

Submission to the House of Commons Special Committee on Electoral Reform

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Introduction

_____The current electoral system in Canada, First Past the Post (FPTP), has been deemed by the government to be an inadequate electoral system and as such has looked to implement a new electoral system. In order to determine the best system to replace FPTP, its main attributes, which should remain part of our system and the negative attributes that should be changed, must be identified. The main benefits of FPTP are strong regional representation, and a single member responsible to constituents. The main issues with FPTP, the alienation of the majority of the electorate leading to voter apathy, strategic voting, and what is essentially a lack of representation in the House of Commons. The issues with FPTP can be very clear; in the past two elections majority governments were formed with 39.5% of the vote in 2015 and 39.6% in 2011. This issue can also be seen in 1926 and 1896 where the party forming government won the most seats while not receiving the highest portion of the popular vote. Thus the system that replaces FPTP should contain strong regional representation, a single member responsible to constituents, and representation in the House that more closely reflects the vote.

Mixed Member Proportional Representation

_____A Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMPR), provides the advantages of FPTP, while returning a much more representational Parliament. Under the MMPR system, there would be two votes, one towards an individual candidate that would represent the riding in the House of Commons the other vote would be for the party. This would mean that a certain number of seats would be set aside and would be given to the party based on the percentage of

votes they received on the second ballot. A MMPR system would allow for a more proportional representation in the House of Commons ensuring that every vote was counted even if the candidate voted for at the local riding level did not win. Using MMPR would also ensure that regional representation was maintained as well as having a single representative responsible to constituents. Having regional representation in Canada is important as the needs of southern Ontarians are different than those of rural New Brunswick, or the West Coast, thus having a voice in Parliament for those regions is important. Secondly, having a MP directly responsible for a constituency allows Canadians to direct appeal to a Member. This can be extremely helpful in ensuring Canadian voices are heard and that Parliament remains accessible as well as accountable. The major change that would occur under MMPR are the allocated seats based on proportional representation. These seats would be distributed based on the percentage of popular vote a party received, for example in the past election the Liberal Party would have received 39% of allocated seats. There are a number of benefits to the proportional representation it would ensure that minority or smaller parties would have a greater chance at being represented, such as the Green Party. This change could result in voters from strategic voting to select the party that most closely represents their beliefs, ensuring a better representation of Canadian values and ideologies in Parliament. Furthermore, by ensuring that every vote has an effect on the result, it ensures a more representative Parliament but also a more fair and legitimate Parliament.

Conclusion

First Past the Post has become an inadequate system that returns majority parliaments that are not representative of the Canadian people. In many cases majority governments that will govern for all Canadians were chosen by only 40% of the populace alienating the remaining 60%. It has become necessary to change the current system to one more representative of the

electorate. While FPTP offers regional representation and a single member responsible for a constituency, it is not truly representative, therefore a system that contains regional representation and MP responsible, but is much more representative is required. The Mixed Member Proportional Representation system offers the benefits of FPTP while also creating a more representative Parliament. Under MMPR a single member would be elected for a constituency that would represent that riding in Parliament ensuring that the regional diversity in Canada is represented. Furthermore, a constituency MP would be easily accessible to the constituents and thus retaining the openness of Parliament. The system would also allocate seats based on the percentage of the popular vote ensuring that every vote counted, this would increase the minority opinions in the House of Commons as well as ensure that the diversity of Canadian ideals are represented. By ensuring that every vote is counted and has an effect on the outcome of the election, Parliament will become more legitimate and representative of the Canadian electorate.