

## The Fraser Institute of Canada: Current Status, Operational Mechanisms, and Development Trends (Postprint)

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Through in-depth analysis of the operational mechanisms and development trends of the Fraser Institute of Canada, this study provides references for the construction and development of think tanks in China. [Method/Process] Using literature research and web-based investigation methods, it summarizes the development history, value concepts, and operational mechanisms of the Fraser Institute of Canada. Simultaneously, based on internationally authoritative global think tank ranking reports, it analyzes the focus areas and development trends of the Fraser Institute. [Results/Conclusion] As Canada's leading think tank institution, the achievements of the Fraser Institute of Canada in numerous fields such as education, healthcare, taxation, environment, energy, and economics are closely related to its unique organizational structure, operational mechanisms, and development philosophy.

### Full Text

## The Current Situation, Operation Mechanism, and Development Trends of the Fraser Institute in Canada

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This paper provides a deep analysis of the operation mechanism and development trends of Canada's Fraser Institute, offering valuable references for the construction and development of think tanks in China. [Method/Process] Through literature review and web-based research, this study traces the development history of the Fraser Institute and summarizes its

value concepts and operational mechanisms. Concurrently, based on authoritative global think tank ranking reports, it analyzes the institute's focus areas and development trends. **[Results/Conclusion]** As Canada's premier think tank, the Fraser Institute's achievements across numerous domains—including education, healthcare, taxation, environment, energy, and economics—are closely related to its unique organizational structure, operational mechanisms, and development philosophy.

**Keywords:** Fraser Institute; think tank; operation mechanism; development trends

**Classification Number:** C931.5

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## Introduction

Founded in 1974 and named after the Fraser River, the Fraser Institute is Canada's leading think tank. Headquartered in Vancouver with branch offices in Calgary, Toronto, and Montreal, the institute ranked first among Canada's 100 think tanks and 21st among 7,815 top-tier think tanks worldwide according to the *2017 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* released by the University of Pennsylvania on January 30, 2018 [?]. As an independent, non-partisan, and non-political organization, the Fraser Institute's mission is to improve the quality of life for Canadians, their families, and future generations by researching, measuring, and broadly communicating the effects of government policies, business innovations, and decision-making on people's well-being. Its research spans education, healthcare, taxation, environment, energy, economics, and other fields. Through the Economic Freedom Network, it also leads a global network of over 100 like-minded organizations across 93 countries and regions.

This study examines the Fraser Institute as a case study, using literature and website investigations, with the *2017 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* and the institute's annual reports as primary sources, to systematically review its current development status and trends. The aim is to provide insights for building new types of think tanks with Chinese characteristics.

## Historical Development

In the early 1970s in Canada, there was widespread consensus that government decision-making represented the best approach to meeting Canadians' economic and social needs. This view was shared across all major political parties, the public service, academia, media, and even portions of the business community. Patrick Boyle, a financial planner at McMillan & Company, began contemplating how to most effectively communicate to the public the important role that markets play in economic development [?]. He envisioned establishing an economic and social research organization distinct from any existing Canadian institutions [?]. Boyle believed this new type of organization should be able to conduct independent economic and social research and disseminate its findings

to policymakers and the public, thereby providing better options for decision-makers while stimulating public demand for sound policies. In early 1974, with support from J. V. Clyne, Boyle secured seed funding for the organization's establishment and obtained \$75,000 in income.

Boyle began working closely with economists Michael Walker from the University of Western Ontario, Csaba Hajdu, John Raybould, and Sally Pipes from Vancouver, among others, with the mission of measuring, researching, and publicizing the impact of competitive markets and government intervention on individual welfare [?], following the philosophy of carefully applying economic laws to determine effective economic policies in specific contexts. After reaching consensus, on October 21, 1974, the Fraser Institute's charter was approved by the Canadian government.

## 2.2 Institutional Development

Since its founding, the Fraser Institute has been recognized by the Canadian federal government as a charitable educational organization and began operations in Vancouver, receiving recognition as a U.S. charitable organization in 1978. Sir Antony Fisher was appointed Acting Executive Chairman in 1975, and in 1977, Michael Walker succeeded Sir Fisher as Executive Chairman, serving until Mark Mullins took over in autumn 2005. In April 2012, economist Niels Veldhuis was appointed Executive Chairman [?], with Peter Brown as Board Chairman.

After more than 40 years of development, the Fraser Institute has grown from its founding to become Canada's top think tank, thanks to the exceptional talent, innovative ideas, and extraordinary vision of its members, as well as generous donations from individuals, business leaders, and private foundations. The institute's development is mainly reflected in the following aspects.

### (1) Growth in Operating Revenue

In 1975, the institute's income was \$421,389. During the first 10 years after its establishment, income grew steadily but modestly. It was not until 1988 that the institute's total income exceeded one million dollars. Beginning in 1993, the institute's income entered a period of continuous growth: in 1994, it exceeded \$2 million; in 1997, \$3 million; in 1999, \$4 million; in 2002, \$5 million; and in 2015-2016, it exceeded \$10 million for two consecutive years. In 2016, donations from individuals alone reached \$5 million [?].

### (2) Increase in Personnel Scale

The institute's development has been inseparable from the growth of its personnel. Its supporting membership grew from 65 in 1975 to 521 in 1983, and by 2003, the support team exceeded 3,000 members, including individuals, corporations, or foundations totaling over 3,000 [?]. The number of staff also increased from 5 at its founding to the current 48, along with 60 external collaborating experts and 350 authors from 22 countries, with this list continuing to grow, including six Nobel laureates [?].

**(3) Expansion of Branch Offices**

From its inception, the Fraser Institute positioned its work to serve all of North America. Therefore, although its headquarters are in Vancouver, as early as 1978, the institute opened an office in Seattle, USA, recognized by the IRS as a non-profit organization, enabling it to receive tax-exempt donations from the U.S. to support research work. Branch offices were established in Winnipeg in the 1980s and in Ottawa in the 1990s. Currently, there are also branch offices in Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, and other locations.

**(4) International Cooperation and Exchange**

As an international organization, the institute has established close relationships with like-minded groups in other countries, including the International Energy Agency, the Cato Institute in Washington, and the Atlas Network (founded by Sir Antony Fisher), thereby laying the foundation for the Fraser Institute's international influence. As part of international exchange, in 1979 the institute hosted a delegation of economists from Latin America, extending its organizational model to countries and regions beyond Canada. It is worth noting that the institute has developed economic freedom network members globally. According to the *2016 Annual Report* [?], the institute currently collaborates with 109 independent organizations from 93 countries or regions to support the Economic Freedom of the World report, including China among these countries.

**(5) Extensive Communication and Media Promotion**

The Fraser Institute regards communication as a core mission of the organization and pursues the goal of maintaining high media exposure. Between 2011-2016, global media coverage of the Fraser Institute in newspapers, television, radio, and online increased by 73%, with 29,000 reports in 2016 covering research reports and publications released by the institute. The Fraser Institute's official website receives over 3 million hits annually, ranking among the top think tank websites. Meanwhile, to expand the dissemination and impact of research findings, the institute diversifies its adaptation of dry research reports, turning the *Globalization of the World Economy* report into a documentary film *Changing the World*, greatly enhancing the dissemination power and influence of its research results. Table 1 presents statistics based on the Fraser Institute's annual reports from 2013-2016, demonstrating the institute's achievements in media promotion and publicity. Due to the institute's emphasis on promotion and publicity, its influence among the Canadian public has been greatly enhanced.

**Table 1** Statistics on Fraser Institute's External Communication and Publicity, 2013-2016

Indicator	2013	2014	2015	2016
Advertising Value of Canadian & U.S. Newspaper, Radio & TV Coverage	\$15 million	\$16 million	\$16 million	—
Website Visits	30,000/1,450	33,600/1,804	36,500/1,804	40,800/—

Indicator	2013	2014	2015	2016
Students Receiving Education & Training Programs / Participating Schools	23,500	26,222	28,338	29,041
Total Media Mentions	5,100	13,800	251,400	6,700
Facebook Followers	16,400	44,695	9,289	124,516
Facebook Videos	19,410	92,713	15,450	344,512
Twitter Followers	21,950	155,510	1,100	1,308
YouTube Video Views	—	—	—	—
North American Newspaper Commentary Pieces	1,421	1,374	22/6,603	19/6,618
Citations in Academic & Professional Journals/Articles	—	—	17/6,846	19/6,846
Global Economic Freedom Network Members	—	—	—	—
Global Think Tank Ranking/Total Number	—	—	—	—
Canadian Think Tank Ranking	—	—	—	—

### 2.3 Institutional Management Strategy

The Fraser Institute positions itself as “an independent international research and educational organization” [?], hoping through its efforts to create a free and prosperous world that provides individuals with more choices, greater market competitiveness, and personal responsibility [?]. *The New York Times* considers it to have both liberal and conservative characteristics, *The Calgary Herald* calls it conservative, and *The Langley Times* views it as “center-right” liberal [?]. Since its establishment in 1974, for over 40 years, the Fraser Institute has consistently adhered to the management strategies established at its founding [?], distinguishing it from other institutions and playing an important role in the organization’s operations, effectively ensuring its development and progress. These are mainly manifested in the following aspects:

- (1) Any donations received by the institute are fully included in total revenue and used for research projects, rather than being allocated according to the board’s discretion.

- (2) The institute and its staff do not participate in any political activities under any circumstances. Its goals are purely to serve the public and safeguard public interest, and its research work and conclusions are entirely based on objective consideration of facts and reliable research methods.
- (3) No donor, institutional member, board member, or committee member may modify or control research projects, and the original content of publications or news should be guaranteed. Research findings can be made openly accessible to researchers and the public.
- (4) The institute may research controversial public policy issues, independently draw conclusions and recommendations, and publicly release them without being constrained by donors' wishes.
- (5) Although the institute was founded by Canadians, it will recruit the best professional talent globally to explore public policy issues faced by Canada and all Western democracies.
- (6) Within the organization, the release of research findings must undergo peer review. The Executive Chairman makes final decisions on issues based on guidance from the Editorial Advisory Board (rather than the Board of Directors) and has the authority to decide whether to make them public.
- (7) All publications will include a brief statement of the institute's core mission and purpose. Furthermore, for published content, authors are responsible for their own views, which represent personal opinions and do not necessarily reflect those of the institute or the board.

### 3.1 Management Structure

The Fraser Institute's Board of Directors consists of a distinguished group of individuals. Board Chairman Peter Brown, Vice Chairmen Mark Mitchell and Rod Senft, along with Honorary Board Member Michael Walker, institutional founder and Lifetime Honorary Board Chairman Patrick Boyle, total 51 people who represent institutional members and manage the institute's business and affairs [?].

The institute's Executive Committee is elected from board members and establishes an Executive President to specifically manage institute projects, with various functional departments assisting the Executive President in completing operational work. Its functional departments include Finance, Administration and Human Resources, Program Development, Education and Training, Products and Promotion, among others.

The institute establishes research centers to conduct research work. Simultaneously, to ensure the quality and level of research projects, an Editorial Advisory Board is established to conduct rigorous peer review of research findings. New research findings, major research projects, and substantially revised research must be reviewed by at least one internal expert and two external experts. External review is a blind review process, with commentary and conference documents reviewed by internal experts.

### 3.2 Research Centers

The Fraser Institute's research scope covers numerous fields related to national economy and people's livelihood, such as education, healthcare, taxation, environment, energy, and economics. The Fraser Institute's research centers mainly consist of three types: first, thematic policy research centers, such as the Indigenous Policy Research Center and the Taxation and Fiscal Policy Research Center; second, regional research centers, such as the Alberta Prosperity Innovation Center and the Ontario Prosperity Innovation Center; and third, education and training research centers, such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Research Center and the Barbara Mitchell Education Improvement Center. Research centers conduct in-depth exploration of relevant issues, publicly publish research reports or findings, provide references for government decision-making and innovation, propose questions and possible solutions, and facilitate public understanding and broad participation in government decision-making.

#### 3.2.1 Thematic Policy Research Centers (1) Indigenous Policy Research Center

Established in 2013, the current center director is Thomas Flanagan. The center's creation goal is to promote a productive forward-looking discussion to find lasting solutions for problems in many of Canada's indigenous communities.

Since its establishment, the center has consistently focused on and committed to resolving issues related to indigenous peoples, including how to conduct education for First Nations and how to provide opportunities for economic prosperity in indigenous communities through oil and gas development. The center's first research report, *Wealth of First Nations*, co-authored by Professor Flanagan and Professor Katrine Beauregard, studied why some First Nations Canadians have successfully achieved higher prosperity levels than other groups, concluding that granting individual property rights is the best way to achieve economic empowerment and improve living standards. The center publishes 3-5 research findings annually, covering indigenous education, resources, government expenditures, laws and regulations, etc. In 2016, the center's publications on Facebook reached 58,000 clicks.

#### (2) Economic Freedom Innovation Center

Established in the mid-1980s, the current center director is Fred McMahon. The center's creation goal is to study economic freedom, an idea proposed in the

early 1980s aimed at changing people' s understanding of government' s role in society—without economic freedom, political freedom will eventually decline.

The center engages in publishing and educational activities globally, leading the Economic Freedom Network composed of 109 independent member organizations from 93 countries and regions, eight of which entered the global top 100 think tanks in the *2017 Global Think Tank Report*.

In 1996, the center released its first *Economic Freedom of the World Report*, analyzing economic freedom in major countries and regions between 1975–1995 and releasing the “Economic Freedom of the World Index,” also known as the Fraser Index. Unlike the Heritage Foundation' s “Index of Economic Freedom,” the Fraser Index rates countries based on whether private enterprises can conduct business freely and efficiently, reflecting the relationship between economic freedom and per capita national income. The “most free” countries typically develop faster with higher per capita national income. The index measures economic freedom from five aspects: government size, legal structure and property rights protection, sound monetary policy, freedom of international trade, and credit, labor, and business regulation. Authors Fred McMahon and Michael Walker state in the report that “economic freedom can bring regional economic prosperity and higher quality of life, while regions at the bottom of the rankings are typically ruled by authoritarian regimes where citizens' freedoms and opportunities are more restricted.” The report also claims that economies with the lowest freedom have experienced economic difficulties affecting social stability, such as Libya, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe; economic freedom has a trickle-down effect on per capita economic income—the freer the economy, the wealthier the people. Over the years, research has consistently shown that high levels of economic freedom promote economic growth, political rights, civil liberties, and improvements in a range of social indicators, including life expectancy and life satisfaction.

The report can be openly accessed through the Fraser Institute' s official website. China is the country with the largest number of clicks on the site, accounting for 28% of the total. Other major countries include the United States, Algeria, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Brazil. The institute also publishes annual reports on economic freedom in the Arab world and North America.

Additionally, the institute co-published the Human Freedom Index with the Cato Institute, measuring indicators of people' s freedom to enjoy speech, religion, women' s rights, association and assembly freedom, and economic freedom [?]. The index uses 79 indicators of personal, civil, and economic freedom to rank 159 countries and regions.

The research center has a large number of publications translated and published annually, with translation languages including Armenian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Greek, Slovenian, Spanish, and Ukrainian.

### **(3) Taxation and Fiscal Policy Research Center**

The current center director is Charles Lammam, one of Canada' s primary

sources for rigorous, in-depth analysis of government budgets, public finance, and economic policy.

Ensuring Canadians are fully aware of government operating costs and individual tax burdens is one of the center's research themes. As one of the high-welfare countries, Canada's 12-year compulsory education, universal medical insurance, and social relief funds are all financed through taxation. Therefore, Canadians pay numerous types of taxes, ranging from personal income tax (federal and provincial), property tax, land tax, real estate tax, education tax, medical tax, deposit interest tax, and gasoline tax, to smaller taxes such as shopping tax, license fees, tobacco and alcohol tax, and fuel tax. Tax Freedom Day refers to the day when income earned before this date goes to tax payments, and only after this date does income belong to individuals. This concept is based on the assumption of earning without spending before Tax Freedom Day. In 2017, Tax Freedom Day was June 9, which received extensive media coverage.

The research center annually releases the *Canadian Consumer Tax Index* to measure the growing tax burden. The 2016 index showed that Canadians spend an average of 42% of household income on taxes and 38% on necessities including food, housing, and clothing.

The research center evaluates the annual fiscal performance of provincial premiers during their terms, mainly from three aspects: government spending, taxation, deficits, and debt. In 2016, British Columbia Premier Christy Clark ranked first.

The research center also conducts ongoing research on the relationship between income inequality and economic development, income mobility, pension plans, and other issues. Results show that Canadians can improve their economic status and transition from low-income to high-income groups through education and skills development and hard work. Canadians are well-prepared for retirement without needing changes to government pension plans.

#### **(4) Municipal Policy Research Center**

Established in 2015, its goal is to conduct in-depth research on municipal finance, land use regulations, and the costs and benefits of municipal services.

The center's research mainly involves three aspects. First, residential land use and management. In Canada, an increasing number of people are concerned about housing issues. Therefore, the Fraser Institute established the Municipal Policy Research Center in 2015, launching a one-year national land use assessment project dedicated to studying the impact of land policies on Canadians' living conditions, environment, and quality, focusing on three regions: Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe area, British Columbia's Lower Mainland, and Alberta's Calgary-Edmonton Corridor. Further research was conducted on national land use regulations and other issues, including housing costs. In 2016, the report *The Impact of Canadian Land Use Regulations on Housing Supply* pointed out that the best way to maintain purchasing power is to ensure adequate supply of new housing. However, apart from natural resources, builders

also face obstacles such as municipal regulation. Research shows that in Canada's largest urbanized areas, numerous management regulations are among the factors hindering residential growth. Second, municipal amalgamation. Studying the amalgamation experience of some rural communities in Ontario found that urbanization did not reduce costs, and in some cases, costs increased. However, municipal amalgamation has accelerated in recent years. British Columbia's unique regional governance system (the regional district system) has benefited the province's capital region. Third, municipal services. The center evaluates the efficiency and cost-benefit of various municipal services, including policing, fire prevention, and waste management.

#### **(5) Natural Resources Research Center**

The current center director is Kenneth Green.

As an exporter of energy and other natural resources, having large quantities of oil and gas, minerals, and metals does not guarantee sustained economic prosperity; sound public policies are also needed to ensure economic development and prevent environmental damage. Therefore, the Natural Resources Research Center is dedicated to studying public policies for Canada's energy and mining economy, understanding the impact of government regulations on these key economic sectors, and providing policy recommendations for the sound operation of public policy.

Under Kenneth Green's leadership, the Natural Resources Research Center has conducted a series of studies on pressing industry issues, including energy transportation safety, global mining investment barriers, oil and gas exploration and development investment, hydraulic fracturing risks, and Ontario electricity prices, receiving over 5,000 national media reports. The research center studied how Alberta's carbon emission caps would reduce oil sands production growth and the impact of Ontario's electricity sector "demand-side management" programs. Research found that although the program's goal was to save money by conserving energy, the results were minimal. The research center annually publishes the Survey of Mining Companies to understand the impact of mineral resource potential and public policy factors (such as taxation and institutional uncertainty) on exploration investment. In terms of energy, through comprehensive research on energy poverty areas in Canada, it was found that in 2013, nearly 8% of Canadian households spent more than 10% of household expenditures on electricity, and with increasing gasoline costs, these numbers would more than double.

#### **(6) Health Policy Research Center**

The Fraser Institute's Health Policy Research Center is dedicated to educating Canadians about problems in the healthcare system and researching possible solutions.

The center annually publishes the survey report *Waiting Your Turn* on health-care service waiting times. In 2016, Canadians' waiting time for medical services was 20 weeks, compared to 9.3 weeks in the 1993 report. A related study to

the *Waiting Your Turn* report, the annual *Leaving Canada for Medical Care* report, mentioned that in 2015, an estimated over 45,000 Canadians received non-emergency medical treatment abroad. Another center study, *The Sustainability of Canadian Healthcare Spending*, predicts that based on a series of factors including demographic changes, provincial governments' healthcare spending will continue to increase over the next 20 years, potentially leading to higher taxes, larger deficits, or reduced spending. Issues closely related to Canadians' health, medical care, and wellness, such as healthcare reform, health insurance, healthcare and pharmaceutical innovation, biologics, medical devices, pharmaceutical trade, and biological development, are all research and focus areas of the center.

### **3.2.2 Regional Research Centers (1) Alberta Prosperity Innovation Center**

Located in Calgary, the current center director is Steve Lafleur.

The Alberta Prosperity Innovation Center was created to long-term measure the impact of Alberta' s policy choices and communicate to the public its commitment to ensuring Alberta' s continuous development and progress now and in the future.

Alberta' s population accounts for only 11% of Canada' s population, but its influence on Canada' s economic drivers has exceeded its historical best levels. Over the past 15 years, the province has made enormous contributions to national economic growth, and even during difficult economic times, it has remained the province with the highest per capita income in the Canadian federation. Historically, Alberta has powerfully promoted Canada' s economic growth through incentives and advocacy for economic reform, becoming a best-practice case for promoting prosperity through increased taxation and effective regulation. For this reason, whether Alberta' s policies succeed or fail, they are worth in-depth study. One of the center' s main goals is to vigorously promote the Fraser Institute' s influence in Alberta. In 2016, through press releases, newspaper commentaries, and radio and television program interviews, the Fraser Institute received extensive attention and coverage in the province' s news media, being mentioned 2,335 times. One particularly influential study by the center compared Alberta' s fiscal situation with energy production conditions in Texas. In addition to several important interviews on radio and television programs across the province, the study was also published in major print media, including the front page of *The Calgary Herald*. Another study on the speed of Alberta' s debt accumulation also sparked hundreds of direct conversations on social media.

### **(2) Ontario Prosperity Innovation Center**

Located in Toronto, the current center director is Ben Eisen.

The Ontario Prosperity Innovation Center (OPI) aims to educate people on how to face current government policies and provide a policy roadmap to help Ontario restore its traditional position as the nation' s economic engine.

The Ontario Prosperity Innovation Center has played a huge role in changing public perceptions regarding government debt and energy policies. In 2013, it published a collection of papers by renowned economists, *Ontario's Debt Situation*, showing that Ontario's per capita debt was \$18,000 that year, nearly four and a half times California's debt that year (\$3,800), and the province's debt accumulation as a percentage of the economy (GDP) somewhat exceeded Greece's debt growth rate in the 1990s. In 2014, a report titled *Can Canada Prosper Without a Prosperous Ontario?* by economist Di Matteo pointed out that the province's poor economic performance dragged down the entire Canadian economy. In 2015, the Innovation Center published 7 research reports that received nearly 1,700 media mentions, equivalent to \$1.24 million in advertising value. Among them, *Ontario: No Longer a Place of Prosperity* documented the province's decline from an economically strong region to an economically lagging region, detailing government policies and their resulting poor performance. In 2016, OPI published a series of far-reaching studies focusing on Ontario's policy development, including *Spending is the Root Cause of Ontario's Debt Crisis and Debt Problems*, *Ontario's Debt Accumulation Compared with Other Provinces*, *Ontario and Michigan: Policy Lessons from the Wolverine State*, and *Ontario's Five Depressions: Regional Analysis of Labor Markets in Post-Recession Ontario*. OPI has played an important role in policy discussions across Ontario, raising public awareness of severe challenges including increasing debt burdens, uncompetitive tax rates, and high energy prices.

### **(3) Quebec Prosperity Innovation and Promotion Center**

Located in Montreal. Recognizing the severity of economic problems facing Quebec, the Fraser Institute established the Quebec Prosperity Innovation and Promotion Center to advance necessary policy reforms for Quebecers.

The center researches major public policy issues in Quebec and disseminates its national research content within the province. In 2016, the institute released an important research report, *Interprovincial Migration in Canada: Quebecers Voting with Their Feet*. The report found that from 1971 to 2015, Quebec's outflow population was greater than its inflow from other provinces, with a net outflow of 582,470 people, most of whom were young people in the early stages of their careers. This trend has led to Quebec's population aging problem unless the government can provide a more promising economic environment. This study received 308 reports in major national media. Researchers' reports are published in both French and English to meet the interview needs of more radio and television stations.

### **3.2.3 Education and Training Research Centers (1) Elementary and Secondary Education Research Center**

Established in 1998, the current center director is Peter Cowley.

The center's *Report Card on Elementary and Secondary Schools* is Canada's only comprehensive ranking of elementary and secondary education strength based on empirical research. Each year, the research center analyzes publicly available

materials from provincial education bureau websites, student achievement data, and other relevant information, synthesizing various relevant and objective indicators of school education comprehensive strength to form a public ranking, enabling parents, teachers, school and board administrators to analyze independent schools' academic performance over time. It also publishes lists of schools showing continuous improvement in all aspects. The school ranking includes not only each school' s achievement information and ranking but also each school' s overall performance over the past five years, and provides information such as the proportion of English as a Second Language (ESL) students and family income as references. Many students and parents believe the school ranking provides a large amount of reference information that can be used to compare different schools' academic performance. Of course, many teachers and schools oppose school rankings, believing different schools are not comparable, and that pure school achievement rankings create unnecessary pressure for schools, teachers, and even students. However, most parents and many professional education professionals also recognize that rankings play an important role in encouraging improved education methods and enhancing the quality of education for Canadian children.

In 2016, in the 19th year of the ranking' s release, approximately over 2 million parents and educators visited the school ranking website, with an estimated 45% to 55% of families referring to relevant data. Therefore, the continuously increasing visits show that the ranking is gradually becoming more popular among parents and educators, which is the purpose of this research project.

### **(2) Barbara Mitchell Education Improvement Center**

Established in 2013. The Barbara Mitchell Education Improvement Center was established with funding from the Garfield Weston Foundation to improve elementary and secondary education in Canada.

The center mainly provides education and training for elementary and secondary school teachers, holds teacher workshops, and develops and releases new learning resources for teachers. Its three key research directions are how to improve teachers' teaching effectiveness, how to improve school curricula, and how to provide parents with more choices in their children' s education. The center also conducts empirical research and widely disseminates education information through traditional and social media to promote public understanding of education policy and future development trends. Therefore, an increasing number of the public recognize that elementary and secondary education can contribute to future prosperity.

### **(3) Education Programs Center**

Established in 1988, the current center director is Lisa-Diane Fortier. The Fraser Institute began holding seminars for university students in 1988, and over the years has added new programs to provide students, teachers, and journalists with opportunities to understand the national economic situation and how to choose and participate in competition.

The center is Canada's only organization providing resources, networks, and forums for students, teachers, and journalists aged 13-24 to learn and discuss economics and public policy from a market perspective. The education center offers a series of programs. In 2016, it attracted over 40,800 high school and university students, teachers, and journalists to participate in learning and seminars, with 18,810 students attending 7 seminars organized by 209 teachers.

For students, seminars help them understand how national policies affect the economy, what methods might be used to solve various policy problems, and how to evaluate issues dialectically. For teachers, teacher seminars attract both new economics teachers and those willing to develop new curriculum content and resources. For journalists, understanding and learning about global economic issues helps them acquire career development skills and enhanced cognition.

The Education Programs Center achieved extraordinary success in 2016, receiving a \$5 million donation from Mr. Peter Munk to further establish the Peter Munk Free Enterprise Education Center and extend existing successful experiences to Ontario. Beginning in November 2016, the Peter Munk Free Enterprise Education Center held seminars and workshops, benefiting over 4,900 students in Ontario.

### 3.3 Funding Income and Expenditure

To maintain institutional independence, the Fraser Institute only accepts donations from individuals, organizations, or foundations, and does not accept government grants or research project commissions, enabling it to analyze and evaluate research content objectively and impartially. The Fraser Institute's funding acquisition and fundraising methods mainly include the following:

#### (1) Membership Donation Income

According to the 2016 annual report, the institute has over 3,000 supporters from Canada, the U.S., and globally, with individuals accounting for 83%, corporations and organizations 15%, and foundations 2%, as shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

In the 2003-2004 fiscal year, the institute received \$120,000 from ExxonMobil; from 2006 to 2016, it received approximately \$765,000 in total donations from foundations controlled by Charles and David Koch; in 2016, it received a \$5 million donation from Canadian businessman Peter Munk. The donation proportion situation for 2013-2015 is shown in Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper].

As can be seen from Figures 1 and 2, although individual members account for over 80% of the Fraser Institute's membership proportion, they contribute less than 20% of donation amounts. Funding from foundations, corporations, and organizations accounts for a larger proportion.

The institute actively seeks foundation support, typically from the U.S., for specific projects. In 2012, *The Vancouver Observer* reported that the Fraser In-

stitute had received over \$4.3 million in income over the past 10 years from eight major U.S. foundations, including the most influential oil and pharmaceutical companies [?].

### (2) Publication Sales Revenue

In 2016, the institute published 85 print or digital publications related to health, government budgets, taxation policies, and other issues closely related to people's lives.

### (3) Other Foreign Exchange and Investment Income

**Figure 3** [Figure 3: see original paper] Financial Sources of the Fraser Institute

The Fraser Institute's expenditures are mainly used for salaries, office costs, research projects, publication expenses, and other consumptions. Its income and expenditure status is shown in Table 2 .

**Table 2** Statement of Financial Operations of the Fraser Institute, 2013–2016

Item	2013	2014	2015	2016
Donations,	\$8,862,414	\$9,554,874	\$10,740,762	\$10,803,866
Sales,				
Interest,				
Other				
Salaries,	(\$8,849,942)	(\$9,516,166)	(\$10,733,156)	(\$10,795,192)
Office				
Expenses,				
Project				
Research,				
Publication				
Costs,				
Sponsorship,				
Other				
Foreign	\$102,518	\$114,990	\$116,120	(\$62,787)
Exchange or				
Investment				
Income/Loss				
Net	\$172,463	\$180,069	\$154,828	(\$54,113)

*Note: Parentheses ( ) indicate expenditures.*

## 4 Development Trends and Rankings

On January 31, 2018, the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) at the University of Pennsylvania released the *2017 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report*, an influential global ranking that comprehensively and accurately reflects the strength of think tanks worldwide. By comparing this with the *2016*

*Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* [?], we can reveal the Fraser Institute's development trends and changes over the past two years. Additionally, using the Fraser Institute as a reference point, Table 3 lists the top three think tanks in each ranking category.

As shown in Table 3, the Fraser Institute's global ranking among top think tanks declined slightly by two positions over the past two years, while its ranking among non-U.S. think tanks improved. It maintains the top position in the Mexico and Canada category. Regarding domain-specific rankings, although the institute does not rank among the top tier, it rose three positions in the global ranking of best defense and national security think tanks and eleven positions in domestic economic policy think tanks, demonstrating significant progress in domestic economic policy research. Its rankings in best domestic health policy, best health policy, best international development, and best international economic policy think tanks declined slightly, though fluctuations remain minimal. Its positions in best science and technology policy and best social policy think tanks remained unchanged.

In terms of special achievements, the institute rose one position in best-managed think tanks; two positions in best use of social media and networks; five positions in best external relations/public engagement programs; and five positions in best use of internet. It declined five positions in best institutional collaboration (two or more institutions); six positions in best support for innovative ideas and paradigms; four positions in best use of media; and experienced minor declines in best think tank conference, most innovative policy ideas/proposals, and best quality assurance and integrity policies and procedures. Its rankings in best think tank network, most influential in public policy, and best independent think tank remained unchanged. Notably, the institute entered the global top 10 in best use of internet (ranked 8th) and best external relations/public engagement programs (ranked 10th), and ranked 11th among best independent think tanks. This demonstrates the Fraser Institute's significant achievements in internet application, public engagement, organizational independence, media interaction, and expanding influence—aligning with its founding mission.

**Table 3** The Fraser Institute's Ranking in the 2017 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report

Ranking Category	Change from 2016	Top 3 Think Tanks in This Category
<b>Top Think Tanks Worldwide</b>		Brookings Institution (USA), French Institute of International Relations, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (USA)
<b>Top Think Tanks Worldwide (Non-U.S.)</b>		French Institute of International Relations, Bruegel (Belgium), Chatham House (UK)

Ranking Category	Change from 2016	Top 3 Think Tanks in This Category
<b>Top Think Tanks in Mexico and Canada Domain-Specific Rankings</b>	-	Fraser Institute (Canada), Fundación Ethos (Mexico), C.D. Howe Institute (Canada)
Best Defense and National Security Think Tanks		Center for Strategic and International Studies (USA), International Institute for Strategic Studies (UK), RAND Corporation (USA)
Best Domestic Economic Policy Think Tanks		Brookings Institution (USA), Adam Smith Institute, National Bureau of Economic Research (USA)
Best Domestic Health Policy Think Tanks		Cambridge Centre for Health Research, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Institute for Health Policy and Strategy (Japan)
Best Health Policy Think Tanks		Cambridge Centre for Health Research, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Center for Strategic and International Studies (USA)
Best International Development Think Tanks		Korea Development Institute, Institute of Development Studies (UK), Brookings Institution (USA)
Best International Economic Policy Think Tanks		Peterson Institute for International Economics, Bruegel (Belgium), Brookings Institution (USA)
Best Science and Technology Policy Think Tanks	-	Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (USA), Max Planck Society (Germany), Science Policy Research Unit (UK)
Best Social Policy Think Tanks	-	Urban Institute (USA), Center for Social and Economic Research (Poland), Brookings Institution (USA)
<b>Special Achievements</b>		
Best Institutional Collaboration (2+ institutions)		Brookings Institution (USA), Atlantic Council (USA), Italian Institute for International Political Studies

Ranking Category	Change from 2016	Top 3 Think Tanks in This Category
Best Managed Think Tanks		Fundação Getulio Vargas (Brazil), Bruegel (Belgium), Brookings Institution (USA)
Best Support for Innovative Ideas and Paradigms		Resources for the Future (USA), Observer Research Foundation (India), Third Way (USA)
Best Think Tank Conference		Shangri-La Dialogue (IISS, Singapore), Italian Institute for International Political Studies, French Institute of International Relations
Best Think Tank Network	-	Fraser Institute, Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Germany), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (USA)
Best Use of Social Media and Networks		Center for Strategic and International Studies (USA), Transparency International (Germany), Brookings Institution (USA)
Best External Relations/Public Engagement Programs		Human Rights Watch (UK), Center for Strategic and International Studies (USA), Brookings Institution (USA)
Best Use of Internet		Center for American Progress, Heritage Foundation (USA), Amnesty International (UK)
Best Use of Media		Peterson Institute for International Economics, Chatham House (UK), Center for Strategic and International Studies (USA)
Most Influential in Public Policy		Heritage Foundation (USA), Brookings Institution (USA), Human Rights Watch (UK)
Most Innovative Policy Ideas/Proposals		Urban Institute (USA), Brookings Institution (USA), Center for Social and Economic Research (Poland)
Best Independent Think Tanks	-	Transparency International (Germany), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (USA), Adam Smith Institute

Ranking Category	Change from 2016	Top 3 Think Tanks in This Category
Best Quality Assurance and Integrity Policies and Procedures		RAND Corporation (USA), Transparency International (Germany), Brookings Institution (USA)

*Note: Data compiled from 2016 and 2017 Global Go To Think Tank Index Reports. “-” indicates no change from previous year, ↑ indicates ranking improvement, ↓ indicates ranking decline.*

Table 4 provides further illustration of the Fraser Institute’s research and development status. The institute appears eight times across various domain-specific think tank rankings, accounting for approximately 60% of total ranking categories, though it has not yet broken into the top three in any category, indicating that its research capacity and level require continuous improvement. In special achievement rankings, the institute appears 13 times, with 61.5% of these rankings placing within the top 20. Combined with Table 3, this demonstrates the Fraser Institute’s focused development goals and direction.

**Table 4** Distribution of the Fraser Institute’s Ranking in the 2017 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report

Category	Total Ranking Categories	Fraser Institute Appearances	Top 20 Appearances	Top 20 Percentage
Domain-Specific Rankings	8	3	37.5%	
Special Achievements	13	8	61.5%	

### Key Characteristics and Implications

Reviewing the Fraser Institute’s 40-year history reveals two distinctive features: first, a high degree of independence, and second, a strong emphasis on external communication and influence-building. Its development philosophy offers important insights for Chinese think tank construction:

**(1) Institutional Independence Ensures Objective and Impartial Research.** The Fraser Institute receives no government funding or research contracts; it relies on donations from thousands of individuals, organizations, and foundations to fulfill its mission. Therefore, as China’s new think tanks develop, they must clarify their positioning and mission while maintaining independence

to provide objective and impartial policy advice to government or parent institutions.

**(2) Adhering to Mission to Serve the Public.** When public policies support competitive markets and positive government impact on people's lives, national prosperity and citizens' living standards improve. Through this approach, the Fraser Institute strives to make Canada the most prosperous and free nation in the world. During their development, Chinese think tanks—whether public or specialized—can enhance government and institutional efficiency and effectiveness by providing valuable policy strategies, thereby contributing to the realization of people's aspirations for a better life.

**(3) Expanding Perspectives Globally to Deliver High-Quality Research.** The Fraser Institute attracts over 300 experts, including six Nobel laureates, to publish papers and books because of its quality-first principle and extremely rigorous standards. All articles and publications undergo blind review by selected global top experts. Chinese think tanks should adopt international perspectives, comprehensively understand global development directions, and provide high-quality, high-level policy recommendations to enhance their effectiveness.

**(4) Increasing Outreach and Conducting Multi-Channel, Multi-Level Exchanges to Become an “Influential” Think Tank.** Organizing various forms of discussions to strengthen dialogue among policymakers, business, academia, and society is crucial for ensuring the Fraser Institute's work better serves social development. When conducting policy-related work, Chinese think tanks should strengthen exchanges with all stakeholders, expand outreach channels and methods, and enhance their global influence.

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*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

*Source: ChinaXiv – Machine translation. Verify with original.*