



NEWS RELEASE

Ottawa's \$5.7 billion in 'specific claim' settlements fails to improve First Nations living standards

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For immediate release

CALGARY—The federal government has paid nearly \$6 billion over the past four decades to hundreds of First Nations in Canada to settle “specific claims” linked to historical treaties, but there has been no corresponding increase in living standards among those recipient First Nations, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think tank.

Notably, First Nations that have settled past claims receive a score of 59.2 on Statistics Canada's Well-Being (CWB) index, which measures living standards using income, employment, housing, and education indicators. First Nations that have not settled past claims and have not received any “specific claims” settlements have the exact same CWB score.

“The evidence is clear—resolution of past historical claims does not help improve the current or future living standards for First Nations in Canada,” said Tom Flanagan, Fraser Institute senior fellow, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Calgary and author of *Specific Claims and the Well-Being of First Nations*.

The study reveals details about “specific claims,” which are filed by First Nations who claim that Canadian governments—past or present—violated the Indian Act or historic treaty agreements, such as when governments took reserve land for railway lines or hydro projects. Most “specific claims” date back 100 years or more.

As of November 2017, Ottawa has settled 450 specific claims, totalling \$5.7 billion in payouts in current dollars. This figure does not include the value of any land given to a First Nation as part of any settlement, or any additional payments from provincial governments. Roughly 530 other claims remain in the investigatory, negotiation or litigation stage.

“Specific claims are for past treaty breaches, and as such, their number is finite. But instead of declining over time, the number of claims keeps growing as lucrative settlements are reached, which in turn prompts even more claims,” Flanagan said.

“Ottawa should set a deadline for filing specific claims so that the government and First Nations leaders could focus instead on programs that would do more to improve the living standards and prosperity for both current and future Indigenous peoples,” Flanagan said.

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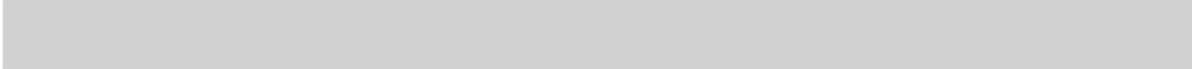
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