

Natives want shares of dividend

OTTAWA - Now that the federal budget is virtually balanced, Canada's Aboriginal Peoples want the federal government to throw some money their way.

"We've put a very strong argument that the best investment that Canada could make is in aboriginal people," Phil

Fontaine, grand chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said Monday at a conference on native cross-border trade.

"The pressure's on for tax cuts and that kind of thing. Well, tax cuts doesn't make much sense for First Nations people. We need some very direct invest-

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ment dollars in our communities. We need greater access to capital."

Fontaine said more money should be spent on aboriginal economic development, noting that the federal government spent about \$50 million on economic development last year.

But Fontaine said about \$700 million went into native welfare and some of that money should be

redirected into development projects that help native communities become more self-sufficient.

Fontaine is attending the three day conference along with Six Nations Band Council Chief Wellington Staats.

Grand River Enterprises president Steve Williams is one of the workshop speakers. GRE is a major sponsor of the conference.