

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

AN EQUAL VOICE PROVINCE SNAPSHOT, 2026

Northwest Territories (N.W.T.) has had two women serve as premier and was the first province or territory in Canada to achieve gender parity in its legislature in 2021, with at least half of its MLAs being women. The N.W.T. Legislative Assembly currently seats 19 members, of which 8 are women (42.1%). N.W.T.'s last election took place in November 2023.



Population
45,803



Female to Male
48.9% : 51.1%



GDP
\$3.9+ billion

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The N.W.T. has a unicameral legislature, with one chamber: the **Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly**. As a parliamentary democracy, the Northwest Territories has 19 constituencies which are each represented by an elected **Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA)**.

The Northwest Territories uses a **consensus government** system, in which there are no political parties, and all MLAs are elected as independents. After a general election, MLAs select from among themselves a **Premier** and Cabinet Ministers, who form government.

The **Commissioner of the Northwest Territories** is appointed by the Government of Canada and represents the federal government in the territory.

MILESTONES

1970

Lena Pedersen was the first woman to be elected to the N.W.T. Council, a body which later became the N.W.T. Legislative Assembly.

1991

N.W.T. was the first Canadian territory to be led by a woman premier with Nellie Cournoyea. Cournoyea was also the second woman to serve as premier in all of Canada, after Rita Johnston in B.C.

1995

Helen Maksagak was the first woman to serve as Commissioner of the N.W.T.

1999

The former N.W.T. was divided into two territories - Nunavut and a new N.W.T.

2021

N.W.T. became the first Canadian province or territory to have a women-majority legislature, with 10 women MLAs out of 19 (52.6%)



CURRENT EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATION

(as of Mar 2025)

Premier: R.J. Simpson (M)
Assumed office: 8 Dec. 2023

7 Cabinet Members
4 women (57.1%) : 3 men (42.9%)

Notable portfolios currently held by women:

- Deputy Premier
- Infrastructure
- Industry, Tourism, & Investment
- Finance
- Health & Social

CURRENT LEGISLATURE

(as of Mar 2025)

19 MLAs total
8 women (42.1%) : 11 men (57.9%)



COMMISSIONERS

(as of Mar 2025)

18 Commissioners since 1905
3 women : 15 men

Current Commissioner:
Gerald W. Kisoun (M)

PAST PREMIERS

(as of Mar 2025)

13 Premiers since 1980
2 women : 11 men

Nellie Cournoyea, 14 Nov. 1991 - 22 Nov. 1995
Caroline Cochrane, 24 Oct. 2019 - 8 Dec. 2023