



PROS & CONS OF DEMOCRACY:

from a Canadian critical historical perspective

By Cathy Tong, Rockridge Secondary School (Class of 2029)

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DEMOCRACY

What is “democracy” to Canada and its citizens in history?

A	1867	British North American Act, Dominion of Canada; independence from Britain & national representation, voting & fundamental rights restricted to propertied men
B	1920	Dominion Elections Act; voting rights amended to include white women (as well as the right to contest elections), minorities remained excluded
C	1960	Indigenous Suffrage; voting rights granted to First Nations without being forced to give up status & identity

DEMOCRACY

What is “democracy” to Canada and its citizens today?

Representative Democratic Government

Members of Parliament are elected to represent the beliefs of the citizens

Erosion in public confidence in democratic & institutional transparency & accountability

Rights of Citizens

Protected freedoms (freedom of speech, religion, & equal protection) under the Constitution

Continuous marginalisation within economic, social, & criminal justice systems

Duties of Citizens

Legal & civic responsibilities (obeying the law, environmental protection, etc.)

Civic illiteracy & misdirected blame to level of government, information pollution & disinformation

PROS OF DEMOCRACY

Institutional Protections

Canadian Charter of
Rights & Freedoms, the
Rule of Law

Counter-Hegemonic Struggle

Peaceful adaptation
involving social and
political movements

Creation of Public Goods

Welfare state reform,
universal healthcare, public
pension safety nets

Federal Pluralism

Representative diversity
in Parliament, regional
linguistic identities (e.g.
Quebec)

Mitigation of Extremism

Party discipline,
brokerage politics,
security frameworks



CONS OF DEMOCRACY

Political & Economic
Illiteracy

Vulnerability to
Demagogues

Risk of Ochlocracy &
Plutocracy



Short-termism

Illusion of Choice &
Majoritarianism