

Child care through an equity lens: Mothers and others

Global Need for Formal Child Care

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Child care as an equity leaver

Child care is essential to women's equality, but there are others besides mothers whose equity rights must be considered when developing child care policy:

- **The children who experience the care**
- **The child care workforce including the gender, race, class and immigration status of its members**
- **Under what conditions is the work performed (*waged, unwaged, unionized/non unionized?*).**
- **The auspice of the work (*is it a public, market or private service?*)**

These factors influence service access and quality, which are themselves elements of equity.

Child care or early education: Not the same

Child Care	Early Education
<p>Purpose Labour force participation Poverty reduction Reduce income assistance</p> <p>Public policy Low levels of public funding Underdeveloped infrastructure Regulatory oversight</p> <p>Service delivery Targeted/fee based/low levels of participation Various funding approaches – taxes, vouchers, subsidies Mix of providers/locations Low levels of qualified educators Accountability limited to licensing</p>	<p>Purpose School readiness Child development Early intervention</p> <p>Public policy Stable public funding Developed infrastructure Democratic oversight - School boards/parent councils</p> <p>Service delivery Universal access/high participation No fees Public funding and provision Defined program Qualified educators Accountability mechanisms</p>



Child care as a labour market support: The policy implications

- Accommodating mothers as workers takes precedence over the needs of children or the child care workforce.
- Children's cognitive, social and emotional development may be desired but are not program drivers.
- Services are primarily private and custodial. State regulation primarily a child protection measure.
- Service financing relies heavily on parent fees and a workforce that subsidizes the service through low salaries.
- Low state support and high parent fees mitigate against the use of group childcare by disadvantaged families who rely on unregulated care or family members; *often the most marginalized members of the child care workforce.*



The policy implications

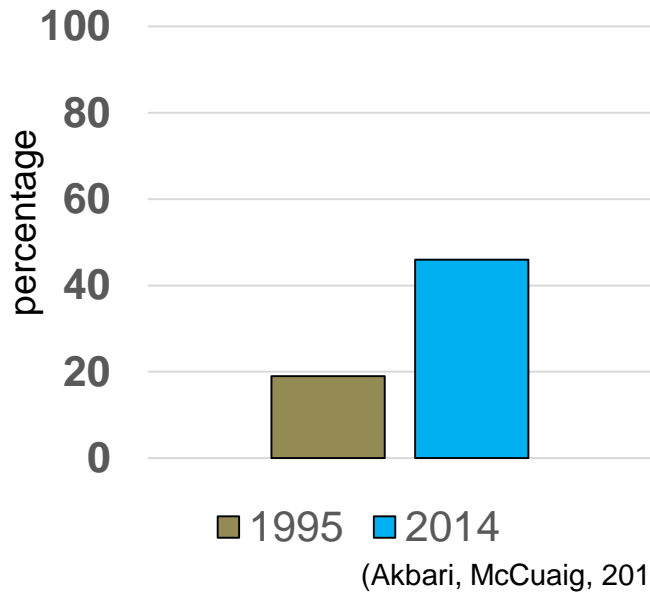
Anything can – and is - considered child care: vouchers, tax deductions/benefits, workfare, UCCB.

Progress isn't measured in numbers of children attending a program but in counting child care spaces and subsidies.

Accountability is measured in 'clear licenses' rather than child outcomes, workforce status or family wellbeing.

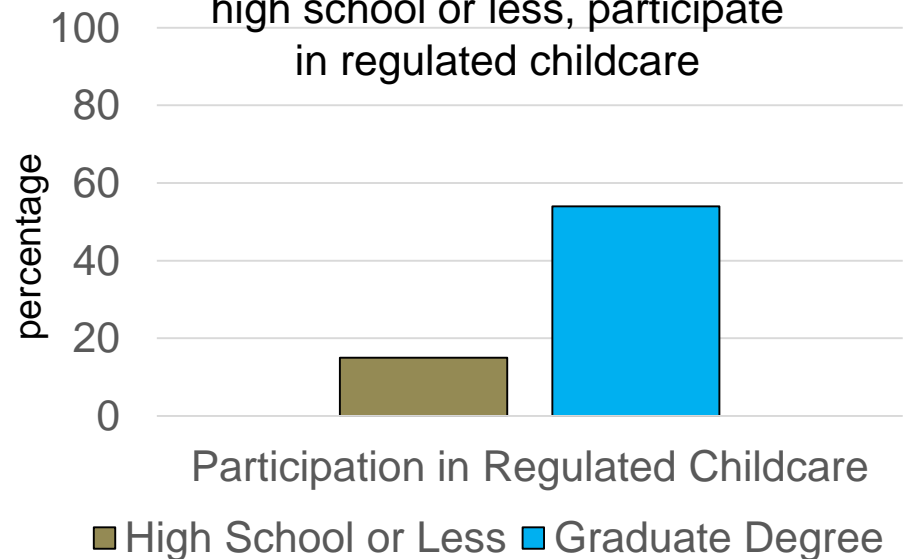
Scare supply/ unequal access

of regulated childcare spaces



Outside Quebec the majority of public funding is targeted to subsidies supporting low-income mothers to participate in the labour force.

Only 15% of children age 1-5 years whose mothers have high school or less, participate in regulated childcare



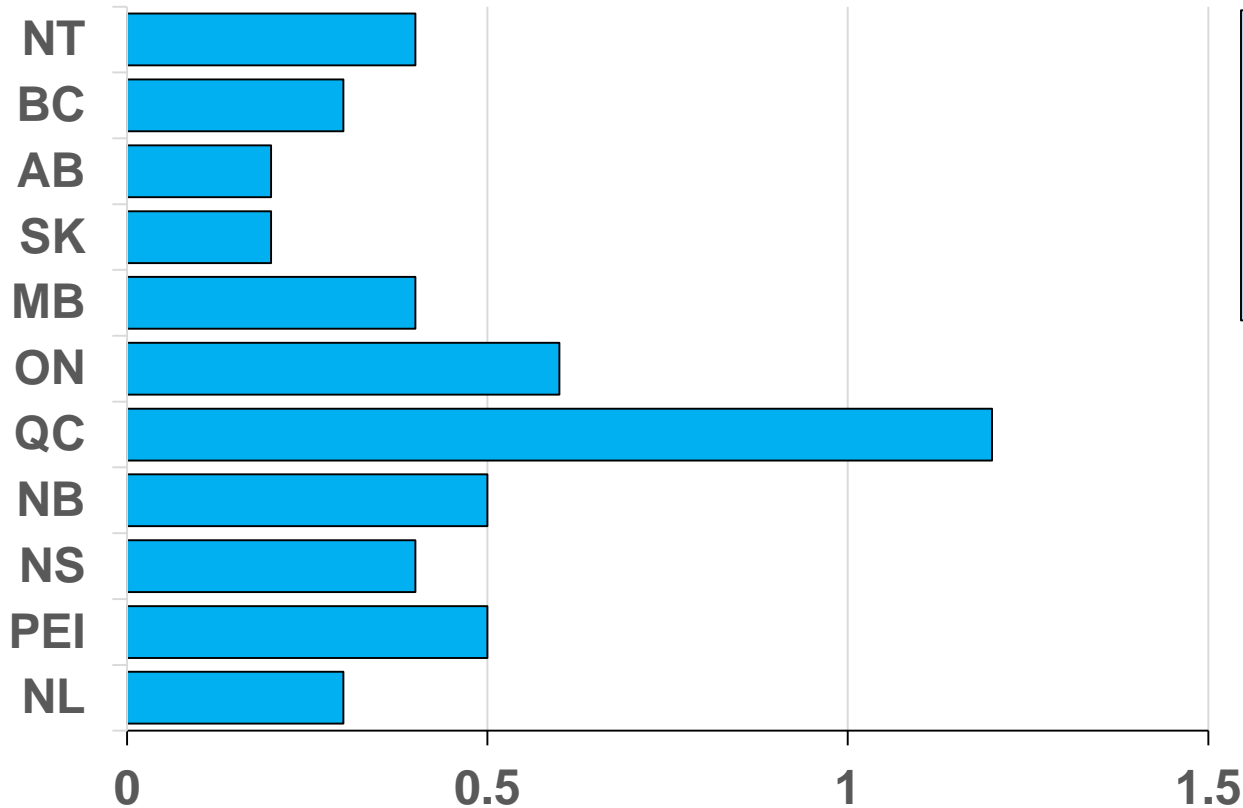
Participation in Regulated Childcare

■ High School or Less ■ Graduate Degree

(Survey of Young Canadians, 2010-2011).

Child care subsidies tied to parent employment result in children - particularly disadvantaged children -- cycling in and out of child care in tandem with their parents' work.

Is the fix more money? Implications of increasing public funding in a market service



Quebec has devoted more funding to childcare than almost the rest of Canada combined.

ECE Spending as a Percentage of Provincial Budget 2014

(Akbari & McCuaig, 2014).



Quebec's ECE funding breakdown

- \$1.1-billion public sector (kindergarten, prek, after school)
- \$900-million non-profit centres (CPEs - 18% spaces)

Total \$2-Billion

- \$1.2-billion home child care (38% spaces)
- \$850-million commercial child care
- \$587-million tax rebates to parents using commercial care

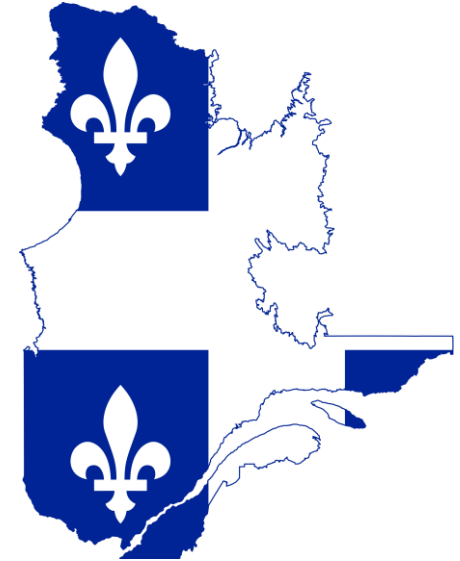
Total \$2.64-Billion

The majority of public funding goes to lower quality home and commercial care, which is predominately used by lower SES families and has the least qualified/compensated workforce.

CPEs where quality is rated highest represent only 18% of services.

Findings of the Quebec CC commission

- ➡ Quebec's investment did lower family poverty and support mothers' labour force participation (70,000 more mothers entered the workforce)
- ➡ Benefits for children are negligible because children were never the prime motivation for investment.
- ➡ Low fees fueled high demand causing governments to turn to the commercial sector because the non-profit sector did not have the capacity/support to expand quickly.





Conclusions

- Child care must be positioned as a public good – not a market service.
- Reposition child care as an education program available to all children, not only those with working mothers.
- For equitable access - the public sector must play a major role in the development & direct delivery of services. Make a portion of the day free.
- Build on the existing infrastructure of public education to extend schools down to serve younger children and out (extended hours) to provide care for all children who want or need it.

Comparison of federal child care commitments over past 40 years

	Trudeau <i>Helping Families</i>	Martin <i>Foundations Program</i>	Chrétien <i>Red Book</i>	Mulroney National Strategy on Child Care
Year	2017	2005	1993	1987
Total investment	\$7-Billion	\$5-Billion	\$2.16-Billion	\$6.4-Billion
Time Frame (Years)	11	5	3	7
Annual average	\$637M	\$1B	\$720M	\$914M
Anticipated spaces	40,000	250,000	150,000	200,000