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I would like to begin by stating that I believe Canada should adopt an Additional Member System (AMS), also known as Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMP), for federal elections. Specifically, an electoral system that allows citizens to vote for a candidate within their regional constituency, which will use the traditional First-Past-The-Post system (FPP), and for the party of their choice that will be based on proportional representation. This would provide voters with a system that maintains the importance of regional cleavages while improving the proportional representation of the political views of Canadians.

Canada's current electoral system of FPP has multiple weaknesses that need to be addressed. Firstly, the FPP system's focus on regional candidates chosen through a plurality of votes has the consequence of wasted votes and strategic voting. This electoral system leads to wasted votes because the votes and opinions of individuals who did not vote for the winning candidate are discarded. This becomes especially problematic when a candidate wins by a slim majority because it means a large number of political opinions are not being represented and included in the House of Commons. As a consequence, voters are deterred from voting. Those who believe their candidate is not going to win will choose to not vote or feel dissatisfied after voting since their democratic participation has not been a useful endeavour. Voters who are not deterred by these faults may instead decide to vote strategically. An example, in the most recent election many individuals chose to vote for the Liberals instead of the NDP to prevent a splitting of the left vote, which could result in the election of a Conservative candidate. This has significant implications on Canada's democracy, as our electoral system currently pushes citizens to not voice their true opinions or elect the individual they feel best represents their political view, but vote for the purpose of preventing an undesired candidate from winning. The process of elections should be centered on citizens identifying and voting for representatives they feel best reflects their views and will give them a voice in the House of Commons.

FPP's focus on regional constituency has also influenced political parties, as parties do not need a majority of votes but a concentration of votes in specific ridings. As a consequence, political parties tailor their platforms to fit specific regions and disregard others, which causes regional tensions in Parliament as political parties become affiliated with certain areas. This problem becomes further magnified with FPP's tendency to create inflated majorities. Although majority governments can provide stability, when combined with regionally focused parties it creates an imbalance between regions. Party's strong connection with its regional base deters political parties from creating policies that benefit all regions, which reinforces regional tensions as those not included in this regional base are disregarded. Canada's strong party discipline only exacerbates this problem, since it limits the ability of Members of Parliament to vote based on

the needs of their constituency but instead with the overall party. This has also led to many arguing that Canada's adherence to party discipline has even diminished the importance of constituency and one's local Member of Parliament, as the Party leader's specific views and policies become more and more prominent. Lastly, due to the creation of larger majority governments, opposition and third parties are weakened and render ineffective even if they received a decent amount of public support during the election. For example, in the 1993 federal election, the Conservative Party received about 16% of the popular vote, which translated into only 2 seats, however, in the same election the Reform Party won 52 seats by only receiving 18% of the popular vote, just 2% higher than the Conservatives. This disproportion is a significant flaw, as it not only reinforces the previous argument concerning wasted votes and strategically voting, but also rewards parties for concentrating on specific regions and disadvantages parties that support policies with greater national reach and whose electoral support is dispersed across regions. Canada needs an electoral system that will more accurately reflect the political views and opinions of Canadians and will not disadvantage parties that are more nationally oriented.

As a result of these faults, in my opinion, the Additional Member System is a better fit for Canada compared to our current system and other electoral systems. This is because AMS involves a combination of regional constituencies, closed party lists, and the inclusion of proportional representation. Although I previously pointed out the problems associated with regional divisions, due to Canada's expansive territory, regional enclaves are significant and must be evenly represented in the House of Commons. Proportional representation does not guarantee regional representation, as it disconnects Members of Parliament from territorial ridings and gives the power of regional representation to political parties. The consequence of this is that parties may decide to not evenly include candidates from all regions on their party lists. This could be due to lack of support in specific regions or desire to put star candidates at the top of the party list for example. AMS guarantees that all regions of Canada are included in the Parliament through the maintenance of constituencies.

Furthermore, the AMS also improves the flaws of the FPP system, such as wasted votes, strategic voting, and unfairness towards third parties. This is because it allows voters to not only vote for their preferred candidate but also their preferred party. All party votes are collected separately and proportionally allocated to parties who did not receive enough seats to accurately reflect their percentage of the popular vote. Therefore, by simply including a party vote third parties are no longer hindered by dispersed support, individuals' votes are no longer wasted if their candidate does not win, and citizens can still vote for their preferred party since plurality is no longer the main focus. In addition, the second vote is also an incentive for regionally focused political parties to adopt more national policies, as across country support will become increasingly advantageous. Further, candidates from predetermined closed party lists will fill seats won through the party vote. Closed party lists can be very beneficially, since parties are

able to put forth candidates that reflect population differences that tend to not be well represented through the candidate vote, such as gender, language, ethnicity, and race. Lastly, the argument against proportional representation is that it allows for small radical or extremist parties to gain seats in the House of Commons. In response, I would suggest a party threshold of 7% of the popular vote to be included for the party vote. Although Canada does not currently have radical or extremist parties, including this threshold is proactive as well as helps define what constitutes a political party in Canada. Therefore, due to the multiple faults of the First-Past-The-Post system, I believe Canada should adopt the Additional Member System, also known as Mixed Member Proportional representation, for its federal elections.