

NEWS RELEASE

Majority of Atlantic Canada and Quebec had low employment incomes in 2019

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HALIFAX— Most CMAs in Atlantic Canada and Quebec are in the bottom half of Canada’s 41 CMAs for median employment incomes in the country in 2019—the last year unaffected by COVID—while energy-centred census metropolitan areas (CMAs) rank high, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Metropolitan areas across Canada vary greatly in their employment incomes, but some regions and types of CMAs fair better than others,” said Ben Eisen, a senior fellow with the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Comparing Median Employment Incomes in Canada’s Census Metropolitan Areas*.

The study measures median employment income—wages, salaries and commissions from paid and net self-employment income before taxes and government transfers—across Canada’s 41 census metropolitan areas for the year 2019, the last year unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

CMAs containing capital cities are heavily concentrated at the top of the ranking of higher income CMAs. In fact, of the ten highest income CMAs, five include either a federal or provincial capital.

The Ottawa-Gatineau CMA topped the list at \$45,500, followed by Edmonton (\$45,470), Calgary (\$43,870), and Regina (\$43,760). Other CMAs connected to the energy sector also ranked high, including Red Deer, AB at 6th (\$42,000), St. John’s, NL at 7th (\$41,360), Saskatoon, SK (12th at \$39,940) and Lethbridge, AB (13th at \$39,470).

Conversely, Census Metropolitan Areas in Quebec (excluding Quebec City at 8th) and Atlantic Canada generally ranked low, with median employment incomes in Montreal, Moncton, NB and Saint John, NB falling below the national average of \$36,960.

The lowest median employment income of Canada’s 41 CMAs was \$31,540 in St. Catharines-Niagara, ON.

Despite variation, most of the CMAs in Atlantic Canada and Quebec are in the bottom half of Canada’s 41 CMAs. The only three exceptions, Halifax (16th), St. John’s (7th), and Quebec City (8th), are provincial capitals.

“Capital cities across Canada rank very high when it comes to employment incomes, as do cities connected to Canada’s energy sector, while many urban areas in southwestern Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic Canada continue to underperform,” Eisen said

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