



— BACKGROUND —

Assistive Voting Device

Elections Canada is testing an assistive voting device that will allow electors with disabilities to mark their ballots independently and in secrecy. The pilot project will take place during the November 29, 2010, federal by-election in the electoral district of Winnipeg North. Elections Canada will evaluate the success of this pilot and will inform Parliament of the results.

What is an assistive voting device?

The assistive voting device assists electors in marking a ballot; it does not store information or count votes. This device will be available at the advance polls on November 19, 20 and 22, and at the local Elections Canada office from November 14 to 23, in the electoral district of Winnipeg North. Other voting methods are still available – the assistive voting device simply provides one more option to electors.

The device provides the following accessibility features, which makes it especially suitable for electors with visual impairments or limited dexterity:

- a tactile controller with Braille buttons
- a sip-and-puff attachment that allows voters to select options using their breath
- rocker paddles
- audio with volume and speed control to hear choices through headphones
- a high-contrast screen with text that can be made bigger

The device also has an audio and/or visual review function to confirm the choice of candidate before printing the ballot. It is also compatible with cochlear implants.

How does it work?

To cast a ballot using the assistive voting device, electors first select the language and accessibility features they want to use. The device will provide visual and/or audio instructions.

When the elector is ready, the device will display and/or speak the candidates' names. The elector will then use the input method of his or her choice to select a name. The device will display and/or speak the name of the elector's chosen candidate, giving the elector an opportunity to confirm his or her selection.

A printer attached to the assistive voting device will mark a regular ballot, which will then be placed in the ballot box.

At the close of polls, officials will count ballots according to Elections Canada's usual process. Ballots marked by the assistive voting device will be indistinguishable from those marked by hand.