

“Premiers and Development Policies in Newfoundland and Labrador, 1949 to 2009.”

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The research is intended to lead to the writing of a book and/or articles about the nine men who have served as Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador since Confederation with Canada in 1949, with a particular emphasis on the four who, it will be argued, have had the most impact on development: Joey Smallwood, Brian Peckford, Clyde Wells and Danny Williams. The focus is mainly on a comparative description and analysis of each premier’s approach to economic and social development for the province.

The research and analysis will be based on three main sources:

1. Secondary materials, including books, articles and newspaper accounts of each premier’s activities and pronouncements.
2. Drawing on the researcher’s own experience and records accumulated while working in a senior public service position for three of the premiers (Peckford, Wells and Williams) as well as an earlier interview with Smallwood about his approach to development.
3. Interviews with former and current premiers, cabinet ministers and senior public servants, as well as leaders in other spheres over the years (business, labour, academia and the community sector).

The objectives of the project include the following:

- 1) To describe, compare and contrast the leadership styles of each of the premiers, especially Smallwood, Peckford, Wells and Williams.
- 2) To examine various themes which characterize the approaches taken by each, for example in the way in which he dealt with the federal government.
- 3) To analyse each premier’s approach to economic development in terms of how it was influenced or informed by various theories of development, such as the modernization, dependency and new economy approaches.
- 4) To draw some conclusions about each of the theoretical perspectives in terms of how well they inform and are informed by the Newfoundland and Labrador case.
- 5) To make some general observations about the nature of politics in Newfoundland and Labrador since Confederation, for example with respect to the differences between the two main parties and the differences between populist and business leaders.
- 6) To use the case study material as a basis for arguing that leadership is an understated phenomenon in political sociology.