

NEWS RELEASE

Living standards declining in nearly one in five First Nation communities in Canada

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For Immediate Release

CALGARY—Despite billions of dollars in government spending, nearly one of every five First Nation communities in Canada has experienced a decline in living standards since 2001, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“For decades, governments in Canada have poured money into First Nation communities in an effort to improve the quality of life, and yet many communities have seen their living standards decline,” said Tom Flanagan, Fraser Institute senior fellow and author of [*Gaining Ground, Losing Ground: First Nations’ Community Well-Being in the 21st Century*](#).

The study—based on the latest Community Well-Being Index (CWB) published every five years by Statistics Canada, which includes measures of income, health and education—finds that nearly 20 per cent of First Nation communities in the country experienced a drop in CWB scores from 2001 to 2016, the latest year of data.

The most dramatic declines were in remote communities in northern parts of Ontario, the Prairies and British Columbia. Many of these communities have very little economic activity and thus rely more heavily on government assistance than other First Nations.

Conversely, First Nation communities with improving living standards (as measured by the CWB) have significant levels of economic activity through business ventures such as real estate and natural resource development.

“In some First Nation communities, the suffering of the people is getting worse, so if their leaders want to turn things around, they should look to other more successful First Nations communities for ways to create economic activity and thus raise living standards instead of continuing to rely on government,” Flanagan said.

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