

Consensus Confusion: The 2019 Northwest Territories General Election

APPSA Presentation

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Presentation Outline

- Consensus Government and Elections in the Northwest Territories (NWT)
- 18th Legislative Assembly
- Retirements
- Campaign Finance
- Representation of Women
- Incumbency and Acclamations
- Voter Turnout and Alternative Voting Methods
- Post-Election - The 2019 Territorial Leadership Committee
- Conclusions

Consensus Government and Elections in the Northwest Territories (NWT)

- Northwest Territories operates a non-partisan form of government known as "consensus government"
- Fixed elections the first Tuesday of October every 4 years
- Uses a single-member plurality electoral system
- 19 electoral districts
- Following the election, the Premier and cabinet are selected by the MLAs through a process known as the Territorial Leadership Committee



18th Legislative Assembly

2015 NWT Election saw an
influx of new MLAs
elected:



Retirements

- Several notable MLAs retired following the 18th Assembly
- 5 total retirements, 3 cabinet ministers and 2 regular members, including Premier Bob McLeod
- Most retirements since 1995



Campaign Finance

- Relatively low costs of campaigning
- Maximum budget of \$30,000
- Individual and business donations capped at \$1,500



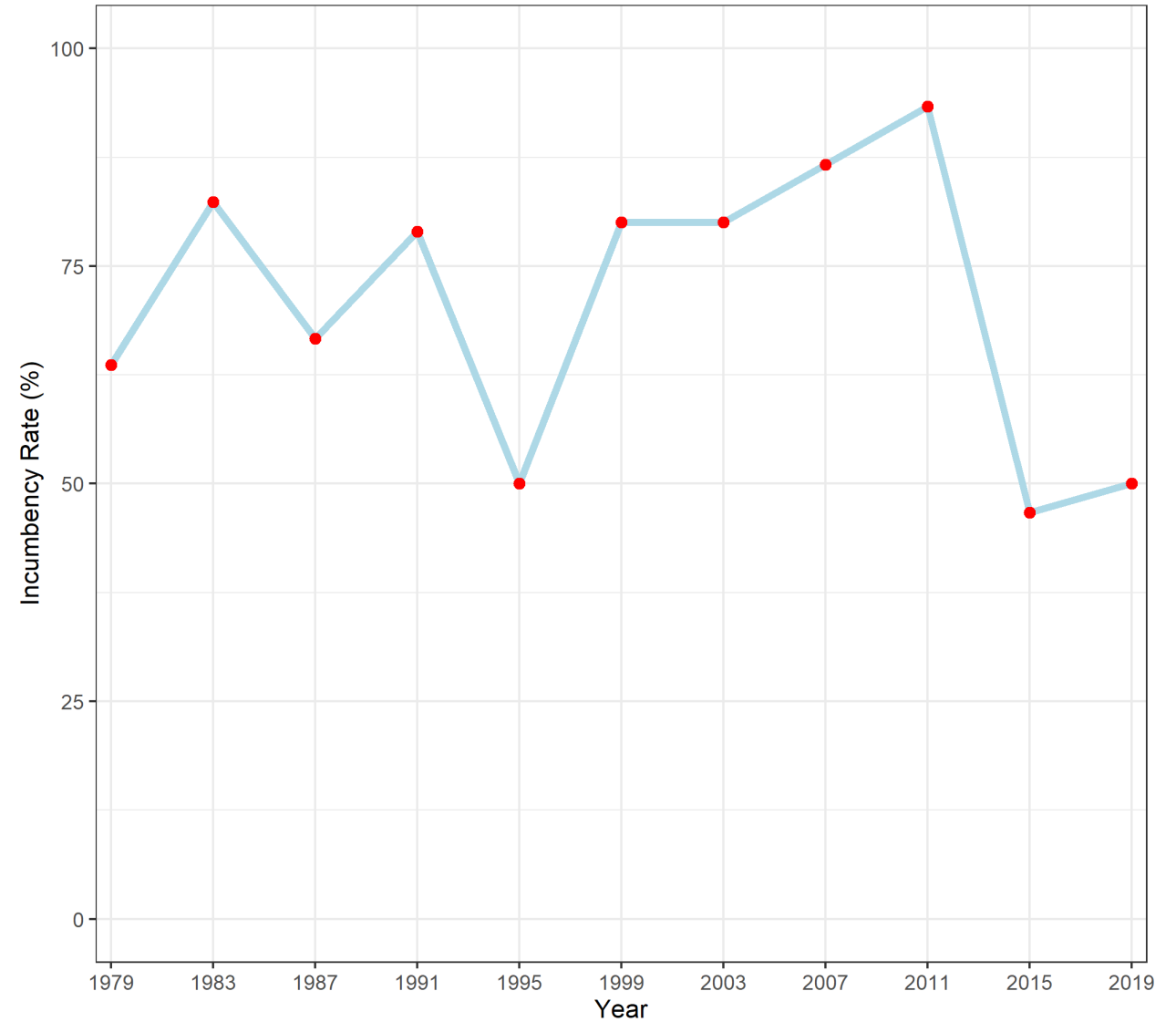
Representation of Women

- Representation of women in the NWT Legislative Assembly was a key issue in the 18th Assembly and leading up to the 2019 Election
- 18th Assembly had the lowest percentage of women MLAs in a Canadian legislature
- Efforts by the GNWT and MLAs to increase representation of women through a special committee and diversity initiatives
- Notable breakthroughs for women in municipal and Indigenous government elections in the years preceding 2019

Assembly (Years)	Number of Women MLAs	Percentage
14 th (1999-2003)	2	10.05%
15 th (2003-2007)	2	10.05%
16 th (2007-2011)	3	15.79%
17 th (2011-2015)	2	10.05%
18 th (2015-2019)	2	10.05%
19 th (2019-present)	9	47.37%

Incumbency and Acclamations

Incumbency Rates in the NWT
1979 to 2019



Source: <https://www.electionsnwt.ca/official-voting-results>

Voter Turnout and Alternative Voting Methods

- Voter turnout typically highest in smaller communities.
- However, 2019 saw some improvement in turnout, particularly among young voters.
- To remedy low turnout, online voting was introduced for the 2019 Election
- Issues with transparency and security of online voting were shared by critics

Simply✓**voting**



Rylund Johnson for Yellowknife North ¹⁰⁰ support this. I am going to vote for myself online in bed in my pajamas out of principle because I have been saying this should happen for years.

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2019 Territorial Leadership Committee



- The Territorial Leadership Committee (TLC) met on October 19, 2019.
- Premier selected via secret ballot, with four MLAs vying for the position
- Caroline Cochrane elected as Premier via secret ballot.

Conclusions

- The years leading up to the 2019 NWT Election presented a window of opportunity for political change in the territory
- The trend of declining incumbency rates persisted
- Questions whether these trends will continue in future elections
- Areas for future research



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