special ballots to electors that apply to vote by mail.

### 12.1. Terminology and Definitions

Term	Definition
Absentee voter	A voter who votes by mail
Declaration form	Elector must sign to indicate s/he has not/will not vote(d) anywhere else during the election and that their name is as stated on the declaration form
Elector & Candidate Information System	Repositories of elector information, including tombstone and address(es), in a central location
Electronic Ballot Delivery	An absentee ballot delivered via email link to an elector upon submission of passkey or shared secret
Inner Envelope	Contains marked ballot and is placed in the outer envelope (with declaration) & the mailer envelope (current procedures)

Mailer Envelope	Used to send the inner envelope containing an elector's marked ballot and signed declaration back to ECHQ.
Outer Envelope	Has Declaration and contains the inner envelope (current system)
Passkey or Shared Secret	Elector must provide in order to validate registration and obtain ballot
Special Ballot	An absentee ballot
Special Ballot Voting Enhancement	The project to improve the means by which an elector may vote by special ballot in making it more efficient and accessible
Special Voting Rules	Program that governs voting by special ballot (Part 11 of the <i>Canada Elections Act</i> )

## 12.2. SBVE Business Process with Electronic Ballot Delivery



The following describes the business situation, should legislation be enabled, that would allow for electronic ballot delivery:

We need to be able to provide the elector with a web service that enables them to upload the information that will be used to provide them with voting instructions, a special ballot kit, a declaration and once the candidates are confirmed on the 19<sup>th</sup> day before election day a list of the candidates in their electoral district.

We need the elector to authenticate themselves by providing a passkey or shared secret information that, once validated, will enable the elector to select and download their electronic ballot package.

We require our special ballot “look and feel” along with the respective candidates for the electoral district of the elector that contains but is not limited to “a place to write in the name of the candidate being voted for”.

We require a declaration that is uniquely identifiable, supplied by our system of record and contains the following business information:

- “the declaration form that the elector must sign that they agree with”
- “the date that the declaration was issued to the elector”
- “the unique identifier that identifies the declaration for the voter”
- “a place for the elector to put their signature”

We need a declaration form that can be folded in such a manner that it is separate from the special ballot but protects the secrecy of the special ballot.

We need a solution that uses standard 8½ by 11 printer paper that the elector can print both the special ballot and the declaration form.

We need to provide the elector with the return address that their special ballot kit (declaration and Inner envelope) will be mailed back.

Other Considerations:

Volumetrics – At the 42nd GE some 50,000 voted by mail.

Security and Privacy

Language - The solution imperatively needs to be bilingual where the elector must be able to toggle between French and English.

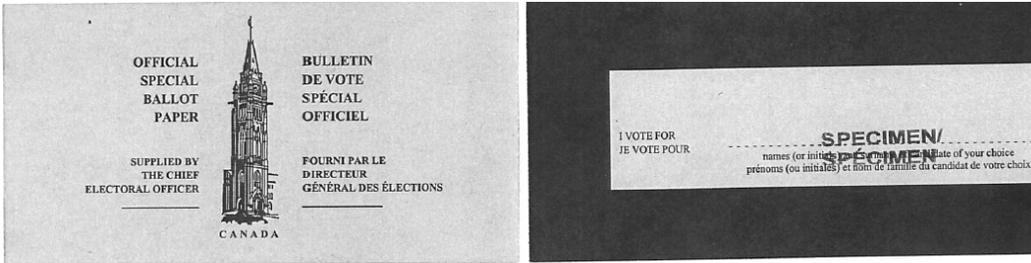
Accessibility – The solution must meet the Government of Canada Web Accessibility Standard WCAG 2.0 accessibility standards<sup>2</sup>. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), which is part of the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), and is administered by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

Business analytics and intelligence – the solutions would need a dashboard with statistics, key performance indicators, self-service querying and reporting oftrend analysis, threshold analysis and searchable data

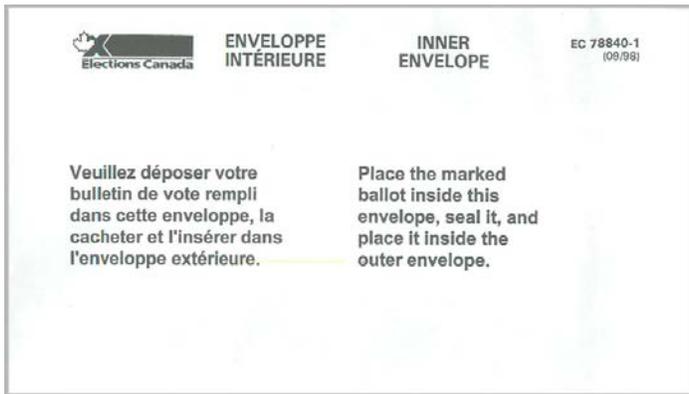
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<sup>2</sup> The objective of this standard is to ensure a high level of Web accessibility is applied uniformly across Government of Canada websites and Web applications. <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=23601>

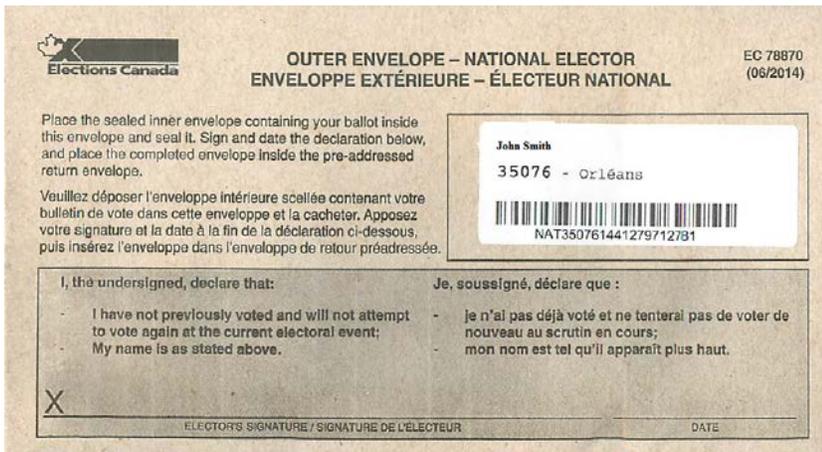
**Current mail-in Special ballot and declaration:**



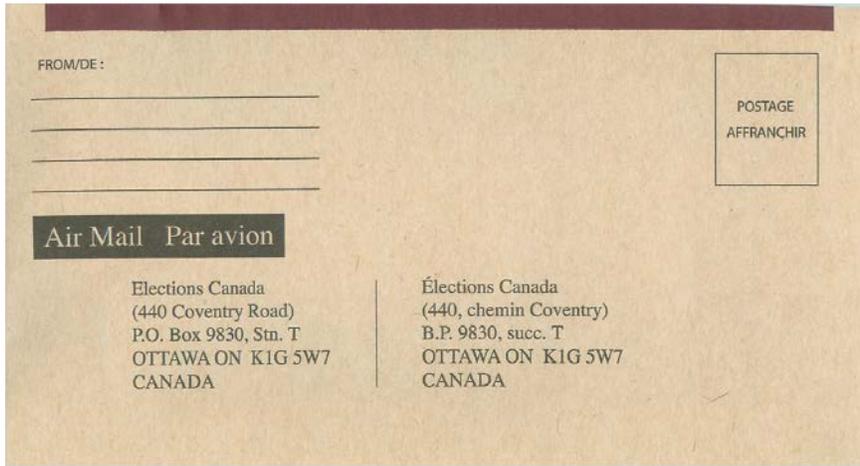
**Current Special Ballot, Front and Back**



**Inner Envelope**



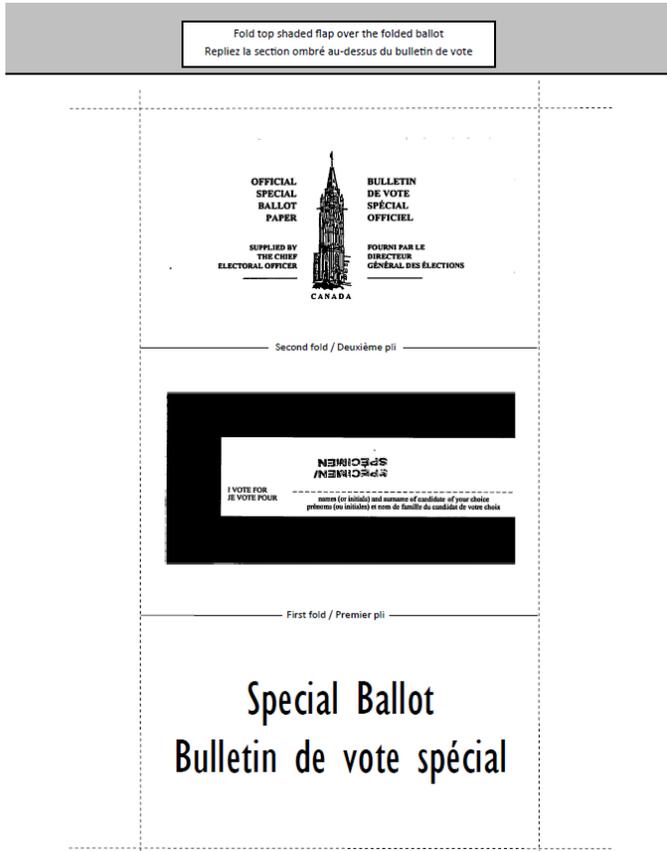
**Outer Envelope (including declaration)**



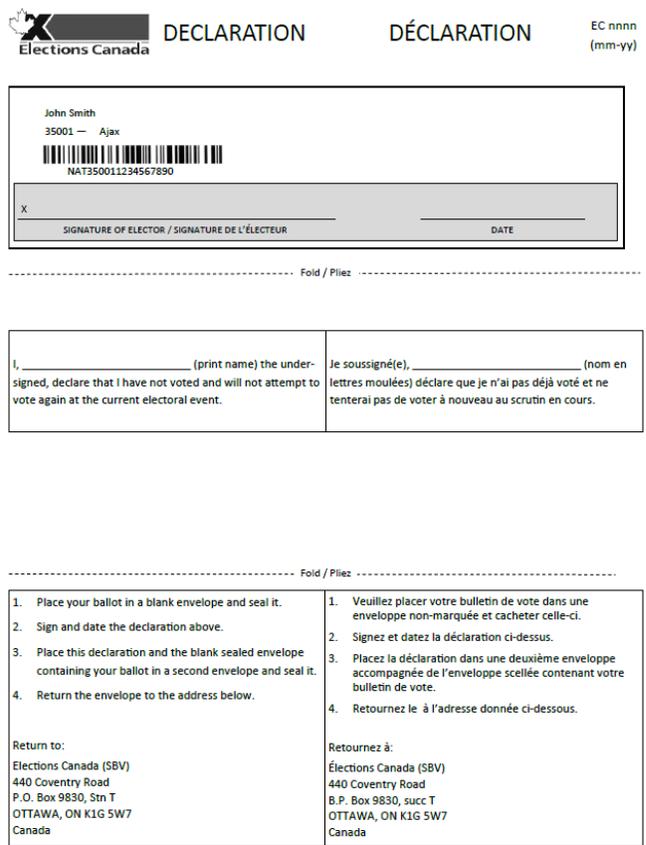
**Mailing Envelope – Front**

**12.3. Proposed mail-in Special ballot and declaration**

Note that other mock-ups are in development and focus groups will be done to confirm design.



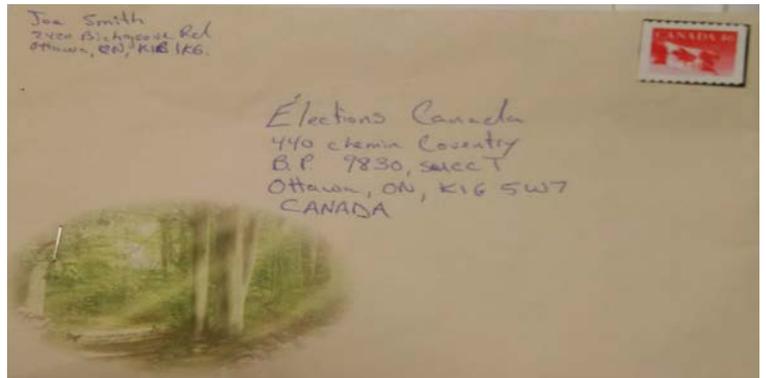
Special Ballot



Declaration



Inner Envelope



Mailing Envelope

## Annex A – Questions and Response Template

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Please answer the questions below and add any information regarding your related products and/or services, that may be of interest.

No.	Question	Response
1	What Electronic Ballot Delivery Products and Services do you offer?	
2	Do you offer a hosted managed service (i.e. SaaS)? If so, where is it hosted?	
3	Which jurisdictions currently use your product and/or services?	
4	Can you provide a sample of your electronic absentee ballot 'kit'? (eg. portal screenshots, template emails, template ballots, etc.)	
Voter experience		
5	Please describe the process as to how a voter may request and receive an electronic ballot ? (Portal, email, etc.)	
6	How are the user instructions typically provided to the voter?	
7	Does your product support multiple languages	

	(e.g. Canadian French and English)?	
8	Can the Electronic Ballot be printed locally by the voter? If so, is the voter able to complete the ballot electronically, prior to printing?-	
9	Which adaptive technologies used by voters with disabilities can be leveraged with your solution? Please provide examples.	
10	Is your solution compliant with the W3C – WCAG 2.0 <sup>3</sup> accessibility standard? Please indicate which other accessibility standards that your solution may be compliant with.	
11	What is the voter electronic ballot authentication process?	
12	What support services are available to voters for your products and/or services? Do you provide this support to the voters?	
Volume		
13	In a given election, what is the largest number of voters that have used your electronic ballot delivery solution?  Was the solution limited to particular groups of	

<sup>3</sup> The objective of this standard is to ensure a high level of Web accessibility is applied uniformly across Government of Canada websites and Web applications.  
<https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=23601>

	voters? (e.g. Voters with disabilities, overseas voters, )	
14	How does your system scale to meet increased demand?	
Pricing Model		
15	How are your products and services costed?	
16	What are your Maintenance and Support cost models?	
Technical		
17	What are your products' traceability, audit and reporting capabilities?	
18	Do you offer implementation professional services? If so, what is typically provided?	
19	What are the technology requirements (capacity, IT infrastructure elements/versions) to operate your product/solution?	
20	What Identity and Access Method (IAM) does your product use to authenticate users? Can it be integrated with an existing IAM implementation?	
21	What data exchange standards and methods does your product support?	

Elections Canada is also exploring the ability to automatically sort ballots received from absentee voters. As part of the implementation of Electronic Ballot delivery solutions, you may have had some experience in this business area. Please provide some possible considerations in the design of the Electronic Ballot delivery forms to support automated ballot sorting.

No.	Question	Response
22	What features of your product support the automated handling and sorting of ballots received by regular mail?	