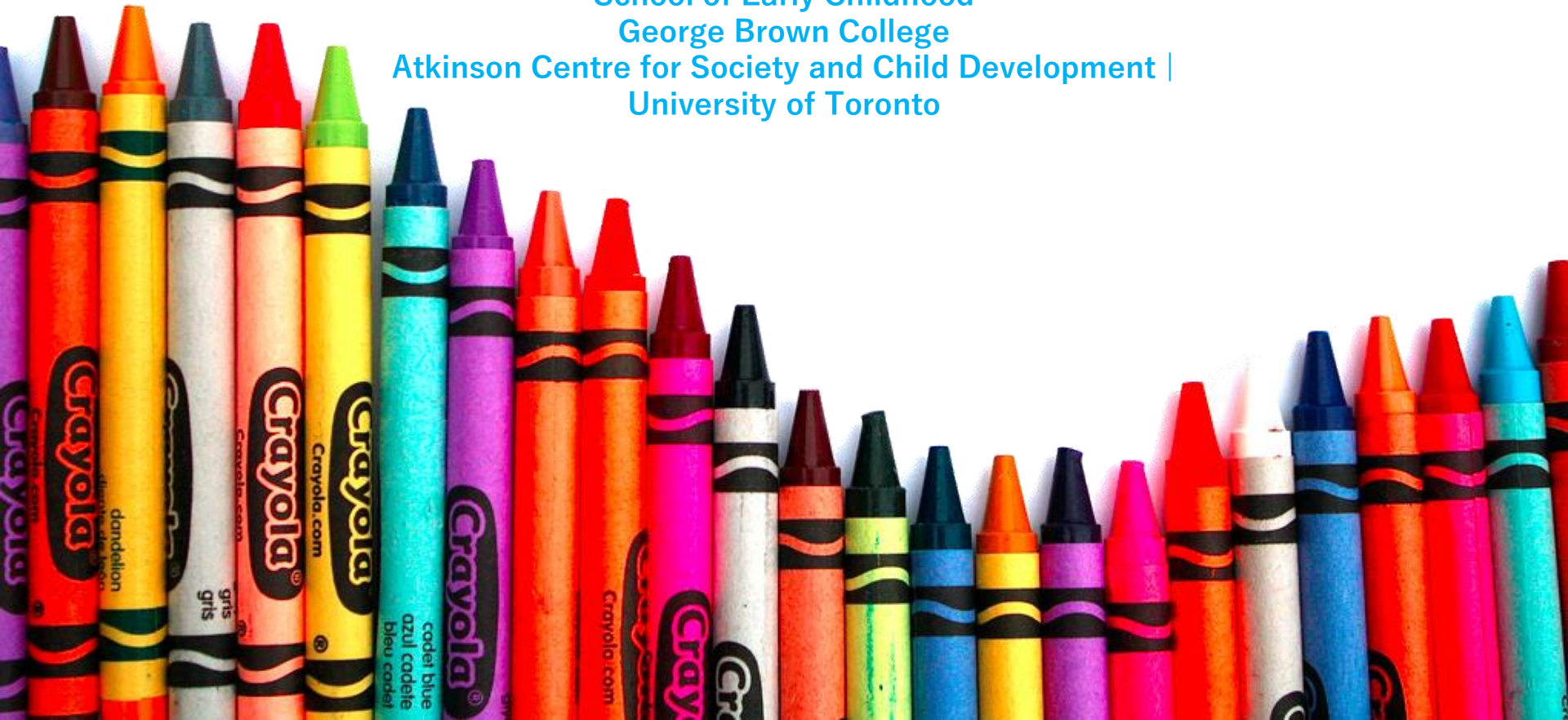


Early Childhood Education and Care The Great Equalizer

Emis Akbari, Ph.D.

School of Early Childhood
George Brown College

Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development |
University of Toronto



THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN CANADA

In 1986, the Federal government released the *Report of the Task Force* on Child Care. The Task Force called for a universal system of child care co-funded by federal and provincial governments.

The Task Force was the first Federal report calling for a national child care program as an "urgent matter".

The 1987 *All Party Committee on Child Care* released reports from each party, all recommending more child care spending.

More than a decade earlier, a 1970 report from the *Royal Commission on the Status of Women* made 167 recommendations including establishing a "national day-care Act."

The Commission recommended the provinces establish childcare boards to oversee the development and operations of networks of child care centres. It suggested that schools provide care for older children

Although most of these recommendations were at least partially implemented, the recommendation for a national childcare program was one of the few that went completely unaddressed.

A 'Gender Budget'



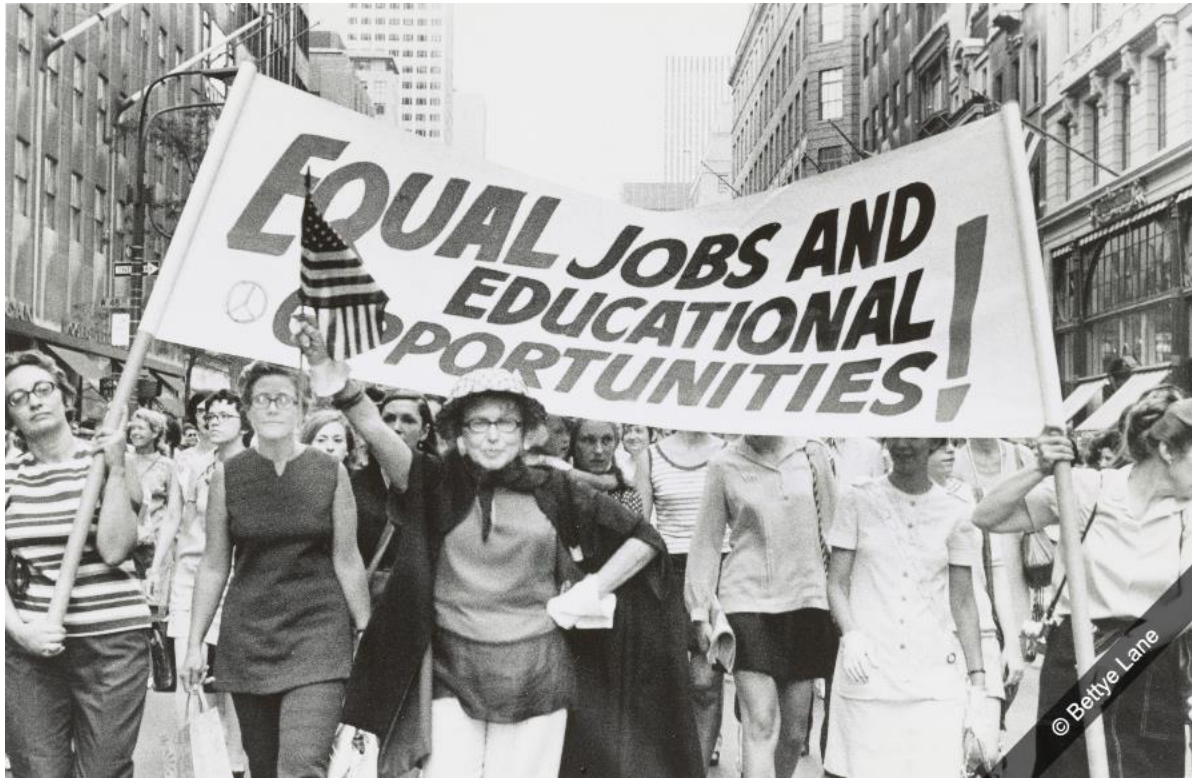
There is no doubt that with the release of the 2017 Federal budget, the government is putting women's issues back on the table after years of silence.

With discussions about increasing female labour force participation, the next organic discussion is child care.

Over a century of public policy demonstrates what happens when we situate child care as a labour market support.

A Historical Comparison

	Trudeau	Mulroney	Liberal Redbook	Martin
Year	2017	1987	1993	2005
Investment in year one	\$500 million	\$5.4 billion	\$720 million	\$1 billion per year
Number of Spaces	40,000	200,000	150,000	250,000
Time	10 years	5 years	3 years	5 years



The women's movement placed child care at the centre of work force equality and opportunity.

What happens when child care is Placed as a labour market support?



Anything can – and is - considered child care



Public policy responses can be anything and everything



A gap was created between those that used child care and those that provided it.

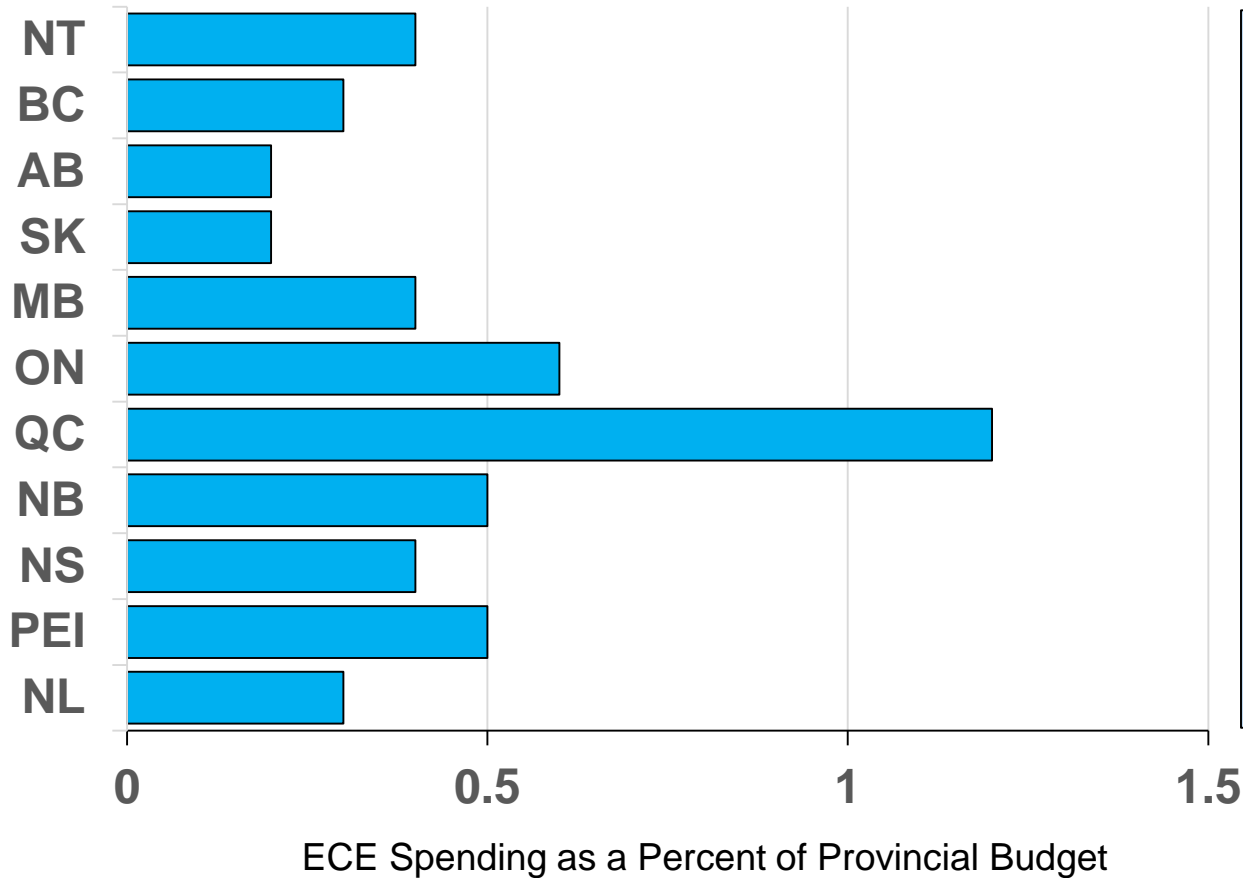


Quality of early childhood centres suffer



Child care remains stuck as a labour market support where the response is subsidies and spaces, rather than the early care and development of children.

Childcare Challenges Persist

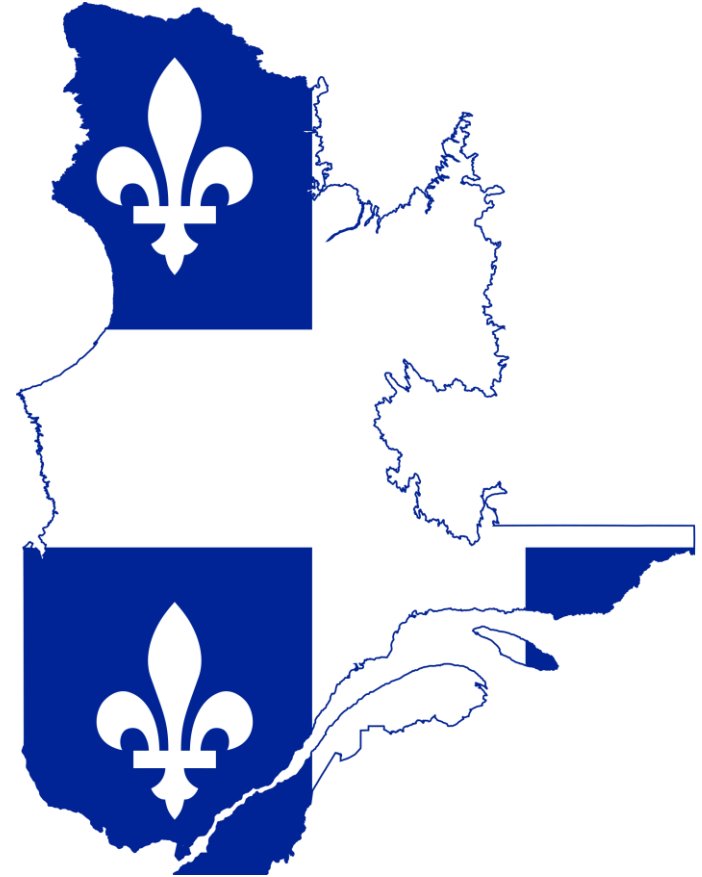


Quebec has devoted more funding to childcare than almost the rest of Canada combined.

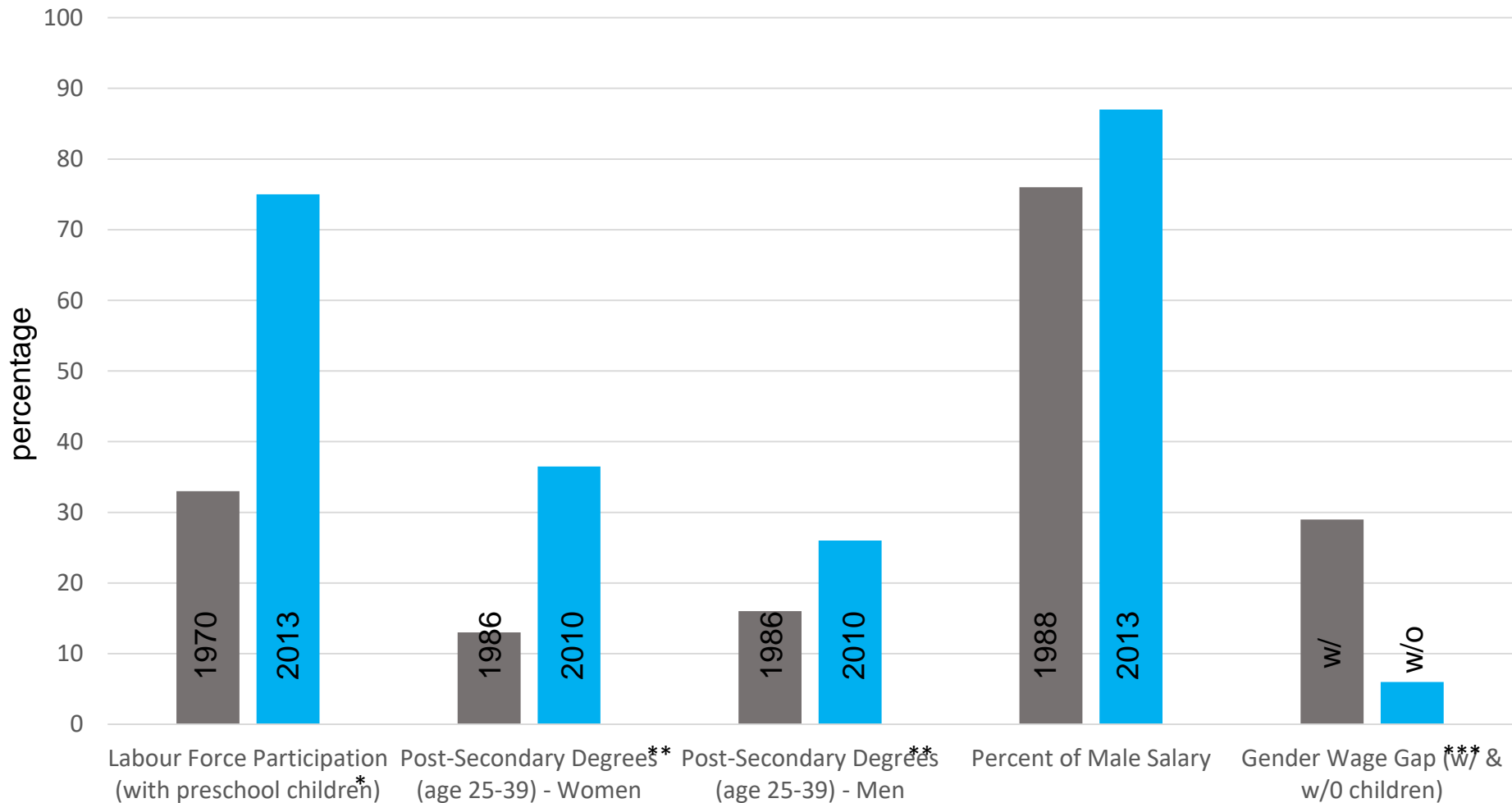
The majority of funding goes to commercial programs. The quality of care persists as an issue

The Findings of the Quebec commission

- ➡ A lot of money has been spent
- ➡ The investment did lower poverty and support mothers' labour force participation
- ➡ Benefits for children are negligible because children were never the prime motivation for investment.
- ➡ Money counts, but how it is spent is also important.
- ➡ If children became the focus, the public policy remedies would be quite different.



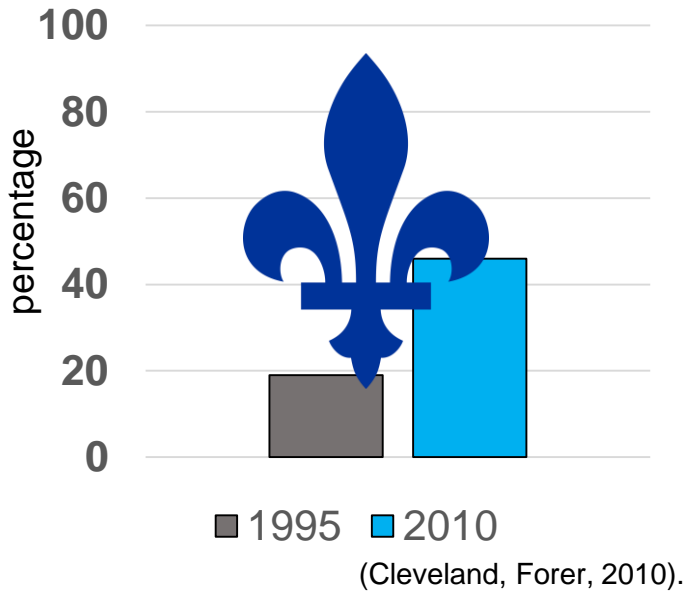
A Maternal Equity Gap Persists



Sources: *Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey; **General Social Survey; ***OECD, 2014)

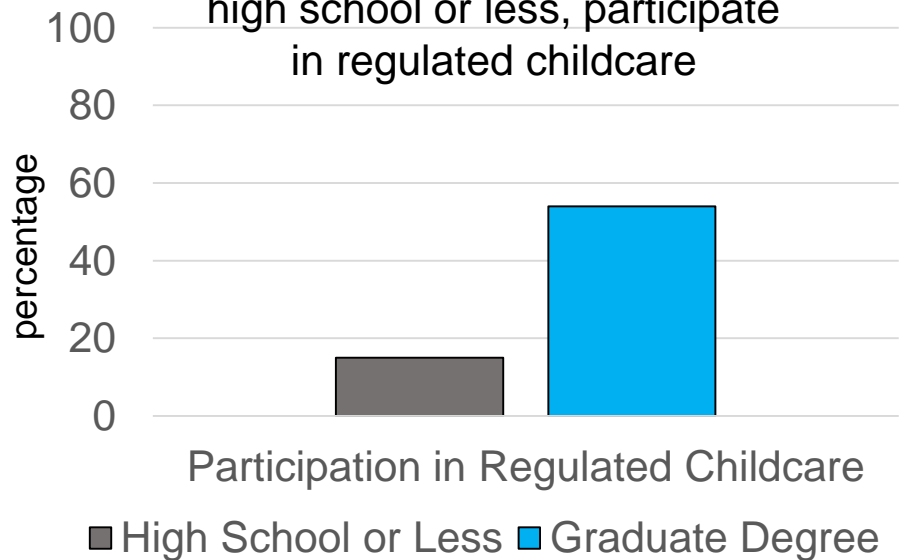
Child Care Challenges Persist

Access to regulated childcare has doubled since 1995



Outside Quebec the majority of public funding is targeted to 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



(Survey of YoungCanadians, 2010-2011).

Would Federal Funding Fueling the Commercial Sector?



The Federal government shows little interest in setting or enforcing standards in areas of provincial jurisdiction

Public funding for child care (as opposed to early education) appears to fuel the growth of for-profit care

An enhanced private sector infringes on a public presence in the delivery of early learning and childcare.



Moving Beyond a National Childcare Program is a Feminist Position

Viewed through an equity lens, policy debates about childcare MUST consider:

- 1) **Who is served (*the child*)**
- 2) **Who is doing the caring labour (*the gender, race and immigration status of the workforce*)**
- 3) **The auspice of the work (*a public, market service or private service*)**
- 4) **Under what conditions (*waged, unwaged, unionized/non unionized*).**

These factors influence the quality of services, which in turn impact families (parental employment, gender equality, work/life balance) and society (equity gap/social cohesion/inclusion).

Schools at the Centre of Equity

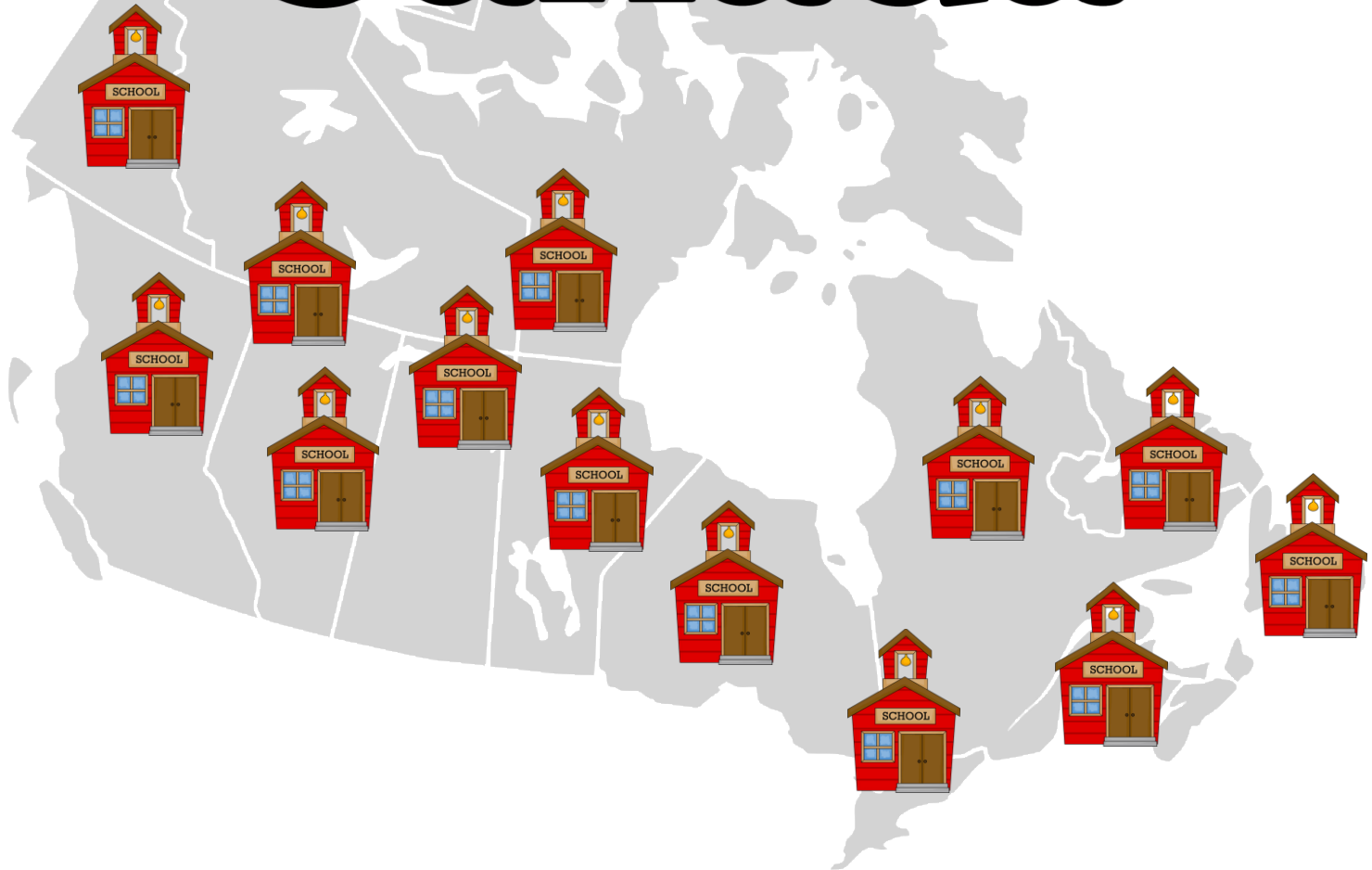
Public education is well placed to grow the care of children.

It has the infrastructure, facilities, public support

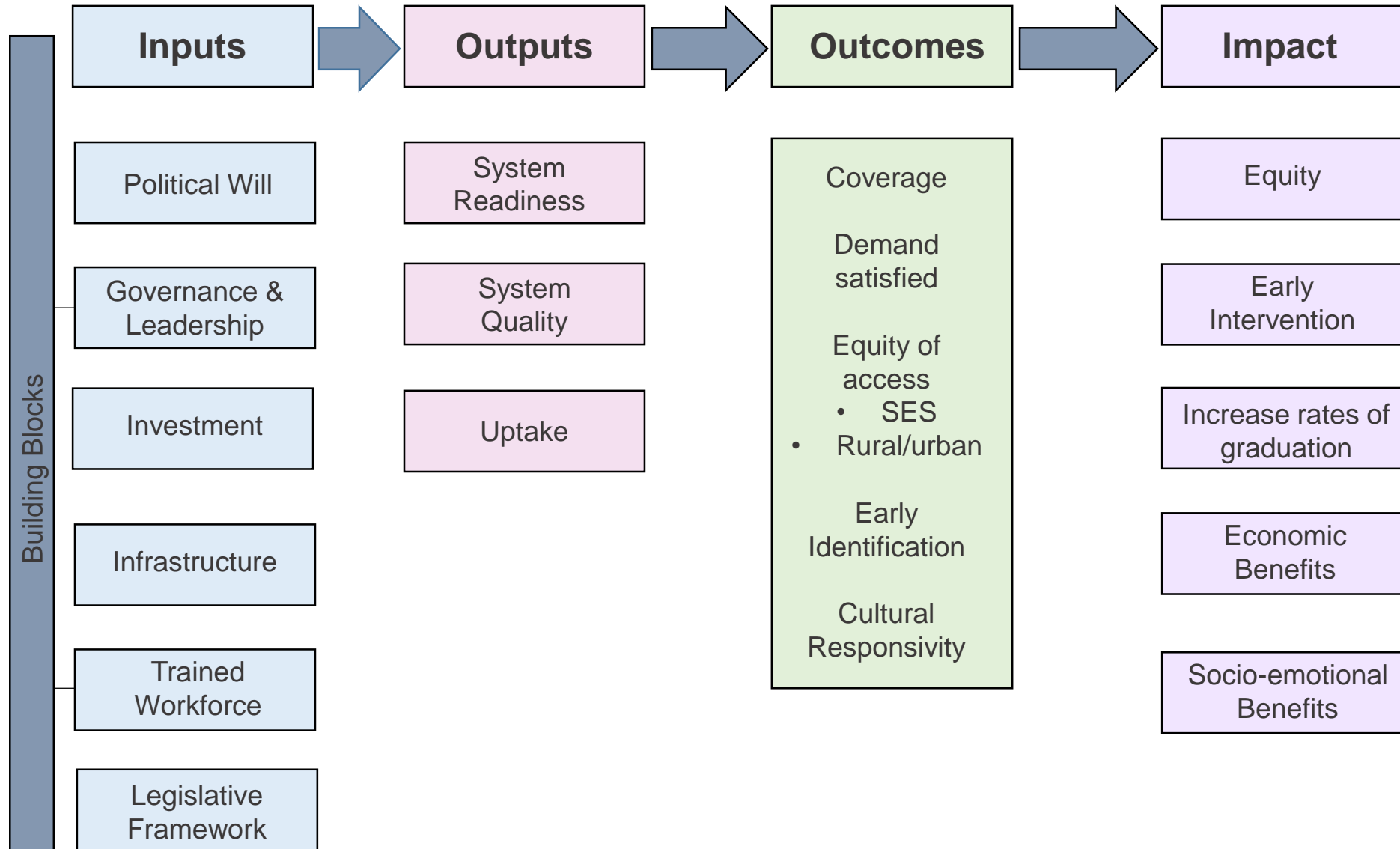
The Federal government has other leavers to support families including enhanced maternity/parental leave, child benefits, tax measures.



Canada



Public Policy Equity Prescription





Atkinson Centre

 UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
OISE | ONTARIO INSTITUTE
FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION

Thank you!

Email:

emis.akbari@georgebrown.ca

