

# THE CHALLENGE OF CARE: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN CANADA AND QUEBEC

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**I**ntroduction This paper examines a policy area at the heart of contemporary struggles in Canada around neoliberalism and welfare state restructuring: early childhood education and care (ECEC) for children under the age of six. ECEC policies and debates, and the strategic paths chosen by state actors in this policy realm, provide insights into how caring labour is valued, how gender equity is understood, and how citizenship is defined. We examine developments in the Quebec and Canadian governments' approaches over the past decade, with a view to identifying the opportunities and constraints for gender equity struggles, the valuing of care in social policy, and how resistance to neoliberalism may benefit from greater consideration of an ethics of care.

Since 1997, when the Parti Québécois (PQ) government set out to fund a universal system of child care, Quebec has been viewed by many child care advocates and feminists as a model. Indeed, the province was lauded by a 2004 report prepared for the OECD Directorate of Education for creating "one of the most ambitious early education and care policies in North America."<sup>1</sup> In contrast, other Canadian provinces were criticized for separating "care" and "education," and offering levels of funding well below those of most other OECD countries. Recent statistics suggest that Canada has one of the highest labour force participation rates of mothers with children under the age of six among the OECD countries. Relatedly, Statistics Canada reports that 53 percent of children aged six months to five years were in child care in 2001, compared with only 42 percent in 1995.<sup>2</sup> Yet, across Canada there is an inadequate patchwork of options for parents

needing child care for preschool-age children, or pre-and-after-school care. According to a 2004 OECD report, Canada spent only 0.2 percent of its GDP on pre-K and kindergarten programs for children aged three to six, or about half of the OECD average; it was therefore recommended that Canada's spending be increased<sup>3</sup> — a recommendation reiterated in a 2006 OECD report called "Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care."

A network of policy research and advocacy organizations in Canada has been pushing recommendations similar to those of the OECD for many years. Due in part to sustained lobbying of this sort, and to the growing focus of educators and policymakers on early learning and development, the Liberal minority government of Prime Minister Paul Martin began in October 2004 to act on creating a nationally funded ECEC program. The government committed to spending five billion dollars over five years across all provinces and territories to support the creation of high-quality, regulated child care spaces, promising improved life chances for many children. For many advocates of ECEC, ourselves included, the Liberal plan was welcomed as an important step forward, and is viewed as preferable to the policy subsequently implemented by the minority Conservative government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, which was elected in January 2006.

Yet key rationales for the policy proposed by the federal Liberals and for the policy implemented in Quebec in 1997 merit critical attention because they reinforce the capitalist logic of commodification and competition, and fail to challenge the unequal sexual division of caring labour. While recognizing the unique achievements of the package of family benefits introduced by the PQ in 1997, we identify similar fault lines in the debates regarding both this package and the Liberals' federal ECEC initiative. Thus our focus is on their similarities as universal (or dual income) breadwinner models,<sup>4</sup> which have been embraced in the name of "social investment."<sup>5</sup> This model's inability to resolve the conflicts experienced by many families in relation to Work-Life balance, parenting, and gender equity is, we suggest, important for two reasons. First, its inadequacies are part of the explanation for the difficulty that feminists, child care advocates, and others have had in fending off "parental choice" campaigns by both neoconservatives and neoliberal

erals. Second, and relatedly, the universal breadwinner model is only a limited vision of what feminists and their allies seek. Our intention in critiquing these two policies is to compare them to what, in our view, is a more genuinely progressive vision: one advanced by feminist theorists such as Nancy Fraser and Carole Pateman under the rubrics of the universal caregiver or gender equity model.<sup>6</sup>

Like Fraser, we believe that it is strategically essential to envisage a world in which men's and women's lives equally "integrate wage earning, caregiving, community activism, political participation, and involvement in the associational life of civil society — while also leaving time for some fun," and that "unless we are guided by this vision now, we will never get any closer to achieving it."<sup>7</sup> Thus, the shortcomings of the universal breadwinner model speak to the potential for a more radical project of welfare state reform — one based on gender equity and an ethic of care. Such a project, we argue, offers profound challenges to the neoliberal conception of citizenship.

In the first part of this paper, we analyze the discourse surrounding the federal Liberals' ECEC initiative in light of feminist work on citizenship, political economy, and care. Second, from a feminist-ethics-of-care perspective, we examine the PQ's family policy, and the direction taken by Jean Charest's Liberal government since April 2003. Finally, we consider family policy options and rationales for feminist strategizing around the goals of gender equity and a citizenship rooted in an ethic of care.

**Social Policy, Citizenship, and Welfare State Reform** Many feminist scholars of citizenship have underscored the patriarchal origin of welfare states and the manner in which women, precisely because of the sexual division of labour, have experienced differential access to and enjoyment of the rights and belonging that ought to come from holding formal citizenship. Feminist critiques of citizenship have been extended to consider the complex intersection of gender with other forms of hierarchy and oppression. These intersections are important to the analysis of caring labour, given that much care work (e.g., that of live-in domestic workers, nannies, and elder care workers) is both undervalued and performed by immigrant and racialized women.

In examining recent family policy debates in Canada, we find it especially useful to recall Nancy Fraser's ideal-type models with regard to the gendered nature of welfare states.<sup>8</sup> For Fraser, there are three potential models that might replace the Male Breadwinner Model that underpins the welfare state's origins. The first is the Universal Breadwinner Model, which aims to secure gender equity by facilitating women's paid employment. To varying degrees, this model recognizes the need for socialized child care services. The second is the Caregiver Parity Model, which seeks to support women who engage in care work, or who engage in a combination of care work and part-time paid employment. Caregiver allowances, maternity leave benefits, and family allowances are provided to supplement the income of family caregivers (predominantly women) so that they are not worse off, in terms of income security, because of their decision to care for children at home. The third is the Gender Equity Model, which seeks to make women and men combine both breadwinning and caregiving, with the aim that "the gendered opposition between breadwinning and caregiving" is dismantled.<sup>9</sup> Such an approach entails measures to delink income from work, to restructure work norms, and to transform the sexual division of caring labour.

The federal Liberal and PQ policies — notwithstanding significant differences — reflect a normative commitment to the universal breadwinner model more than to either caregiver parity or, importantly, gender equity. Although child care services have been viewed by feminists as an important social citizenship right for women — a condition for equal workforce participation and economic independence — the absence of an equal emphasis on an egalitarian sexual division of caring labour leaves too much unchanged. Moreover, this limited representation of sexual equality (equal workforce participation) easily assists a neoliberal hypervalorization of "independence" and an undervalorization of care relationships (as productive, meaningful, and constitutive of citizenship).

Since the 1990s, much feminist political economy work has focused on the implications of neoliberalism for gender equality and citizenship. Neoliberalism is seen to have negatively affected the ability of minoritized groups to make claims in the name of citizenship.<sup>10</sup> Neoliberalism has also

exacerbated existing inequalities among social groups, with women in particular shouldering greater unpaid/caring work responsibilities in the face of state cuts to social spending. Federally, Canada has been described as having moved from a “social liberal” welfare regime to a more liberal welfare regime through the 1980s and 1990s, with some shift towards reinvestment in social policy (certainly rhetorically) occurring in the new millennium.<sup>11</sup> Hence, the minimal universal benefit program for families with children (Family Allowance) put in place after the Second World War disappeared by the 1990s in favour of targetted programs, while government funding for child care has always been directed to low-income families to secure labour market participation.<sup>12</sup> Also speaking to the linkage of child care funding with labour market participation, the wage earner with the lower income in a working couple (typically women) may also claim a federal tax deduction for a portion of child care expenses.

In recent Liberal discourse, as in New Labour’s Third Way discourse,<sup>13</sup> a renewed emphasis on investment in ECEC programs in Canada has been presented as a foundation of equality of opportunity (by improving the educational opportunities of disadvantaged children, and meeting the need of parents — particularly women — for child care services in order to participate in the paid workforce), as well as a strategy for reducing child poverty. A central theme has been the importance of child care provision as a condition of greater labour market participation and less dependence on state-provided social assistance. Investment in child care and in maternity and parental leave benefits is secondarily linked to easing work-family conflict. As an economic investment, ECEC is predicted to pay long-term dividends by producing better educated, properly socialized, and productive citizens who will lessen demands on state welfare and reduce criminality. A related “investment in human capital argument” identifies ECEC as contributing to a globally competitive future workforce and national economy: investment in child care will improve school readiness, students’ achievements in school, and the overall skills and employability of the labour force (hence the independence of future citizens).<sup>14</sup>

The linkage, in recent political discourse, of investment in child care to

labour market competitiveness and state expenditure goals reflects the continuing dominance of a liberal conception of independent citizenship. The social security review undertaken by the Chrétien government after 1993 had two key targets: reducing child poverty and getting people off social assistance, thereby reducing state expenditure.<sup>15</sup> Child care expenditure was to have the “double benefit” of supporting employment (particularly that of lone mothers) and reducing the costs of child poverty. Mahon and Phillips argue that, even in the post-deficit era, in the early 2000s, the federal government’s “children’s agenda” bore the hallmark of “the neoliberal and ‘third way’ liberal/social democratic emphasis on getting people off of social assistance and into the (low-wage) labor market.”<sup>16</sup> The child care discourse of the Martin government (2004–2005) also stressed the underlying goals of workforce participation, labour market competitiveness, and independence.

It is with these articulations in mind that we examine the national ECEC program introduced by the federal Liberal government in 2004, as well as the policies introduced by the social democratic PQ government in Quebec in 1997. We see these policies as both reflecting, and potentially giving rise to, renewed claims-making for citizenship rights and gender equality. Thus, even in an era of neoliberalism, governments and social actors face not only constraints but also opportunities. At the same time, we believe that feminists need to be alert to the multiple meanings of these policy initiatives, including the ways in which their emphases and omissions provide opportunities for neoconservative mobilization, or the reinforcement of neoliberal conceptions of citizenship, and fail to move us in the direction of a gender equity welfare state model. We suggest that to fully understand the limits of, and possibilities opened up by, recent ECEC initiatives in Quebec and at the federal level, serious attention needs to be paid to the contributions of care ethic scholars to thinking about welfare state reform.

**Care Ethics** Although it is impossible to do justice here to the rich body of literature addressing an ethics of care, it is necessary to clarify our usage of the term. Fiona Williams provided an admirably concise summary of principles, issues, and policy implications of a “political ethics of care” in a

2001 essay, from which we draw the following four elements.<sup>17</sup> First, an ethics of care “demands that interdependence be seen as the basis of human interaction; in these terms, autonomy and independence are about the capacity for self-determination rather than the expectation of individual self-sufficiency,” which is so deeply engrained in the neoliberal definition of citizenship. Second, an ethics of care attributes moral worth to caring relationships, “whether based upon blood, kinship, sexual intimacy, friendship, collegiality, contract or service.” The human quality of care is not measurable in economic terms. As most can attest from personal experience, there is a limit to the ability of human services, such as nursing, teaching, or caring for the young or the old, to achieve economic efficiencies without sacrificing the quality of care. Third, an ethics of care is alert to power inequalities in care giving and care receiving that may be constituted through relations of gender, disability, age, ethnicity, race, nationality, class, and sexuality, among others. Fourth, and crucially, the establishment of an ethics of care in social policy requires, for a start, the restructuring of work/life time, financial and practical support to carers and those requiring care, meaningful choices, equal access to public space and transport, and antidiscrimination and antipoverty policies.<sup>18</sup>

The centrality of work/productivity/employment in both liberal and social democratic welfare regimes, and of the work ethic in the Third Way project of Prime Minister Tony Blair, reflect the deep-rootedness of the capitalist performance principle in modern societies. Following Herbert Marcuse, Ruth Levitas argues:

The main characteristic of the performance principle is that it keeps people working harder and longer than is necessary given the forces of production. It is an instrument of domination and social control, operating partly through the manipulation of wants and needs, and the deliberate construction of scarcity. The transition to a ‘new reality principle’ involves a qualitative change in needs and wants, leading to an increase in satisfactions without a progressive increase in material consumption by the currently affluent. Whereas the characteristics of the performance principle are domination and exploitation, those of the new reality principle are receptivity, sensitivity, nonviolence and tenderness.<sup>19</sup>

Thus a renewed focus on the meaning of care relationships is one way into a societal debate about human needs and the kind of institutions necessary to permit their fulfillment. Care ethics work brings with it new tools for analyzing and re-envisioning social policy. Time and resources for caring relationships are matters intimately connected to work norms and sustainable livelihoods. Discussion of Work-Life Balance is already familiar in European policy circles, and is becoming a focus of public policy research in Canada.<sup>20</sup> Williams suggests that Work-Life Balance discourse opens up space for designing policies according to societal priorities significantly different from those of work and profit. Radical European economists have been proposing for many years measures to reduce work time and to provide a “basic income.”<sup>21</sup> André Gorz, in particular, argues for the delinking of income from paid work.<sup>22</sup> Such policies clearly threaten the conditions of capitalist accumulation, and confront a now established regulatory regime of globalized capital flows. The prioritization of care ethics in social policy implies nothing less than the subordination of capital to human needs.

Placing caring relationships and caring labour at the centre of social policy design — along with gender equity — also challenges the predominantly masculinist and individualist construction of citizenship. Indeed, as Olena Hankivsky has argued with respect to the Canadian case, “we need to examine the far-reaching consequences of not prioritizing care and its values in the construction of our polity, its institutions, and in the content of our policies.”<sup>23</sup> One of those consequences, when it comes to how our society organizes care for young children, is the super-exploitation of the predominantly female care providers, who, as one child care worker put it, “are at the bottom, holding it all up.”<sup>24</sup>

### **The Federal Liberals’ ECEC Discourse**

#### ***Parental Choice and Gender Equity in Third Way Welfare State Reform***

As mentioned above, a number of rationales have been put forward by advocates of greater state investment in ECEC.<sup>25</sup> Most child care funding advocates refer to more than one of these rationales in making their cases to governments, although there are differences of emphasis. However, the predominant rationale in governmental discourse in recent years (especially



in the ECEC initiative of the Martin Liberals) is the linkage of ECEC to the goals of competitiveness in the global capitalist economy, and to the formation of self-sufficient citizens who do not make welfare claims, sometimes accompanied by the concern to reduce child poverty. Thus, the November 2002 report of the National Liberal Caucus Social Policy Committee, which provided “an implementation framework for a National Child Care Strategy,” stated:

The quest for a new ‘architecture’ is driven not only by the need for more effective political instruments to pursue the various purposes and objectives of social policy. There is growing support for the view that social policy should be seen as a profitable investment in the ‘knowledge economy.’ Strong and sustainable social programs will enhance Canada’s economic competitiveness by supplying the vital social infrastructure [of] health care, lifelong learning, a skilled and knowledgeable workforce, and solid supports for families with children that bestows comparative advantage on the global economic stage.

This rationale is echoed in the Liberal government’s Speech from the Throne in October 2004, which set out the new ECEC initiative, and in various speeches made by Prime Minister Martin.<sup>26</sup>

Defending the government’s policy in a House of Commons debate in February 2005, the Minister for Social Development, Ken Dryden, asserted: “Child development experts to economists, like Nobel laureate in economics, James Heckman, and Governor of the Bank of Canada, David Dodge, have been very clear in stating that an investment in early child development pays off far more than any other educational investment at any other time in a person’s life.”<sup>27</sup> At the same time, Dryden acknowledged the “ambivalence” of many parents regarding child care:

As parents, we are all ambivalent about child care. We are ambivalent because we are parents, because we feel guilty about not spending more time with our kids .... A recent study, as was cited by the Vanier Institute of the Family, has found that most moms and dads with preschool children would prefer that one parent stay home and take primary responsibility for raising the children. Again, that is not surprising .... For economic reasons, for reasons of lifestyle, for reasons of independence and lots more, in the great majority of cases both parents, even with young children, are in the workforce. We can feel guilty and we can wish it were not so, but it is so.

The Third Way social investment rationale underpinning the Liberals' new child care initiatives was supported by various advocates of a national child care program. For example, former Saskatchewan Premier Roy Romanow, and former Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick Margaret McCain, argued that a national child care program "could be as significant to nation-building as medicare and public education," and, "[d]one well, it will provide multiple dividends: addressing child poverty, school performance and work-force productivity."<sup>28</sup> Martha Friendly, a leading researcher and advocate of a national child care policy, argued that "investments in early childhood development are central to evidence-based strategies for lifelong learning that will contribute to Canada's social fabric, competitiveness, and increased productive growth in the twenty-first century."<sup>29</sup> Similarly, policy interventions by the Canada Policy Research Network (CPRN) — a major policy think tank — while also linking ECEC to the "public goods" of "higher levels of inclusion and equity," characterized government investment in ECEC as "a crucial pillar of the knowledge-based economy and society, as well as a policy instrument for ensuring high employment rates."<sup>30</sup>

These Third Way rationales for ECEC in much of the campaigning for a national child care program have displaced, to some extent, the emphasis of the women's movement in the 1970s and 1980s on gender equality as the guiding rationale for supporting a national child care program.<sup>31</sup> Mahon observes that "gender equality is but one of the objectives that may be advanced for providing public support for nonparental child care and feminists often choose to present the case in ways that stress these other objectives in order to gain new allies and thus to win the battle for public support."<sup>32</sup> The alleviation of child poverty, or ECEC as a "national investment in future 'knowledge-based economy' workers,"<sup>33</sup> are such objectives, and Mahon and Phillips' account of feminist strategy in the 1990s demonstrates that — in the context of federal government withdrawal of funding for women's organizations — child care activists "joined forces with a broader coalition under the banner of fighting child poverty," viewed as a "potential chink in neoliberalism's armour."<sup>34</sup>

Liberal politicians have chosen, most often, to talk about child care in terms of support for working families, or for working parents, rather than

support for women's workforce participation. Despite the efforts of some women's and child care advocacy organizations, the women's equality rationale was — outside of Quebec — seldom heard in media reports or political speeches during the 2004–2005 debate. The discourse of the Martin Liberals, like that of Blair's New Labour Party, emphasized measures to improve equality of opportunity while denying the existence of necessary inequalities produced by the supremacy of the market over society, and ignoring questions of racial and sexual discrimination.

***Parental Choice and Gender Equity in Neoliberal, Neoconservative Welfare State Reform*** The Conservatives — along with their “satellite organizations”<sup>35</sup> and media supporters — represented the Liberal policy as coercive,<sup>36</sup> biased towards workforce participation and dual-earner families (hence unsupportive of “traditional” child-rearing arrangements), and as disrespectful of parents' competence to raise their own children. Utilizing a misleading counterdiscourse of “allowing families [rather than the state] to choose” a child care option that meets their needs, the Conservatives proposed a maximum \$1,200 taxable yearly benefit for the parents of any child under the age of six. Although the Conservatives' universal child allowance does nothing substantial to make withdrawal from work to care for children an option for parents, or to address the severe shortage of regulated child care spaces in the country, their framing of the Liberals' ECEC policy as failing to provide financial support for parental caregiving resonated with many parents.

The English language media tended to present the alternatives on offer in a polarized fashion — as a choice between universal child care services (a universal breadwinner model) on the one hand, and a greater measure of financial support for families (i.e., women) caring for children at home (a familialist model) on the other hand.<sup>37</sup> Other measures that had been earlier introduced by the Liberals to support parental caregiving (particularly the extension of maternity and parental leave benefits in 2001) tended to be ignored, as was the utter inadequacy of the Conservatives' monthly child care allowance as an income supplement for caregivers.<sup>38</sup> The Liberals' emphasis on the knowledge economy rationale for ECEC, along with their dismissal

of many parents' ambivalence about not having a wider pallet of choices, contributed to this framing of the debate.

With the Liberals increasingly on the defensive in the electoral campaign of 2005–2006, feminists who supported both a system of publicly funded, universal child care and income support for caregivers (among other elements of a gender equity model) found themselves defending the national ECEC funding agreements as a large step forward on a longer road.<sup>39</sup> Following the election of the Harper Conservatives, Canadians have neither a universal breadwinner model, nor a universal caregiver model, only the *status quo ante*. One reading of this setback is that while many women (and no doubt some men, too) need and want both employment and publicly funded, universal child care services, they also want a choice — currently unavailable to many — to stay at home with their preschool children and not to be penalized financially or by loss of employment for doing so.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, such a conclusion is compatible with the findings of the Vanier Institute of the Family on families' child care preferences, given existing options.<sup>41</sup> Many parents are not persuaded by Third Way arguments that focus on the functionality of ECEC for future economic growth and prosperity, or a globally competitive labour force, and may even be suspicious of this instrumentalization of child care.

Extending paid maternity and parental leave benefits, making them more generous (so as to enable more people to take advantage of them), or delinking them altogether from insurable employment earnings, are costly measures for states and employers, especially if they are combined with publicly funded, universal child care services. Such measures do not encourage, but on the contrary, may reduce workforce participation and dependence upon wage labour. Thus they do not conform to a neoliberal or Third Way vision of independent citizenship. Rather, measures that acknowledge and support the desire of many parents to spend time with their young children, and the need for a restructuring of the sexual division of labour so as not to marginalize women as caregivers (including reforms to work norms and to parental leave benefits), may be viewed as elements of a quite different vision of citizenship — one rooted in an ethics of care, gender equity, and social solidarity.

**Quebec's Family Policy** Under the premiership of Lucien Bouchard from 1996–2001, and Bernard Landry from 2001–2003, the PQ acted on a commitment to make ECEC a provincial priority. According to former Minister for the Family Pauline Marois, one of the explanations for the PQ's adoption of the 1997 family policy was the accumulation of research demonstrating the connections between ECEC and “longer term issues like school dropout, unemployment, and social exclusion.”<sup>42</sup> Marois gave special weight to the study commissioned by the Bouchard government, *Un Québec fou de ses enfants* (1991),<sup>43</sup> which “showed how every dollar spent on preschool education saved six dollars of subsequent expenditures.”<sup>44</sup> The government identified the major objectives of the new family policy as the promotion of child development and equal opportunity; the reconciliation of parental and occupational responsibilities; equity among families (to be achieved by providing additional assistance to those with low incomes, while maintaining universal support in certain areas); and to enable parents to stay with their children following birth or adoption.<sup>45</sup>

The provincial government undertook to finance approximately 80 percent of the cost of the child care and after-school programs, with parent fees covering about 20 percent. The 1997 White Paper on family policy, *Les enfants au coeur de nos choix*, proposed the eventual phasing out of commercial (for-profit) child care; government subsidies were to go to the nonprofit, community-based Centres de la Petite Enfance (CPEs). (The commercial sector subsequently negotiated inclusion in eligibility for subsidies, although these, initially, were set at a rate lower than those provided to the CPEs.<sup>46</sup>) In 2003, Quebec spent approximately \$1.8 billion on child care (a whopping 68 percent of all the provincial and territorial expenditure on child care in Canada combined).<sup>47</sup> Spaces in the CPEs were to be affordable for all parents, regardless of income. Parents would pay five dollars per day, with the exception of low-income working parents and parents on social assistance, whose fees would be further subsidized. In exchange for this subsidized service, parents gave up the right to claim child care expenses as a Quebec tax credit.<sup>48</sup>

Between March 1997 and March 2001, the total number of places in child care facilities in Quebec grew by 54,386, or almost 70 percent (to a

total of 133,250 places).<sup>49</sup> However, the PQ government soon found that the existing network could not accommodate demand. The *Institut de la statistique du Québec* estimated in 2001 that 85,000 children were on waiting lists for a child care space.<sup>50</sup> Primary schools were also being encouraged to create child care services. Between 2001 and 2004, the supply of regulated child care spaces was increased by another 50,000 spaces.<sup>51</sup>

The enormous demand for affordable, quality child care has significantly increased the demand for a trained ECEC workforce. Prior to 1997, Quebec's standards for staff-child ratios and staff qualifications had been "among the least demanding in the country."<sup>52</sup> Subsequently, programs for training child care workers in early education and in the management of child care centres were created.<sup>53</sup> The PQ government aimed to create 12,000 new early childhood educator jobs between 2000 and 2005.<sup>54</sup> As well, improved wages and working conditions, including a negotiated salary grid and pension plan, have increased recognition of the child care workforce. Quebec is the only jurisdiction in Canada where child care workers' salaries are set through a centralized collective bargaining process involving two major unions (the main one for child care workers being the *Confédération des syndicats nationaux*, or CSN), the government, and employer representatives. It is significant that of the 31,000 unionized, centre-based child care staff across Canada in 2003, 25,000 were in Quebec.<sup>55</sup>

In 2000, the starting salary of a child care worker with a junior college (CEGEP) diploma was only \$20,293.<sup>56</sup> Following a threatened strike and a government settlement with the unions in 1999, child care workers' wages are estimated to have increased by an average of 38 percent between 2000 and 2003.<sup>57</sup> Wages of unionized child care workers in Quebec were reported to be between \$13.86 and \$18.35 per hour in 2005,<sup>58</sup> putting them substantially above those of child care workers elsewhere in the country.<sup>59</sup> However, wages in this sector remain low in comparison with those of other public sector workers, and pay equity is a key issue in the ongoing negotiations between child care workers (represented by the CSN) and the Quebec government.

The 1997 reform also proposed to link parental insurance to earned income rather than to the duration of work, making leaves available to any

parent who had earned just \$2,000 or more in the year prior to birth. The funding rate was set at 75 percent of the previous year's income — a rate significantly higher than the 55 percent coverage offered by the federal government's parental insurance scheme. The reform also proposed a specific paternity leave of up to five weeks, whose payments would be based on the father's income. This paternity leave, unique in North America, was implemented in January 2006, and it will take some time to ascertain its effect on the number of men taking leaves. These measures indicate a greater commitment on the part of the PQ than on the part of the federal Liberals to accommodate parental care.<sup>60</sup>

Quebec's 1997 reforms also introduced a new family allowance program targeted to low-income families, and covering expenses from birth to the age of 18. This policy had a redistributive aim; however, it also ended the preexisting universal family allowance and birth allowances (*allocations à la naissance*). Jenson notes that "the major losers in this shift to a single, targeted family allowance were middle-income families with more than two children. They no longer can count, for example, on a birth allowance injecting up to \$8,000 into the family treasury."<sup>61</sup> The ending of the universal family allowance and the birth allowance, and the central place of publicly funded daycare in the family policy conveyed the message that parents should go back to work after the child's first year of life. These changes were protested by Quebec's "family movement," which supports state funding to socialize the costs of child raising, but believes that the money should be directed to parents to use as they see fit, that is, to supplement the income of stay-at-home caregivers or to use nonregulated care as alternatives to the publicly funded child care system.<sup>62</sup> Concerns raised by child development experts who believe that children under the age of two are — given the average quality of care in daycare centres — better off in a home environment have also been widely popularized in Quebec.<sup>63</sup>

To counter the opposition of the family movement, the PQ government and the civil society supporters of the new family policy argued that its programs are needed by the more than 72 percent of the Quebec women with children who are in the paid workforce.<sup>64</sup> The objective of making parenting more "harmonious" with work force participation was shared by

Quebec's women's movement. State-provided child care had been on the list of demands of the *Fédération des femmes du Québec* (FFQ) since the mid-1960s, and was supported as well by the CSN and a strong grassroots movement. Again, this has much to do with the particular context of Quebec. The union movement is significantly stronger in Quebec than in other parts of Canada, or in North America.<sup>65</sup> Approximately 41.4 percent of the Quebec labour force is unionized, as compared to 30.4 percent in the rest of Canada.<sup>66</sup> It can also be noted that the FFQ was, by the 1970s, supported from within the provincial state by "femocrats," and has remained a vibrant force until today (in contrast to the diminished influence of the women's movement in Canada outside Quebec).<sup>67</sup>

While we take the struggles of the feminist movement and unions to be especially important in understanding how Quebec came to adopt a family policy so distinct among liberal welfare states, other interests and actors have, of course, also helped to shape Quebec's approach to family policy (including demographers and education experts). As noted, reports produced in the 1990s had concluded that accessible child care and education for preschool children were essential to improve the school performance and completion rates of children from low-income families, and to improve their chances of healthy, productive lives.<sup>68</sup> The Quebec government's 1997 White Paper on family policy, *Les enfants au coeur de nos choix*, solidified these linkages. ECEC was presented as being consistent with the state's goals of improving Quebec's education system and making its workforce competitive with those of other knowledge-based economies. The labour force participation objectives were clearly stated in a discussion paper published by the *Ministre de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille* (MESSF), entitled "Toward a Policy on Work-Family Balance."<sup>69</sup> Quebec's post-1997 family policy also aimed to induce parents receiving social assistance to enter the labour market, and to facilitate parents' workforce participation in general. As Jane Beach et al. put it, in Quebec, "ECEC was a major component of a global strategy for social and economic development."<sup>70</sup>

***Parental Choice, Gender Equity, and Neoliberal Economics*** In the run-up to the 2003 election, the Action démocratique du Québec party proposed



to give parents vouchers that they could use to pay for any kind of child care, using the argument of parental choice, much like the Harper Conservatives. The Liberals sought the votes of the parents unhappy about having lost their birth allowances and the universal family allowance by proposing to increase family allowances.<sup>71</sup> At the same time, the Liberals proposed raising the share that parents pay for child care, using a sliding scale of fees according to income. The Liberals also supported private daycare providers, on the grounds that private facilities could be opened far more quickly than the CPEs with their elected community boards.

The Charest government has been critical of its predecessor's social spending commitments, and has sought to reduce social expenditure. In relation to the province's family policy, this has included cutting the budget for publicly funded child care by \$25 million a year, raising parent fees, reducing operating grants and eliminating capital funding for the CPEs in 2004, passing legislation to decertify unionized family child care providers in 2003, and dragging its feet on implementing pay equity and salary increases for unionized child care workers.<sup>72</sup> The government presented its Child Assistance tax credit for dependent children as a \$550 million "reduction in the tax burden," albeit one targeted to middle-class and low-income families.<sup>73</sup> Significantly, the Liberals also played the parental choice card, presenting the tax credit as a response to the wishes of parents who choose not to place their children in the government-funded centres, but to have them looked after in the private network or at home. "Thanks to this measure," said the Finance Minister in his 2004 budget speech, "we are giving parents more freedom and making the situation *fair* both for parents who pay the reduced contribution for their daycare space and for those who turn to other types of child care."<sup>74</sup>

The Educational Child Care Act (Bill 124), forced through the National Assembly in 2005, included a number of reforms to the regulation of CPEs and home daycares that had the effect of reducing the emphasis on ECEC as an objective of the child care policy. The *Association Québécoise des centres de la petite enfance* (AQCPPE) argued that, under the guise of addressing problems with waiting lists and atypical needs for child care (i.e., the need for more flexible arrangements), the government was fundamentally changing

the orientation of the child care model.<sup>75</sup> This included a shift from treating the centres as “an educational service and support for their parents” to “the simple notion of educational child care service in which children are cared for while their parents are at work”; the facilitation of for-profit centres; the governmental centralization of standardization and management of CPEs — removing community governance from the child care centre network; and turning home-based child care providers into subcontractors working under the umbrella of home daycare coordination agencies (while before they had been associated with the CPEs, had a role in CPE decision-making, and had access to CPE educational resources).

There has been a substantial redirection of government funding from the community-based, nonprofit CPEs to the for-profit child care sector. The Charest government — along with the *Association des Garderies Privées du Québec* (AGPQ) — has repeatedly claimed that the private sector can create spaces more quickly and cheaply than the CPEs. The fact that this difference is achieved by the for-profits spending less on programming and paying lower salaries — hence, by lowering the quality of care — has been documented by researchers, but appears to be of little concern to the government.<sup>76</sup> Jenson describes the outcome of the Charest government’s “neoliberal pushing back” of the PQ’s model as “a publicly funded child care system emptied of much of its ECEC content, increasingly responsive to market signals rather than social justice concerns [or a] notion of being part of a societal project.”<sup>77</sup>

This brief account of the twists and turns of ECEC policy in Quebec demonstrates the contradictions generated by the Liberals’ attempts to regulate the universal breadwinner model. The aim of publicly subsidized child care is to facilitate women’s workforce participation, shifting caring labour to the commodity sphere or to the public sector (and creating increased demand for service providers). Yet, publicly subsidized child care signifies a failure of the private market and conflicts with the neoliberal drive to reduce state expenditure. The reflex is to reprivatize child care (turn it back to families and to the commercial providers), thereby reducing state spending and promoting self-sufficiency in familial form. Feminists object to the familial solution on gender equality grounds, viewing a universal

breadwinner model as at least a step forward for women. Meanwhile, the sexual division of caring labour remains largely unchanged.

Further complicating matters for feminists and parents are sometimes divergent expert discourses regarding the developmental needs of preschool children. Expert discourse on the value of ECEC for child development problematizes the familial and private market solutions, by insisting that these auspices cannot be relied upon to provide optimal conditions for early childhood learning and socialization — particularly for children aged three to six.<sup>78</sup> Experts in child development also emphasize the critical nature of the first two years of life for child-parent attachment, and raise questions about the one-sidedness of family policies that emphasize workforce participation while providing little support for parents to stay at home with their children during these early years. As scientific paradigms about early childhood development and psychological well-being shift, and as the demographic and social conditions of parenting change, parental — and particularly women's — expectations about work-family balance may be expected to change as well. Canadian women having children today are, increasingly, more educated and older than they were in previous decades. It may be that — within this group — the decision to interrupt or postpone careers to have children, combined with current ideas about parenting and child development, is associated both with different expectations about the experience (and requirements) of parenting, and different understandings of gender equality and freedom. Thus it is important to consider that there may be generationally different experiences that animate demands for support for families and for the restructuring of Work-Life Balance.

The emphasis on publicly funded, universally accessible, and high-quality child care provision serves the egalitarian objectives of facilitating women's participation in the workforce, socializing the costs of raising children, and improving the life chances of children from poor families. However, the Third Way family policy has not significantly advanced the objectives of gender equity in the domestic sphere, that is, by involving men in caregiving, by substantially reducing or eliminating the financial/security penalties incurred by caregivers who choose to stay at home, or by reforming work norms/legislation to improve workers' flexibility with regard to caring labour.

And, while child care sector workers are now better paid in Quebec than in most other parts of the country — due mainly to increasing demand for their services and unionization — their labour and qualifications continue to be undervalued within both public and private sectors.

Thus the neoliberal state has no way of resolving the contradictions generated by its desire to have its cake and eat it, too — that is, to have women fully employed (a universal breadwinner model) and to leave childraising up to the private sphere (a familialist/private market model). Moreover, the Third Way rationale for social investment in ECEC, which emphasizes future labour market competitiveness, parents' workforce participation, and independence, has proven problematic for building the consensus necessary even for a universal breadwinner model federally, and for sustaining it in the case of Quebec. In the recent discursive framing of policy options, the possibility of a gender equity model that truly addresses our needs for Work-Life Balance, values care relationships, and redefines citizenship on the bases of equal responsibilities for men and women with regard to caring labour has all but disappeared from view. For this reason, an ethic of care needs to become central to our strategic and policy choices.

**Parental Choice, Gender Equity and an Ethics of Care** Although the PQ's parental leave provisions were a significant improvement over federal policy, in neither case does social policy sufficiently prioritize a care ethic that recognizes as legitimate the needs of both those who give and those who receive care — whether in the paid or the unpaid spheres. Where caring labour in the public sector has been valorized, this has been due, primarily, to the efforts of the work forces themselves, their unions, and users of their services (such as parent advocates of better wages for child care workers, relatives of persons in elder care facilities who demand more funding and higher staff-patient ratios, or public supporters of teachers and nurses). Women's organizations and unions have also drawn attention to the highly feminized character of caring labour in the paid sphere, and have attributed its comparatively poor remuneration to deeply engrained societal sexism. By comparison, less attention has been paid to the racialized nature of low-paid care occupations.

Having extended the length of maternity and parental leaves in 2001, while initiating transfers to the provinces to help fund ECEC services,<sup>79</sup> the federal Liberals focused in 2004–2005 on significantly increasing (by \$4 billion) their next five-year spending commitment on ECEC, and — initially — on tying this funding (to the provinces) to investment in child care services. While spending in both these program areas remained inadequate to meet either parental caregiver or socialized child care needs, government discourse did not recognize the legitimacy and intrinsic value of care as a citizenship responsibility — one that should be equally shared by men and women — but rather emphasized the importance to working parents of child care as a support for employment. This notable State preference for a commodification role<sup>80</sup> over support for noncommodified relationships that are viewed as constitutive of citizenship, reflects the undervaluing of caring labour that typifies the universal breadwinner model. It is an approach advocated, moreover, by social democratic theorists like Esping-Andersen, who sees the absence of child care services as a barrier to women's employment and to the growth of postindustrial service occupations (since dual-earner families need to purchase goods and services they no longer have time to produce themselves), but who does not consider the ways in which commodification also generates profound conflicts.<sup>81</sup> In short, there is a policy failure to reflect on the interdependence among human beings, and the ways in which noncommodity relationships “hold up,” and are equal in worth to, activities performed in the paid sphere. To address this failure, we need to turn, once again, to a universal caregiver model that can embrace an ethic of care.

An ethic that values care carries the potential to subvert neoliberalism's constructions of citizenship, human needs, and human nature. It challenges, potentially, the centrality of employment as a measure and criterion of social entitlement. Linked to a feminist critique of the sexual division of labour, it calls into question the universal breadwinner model as a satisfactory form of gender equality. It brings into sharp relief the irreconcilability of neoliberalism's conception of the independent citizen with the real needs and desires of individuals as they pass through the life cycle. The policy alternatives advocated by social and state actors in relation to child care (as well

as other areas of social policy) are inevitably rooted in valuations of care and interdependence, as well as gender equity. The policies adopted shape not only the conditions of caring and caring labour in various spheres, but the very foundations of citizenship.

The desire to be at home with one's children in the early years is keenly felt by many parents, but inadequately supported by public policy. This is the chord that family movements and conservative critics of the universal breadwinner model are striking with many parents. At the same time, given that much of the centre or home-based child care provision in the country is — by all accounts — mediocre (with only the nonprofit centres generally rating “good” to “very good” in quality of care studies), parents using paid services frequently have anxieties about the choices available to them. Clearly, an underfunded child care system will produce poor quality care and long waiting lists, thereby enabling neoliberals to make claims about the superiority of turning child care over to the private sector. The low wages of care providers and educators in this sector contribute to the scarcity of well-qualified workers and high turnovers in staff. The parallels to the health and education sectors and the undermining of these services as public goods are apparent. What we need, then, is a family policy package that offers both high-quality, universal ECEC programs as a public good, and better options to enable parents to stay at home with their preschool-aged children. The existing articulations of parental choice and gender equality within the Third Way, neoliberal, and neoconservative projects have allowed for consideration of only two alternatives for family policy: a familial and market-based male breadwinner model, or a universal breadwinner model. A third alternative — a gender equity model that embodies an ethic of care — has yet to be seriously pursued. To get there, we need to generate more discursive space for an ethics of care in social policy debates.

Elements of this third alternative — in addition to publicly funded, universal child care — might include caregiver and family allowances, longer and more generously funded maternity and parental leaves, substantial “daddy leaves,” work time reduction,<sup>82</sup> greater work flexibility for employees, pension reform, and basic income proposals. The purpose of such reforms should be to give individuals greater flexibility to adapt work to the needs of their life

cycles and care relationships, rather than the other way around. They should also aim to restructure the sexual division of labour — to move us towards a model of gender equity in which men participate fully in caring labour.

A more holistic approach to family policy may be critical to resisting the direction of the Charest government in Quebec, and of the Conservatives federally, as they devalue the caring labour of both early childhood development workers and parents, and perpetuate significant inequalities in the quality of children's early developmental experiences, while claiming to honour the needs of families. Although the commitment to a universal breadwinner model has been a longstanding objective of the women's movement, and there was understandable excitement around the advances represented by the post-1997 Quebec family policy and the 2004 federal Liberal proposals, the absence of a stronger valorization of caring relationships and caring labour has, we argue, contributed to their vulnerability to attack from the Right.

The predominant ECEC discourse articulated by state officials in Canada and Quebec in the past decade, which constructs ECEC as an important underpinning for economic productivity and global competitiveness and for the formation of independent citizens, is incapable of challenging the neoliberal performance principle. Resistance to the disciplining of market relationships and to the domination of market over society calls for a discourse that acknowledges the real stresses and desires of individuals with regard to parenting, elder care, and Work-Life Balance, and that respects the needs of young children and elders. The struggle for gender equity ought not to end with a universal breadwinner welfare state model that leaves the sexual division of labour in the private sphere essentially untouched and the criteria of full citizenship profoundly exclusive of caring labour.

## Notes

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1. OECD Directorate for Education, *Early Childhood Education and Care Policy: Canada Country Note* (October 2004), p. 5.
2. Statistics Canada, *Report* (7 February 2005).
3. OECD, *Early Childhood Education*.

4. See Nancy Fraser, "After the Family Wage: Gender Equity and the Welfare State," *Political Theory* 22/4 (1994), pp. 591–618.
5. For Third Way theorist Anthony Giddens, the "social investment" state invests in "human capital" to create more opportunities for people to be self-reliant. See *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 99–128.
6. See Fraser, "After the Family Wage," and Carole Pateman, "The Patriarchal Welfare State," in Amy Gutmann, (ed.), *Democracy and the Welfare State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).
7. Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), p. 62.
8. Fraser, "After the Family Wage."
9. *Ibid.*, p. 611.
10. Jane Jenson and Susan Phillips, "Regime Shift: New Citizenship Practices in Canada," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 14 (Autumn 1996), pp. 111–135; Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Christina Gabriel, *Selling Diversity: Immigration, Multiculturalism, Employment Equity and Globalization* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2002).
11. Janet Siltanen, "Paradise Paved? Reflections on the Fate of Social Citizenship in Canada," *Citizenship Studies* 6/4 (2002), pp. 395–414; Janine Brodie, "Citizenship and Solidarity: Reflections on the Canadian Way," *Citizenship Studies* 6/4 (2002), pp. 377–394; Gregg M. Olsen, *The Politics of the Welfare State — Canada, Sweden, and the United States* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2002); Shereen Ismael, *Child Poverty and the Canadian Welfare State: From Entitlement to Charity* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2006).
12. Rianne Mahon and Susan Phillips, "Dual-Earner Families Caught in a Liberal Welfare Regime? The Politics of Child Care Policy in Canada," in Sonya Michel and Rianne Mahon, (eds.), *Child Care Policy at the Crossroads: Gender and Welfare State Restructuring* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 191–218.
13. The term "Third Way," associated with British sociologist Anthony Giddens (see *The Third Way*), was also adopted by Tony Blair to characterize the orientation of the New Labour Party, and by Gerhard Schroeder, leader of the German Social Democrats. It signals the idea of a new path for progressive politics that falls between neoliberalism and "old" social democracy.
14. For experts in the field of early childhood education and development, the objectives of ECEC have to do with the physical, psychological, and emotional growth and well-being of children, based upon research in neuroscience and developmental psychology. See, for example, Daniel J. Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are* (New York: London: Guilford, 1999), and the summary of Donna Lero's address to the Canadian Council on Social Development conference (Winnipeg, November 2004).
15. Mahon and Phillips, "Dual-Earner Families," p. 203.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
17. Fiona Williams, "In and Beyond New Labour: Towards a New Political Ethics of Care," *Critical Social Policy* 21/4 (2001), pp. 467–493.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 487–488.
19. Ruth Levitas, "Against Work: A Utopian IncurSION into Social Policy," *Critical Social Policy* 21/4 (2001), p. 461.
20. See reports by Quebec's *Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille*, the Conference Board of Canada, the Vanier Institute of the Family, the Centre for Families, Work, and Well-being (University of Guelph), and Canadian Policy Research Networks.
21. See, for example, Alain Lipietz, André Gorz, Pierre Larrourou, Claus Offe, Philippe Van Parijs, and the Basic Income Earth Network/BIEN/Index.html>.
22. André Gorz, *Reclaiming Work: Beyond the Wage-Based Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).
23. Olena Hankivsky, *Social Policy and the Ethic of Care* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), p. 7.
24. Unnamed agency-based family child care provider, quoted in Jane Beach, Jane Bertrand, Barry Forer, Donna Michal, and Jocelyn Tougas, *Working for Change: Canada's Child Care Workforce: Labour Market Update* (Ottawa: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 2004), p. 9.
25. A list of organizations lobbying on this front may be found on the website of the Childcare



- Resource and Research Unit (CRRU), <<http://childcarecanada.org/links/index.html>>.
26. Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Speech from the Throne to Open the First Session of the 38th Parliament*, 1st Session 3 (5 October 2004), <[http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&Page=archivemartin&Sub=speechesdiscours&Doc=speech\\_20041005\\_274\\_e.htm](http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&Page=archivemartin&Sub=speechesdiscours&Doc=speech_20041005_274_e.htm)> (accessed 8 December 2007); Paul Martin's reply: Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Reply to the Speech from the Throne*, 38th Parliament, 1st Session 3 (5 October 2004), <[http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&Page=archivemartin&Sub=speechesdiscours&Doc=speech\\_20041006\\_275\\_e.htm](http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&Page=archivemartin&Sub=speechesdiscours&Doc=speech_20041006_275_e.htm)> (accessed 8 December 2007); Paul Martin, speech to senior public servants at the Museum of Civilization, Gatineau, Québec (20 September 2005), <[http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&Page=archivemartin&Sub=speechesdiscours&Doc=speech\\_20050920\\_586\\_e.htm](http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&Page=archivemartin&Sub=speechesdiscours&Doc=speech_20050920_586_e.htm)> (accessed 8 December 2007).
  27. Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates and Proceedings (Hansard)*, 38th Parliament, 1st Session 57 (15 February 2005).
  28. Roy Romanow and Margaret McCain, "Stand on Guard for Childcare," *The Globe and Mail* (4 February 2005), p. A13.
  29. Martha Friendly, "Strengthening Canada's Social and Economic Foundations: Next Steps for Early Childhood Education and Child Care," *Policy Options* (March 2004), p. 51.
  30. See Eva Lazar, "Social Investment: Not a Matter of Either/Or," *The Toronto Star* (17 January 2006), p. A17, and Jane Jenson, "Canada's New Social Risks: Directions for a New Social Architecture," CPRN National Architecture Papers Research Report F/43, Family Network (Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2004), p. 41.
  31. Famously, the Chair of the 1983 Royal Commission on Equality in Employment, Rosalie Abella, characterized child care as "the ramp that provides equal access to the workforce for mothers" (*Report of the Royal Commission on Equality of Employment* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1984). For an overview of women's organizing, see Annis May Timpson, *Driven Apart: Women's Employment Equality and Child Care in Canadian Public Policy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001).
  32. Rianne Mahon, "Gender and Welfare State Restructuring: Through the Lens of Child Care," in Sonya Michel and Rianne Mahon, (eds.), *Child Care Policy at the Crossroads: Gender and Welfare State Restructuring* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 20.
  33. *Ibid.*
  34. Mahon and Phillips, "Dual-Earner Families," p. 202. See also Alexandra Dobrowolsky and Jane Jenson, "Shifting Representations of Citizenship: Canadian Politics of 'Women' and 'Children,'" *Social Politics* 11/2 (2004), pp. 154–180.
  35. For example: Advocates for Child Care Choice [Ontario], Real Women, LifeSiteNews.com, Institute for Canadian Values, Alberta Federation of Women United for Families, Fund the Child Coalition, Focus on the Family Canada.
  36. See, for example, Conservative MP Rona Ambrose's statements in the House of Commons: Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates and Proceedings (Hansard)*, 38th Parliament, 1st Session 57 (15 February 2005).
  37. See, for example, Louise Taylor, "Day Care: Partial Solutions for an Undefined Problem," *Edmonton Journal* (6 April 2006), pp. E1, 6–7; "One child care model is not appropriate for all families," Global News report for the national news broadcast (11 February 2005).
  38. The Liberals' 2004 ECEC initiative, which promised \$5 billion over five years, built on a preexisting policy package that included the Child Care Expense Deduction (CCED) (introduced in 1971), which allows the parent with the lower income to deduct receipted child care expenses up to a maximum of \$7,000/year, depending on income; the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) (introduced in 1997), which targets low-income families; and maternity and parental leave benefits funded through the federal Employment Insurance program. The latter were extended in 2001 to 15 weeks (maternity leave only) plus 35 weeks parental leave, which may be taken by either parent or shared, funded at an earnings replacement rate of 55 percent, or a maximum of \$413.00 per week. Federal spending on these measures amounted to \$545 million for the CCED in 2005/2006, \$9.2 billion for the CCTB in 2005, and \$3.02 billion for the EI benefits in 2006 (figures from Paul Kershaw, "Measuring Up:

- Family Benefits in British Columbia and Alberta in International Perspective,” *Choices* 13/2 (2007), p. 8). The Conservatives and media sympathetic to their framing of the debate chose to ignore the supports that these elements of the package provide to parents who care for their children at home — principally, the EI benefits. (Most family policy experts argue that the CCTB is designed to keep low-income parents in the workforce, not to support them to stay at home. See, for example, Mahon and Phillips, “Dual-Earner Families,” p. 207.) In our view, while the extension of maternity and parental leaves was a significant step towards recognition of parents’ desire to care for their infants, as well as enhanced support for them to do so, it is not sufficient to alter our characterization of the federal package as predominantly committed to a universal breadwinner model. For more details, see note 40.
39. See, for example, comments by Martha Friendly in Laurie Monsebraaten, “Child Care Splits Parties, Parents,” *The Toronto Star* (16 January 2006), p. A08.
  40. To some degree, current federal maternity and parental leave provisions, because they are contingent on employment and income, may be characterized as a “middle class” benefit. The restrictions on eligibility for EI benefits and their low earnings replacement rate (55 percent) mean that only about 61 percent of new mothers can take leaves; only one in five mothers who took leave in 2001 could access employer benefits to supplement their EI benefits (Paul Kershaw, “Carefair,” paper prepared for the Gendering the Nation-State Workshop, Canadian Political Science Association Annual Meeting (June 2004), p. 14). Mothers who returned to work within four months had median annual earnings of just under \$16,000 (Beach, *Working for Change*, p. 58). Men accounted for only 11 percent of leave-takers in 2003 (Kershaw, “Carefair,” p. 14).
  41. Reginald Bibby, *The Future Families Project: A Survey of Canadian Hopes and Dreams* (Ottawa: The Vanier Institute of the Family, 2004).
  42. Marois’s comments are summarized in *Child Care for a Change! Shaping the 21st Century*. Proceedings of the Canadian Council on Social Development conference (Winnipeg: November 2004), pp. 4–5.
  43. Quebec, Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS), *Un Québec fou de ses enfants: Rapport du Groupe de travail pour les jeunes* (1991).
  44. Marois, *Child Care for a Change!*, p. 5.
  45. Quebec, Ministère de la Famille et de l’Enfance (MFE), *Growing up in Québec: Overview 1990–2001* (2001).
  46. Quebec, Ministère de la Famille et de l’Enfance (MFE), *Guide des programmes et services gouvernementaux*, <<http://www.messf.gouv.qc.ca/services-en-ligne/>> (accessed 10 November 2004).
  47. Beach et al, *Working for Change*, p. 47. Quebec’s figure includes expenditure on school-age care from the Ministry of Education.
  48. MFE, *Guide des programmes et services*.
  49. MFE, *Growing up in Québec*, p. 23.
  50. Figure reported in Gillian Doherty, Martha Friendly, and Jane Beach, *OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care: Canadian Background Report* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 2003), p. 44.
  51. Beach et al, *Working for Change*, p. 36.
  52. Jane Jenson, “Family Policy, Child Care and Social Solidarity: The Case of Québec,” in Susan Prentice, (ed.), *Changing Childcare* (Halifax: Fernwood Press, 2001), p. 55.
  53. For details of the new requirements and training programs, see Beach et al, *Working for Change*, p. 62.
  54. Jenson, “Family Policy, Child Care and Social Solidarity,” p. 56 Beach et al, *Working for Change*, p. 62, report that a “major campaign” was undertaken between 1999 and 2002 in Quebec to promote child care as a career. The MFE reported in 2000 that there had been a 56 percent increase in enrolment in ECEC programs corresponding to the expansion of the CPEs.
  55. Allison Hanes, “Day-Care Walkout Pressures, 22,000 kids affected,” *The Montreal Gazette* (17 January 2004), p. A7.
  56. Jenson, “Family Policy, Child Care and Social Solidarity,” p. 55.

57. Beach et al, *Working for Change*, p. 46.
58. Kevin Dougherty, "No New Money for Day Care, Québec Says," *The Montreal Gazette* (29 June 2005), p. A1.
59. The Child Care Human Resources Sector Council estimates that the average salary for full-time child care workers in Canada is \$22,500 a year (Margaret Philp, "Child Care Wages 'Demoralizing,'" *The Globe and Mail* (9 November 2004), p. A9.
60. While the federal government can act through the EI program to extend maternity and parental leaves and to increase the replacement rates, it has not chosen to go further than the 2001 extension of leave periods. See Rianne Mahon, "Early Child Learning and Care in Canada: Who Rules? Who Should Rule?" Discussion paper prepared for the Canadian Council on Social Development National Conference on Child Care in Canada (Winnipeg: November 2004).
61. Jenson, "Family Policy, Child Care and Social Solidarity," p. 51. For an explanation of the *allocation à la naissance*, see the Ministère de la Famille et des Aînés, "Historique de la politique familiale au Québec," <<http://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/thematiques/famille/politique-familiale/historique.asp>> (accessed 8 December 2007).
62. See Robert Baril, Pierre Lefebvre, and Philip Merrigan, "Quebec Family Policy: Impact and Options," *Choices/IRPP* 6/1 (2000), pp. 4–52. ; Norma Kozhaya, "\$7-A-Day Childcare: Are Parents Getting What They Need?" *Economic Note* (Montreal Economic Institute, October 2006); Paul Daniel Muller, "For a Better Child Care Policy: The Great Majority of Countries with Active Family Policies Offer Parents More Choice than Quebec Does," (Op-Ed) *The Montreal Gazette* (23 October 2006), p. A23.
63. See especially Dr. Jean-François Chicoine et Nathalie Collard, *Le Bébé et l'eau du bain* (Montréal: Québec-Amérique, 2006).
64. Martha Friendly and Jane Beach, *Trends and Analysis: Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2004* (Toronto: University of Toronto, Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2004), p. 55.
65. See Jacques Rouillard, *Le syndicalisme québécois: Deux siècles d'histoire* (Montreal: Boréal, 2004).
66. *Confédération des syndicats nationaux*, "Regroupement pour un régime québécois d'assurance parentale" (juin 2002), <<http://www.csn.qc.ca>> (accessed 5 May 2005).
67. See Chantal Maillé, "The Québec Women's Movement: Past and Present," in Alain-G. Gagnon, (ed.), *Québec: State and Society*, 3rd ed. (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2004), pp. 287–306; Janine Brodie, *Politics at the Margins: Restructuring and the Canadian Women's Movement* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1995).
68. Among these were the 1991 report prepared for the MSSS, *Un Québec fou de ses enfants. Rapport du Groupe de travail pour les jeunes* (Québec: Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux) (referred to as the Bouchard report, after its key author, psychologist Camil Bouchard), and the 1996 report of the *Conseil supérieur de l'éducation*.
69. *Discussion Paper* (undated), <<http://www.messf.gouv.qc.ca>> (accessed 10 November 2004), p. 8.
70. Beach et al, *Working for Change*, p. 61.
71. As Jenson notes, "parents providing their own child care full time were still angry [in 2002] about not having any recognition." ("Rolling out or Back Tracking on Québec's Child Care System?" Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the Canadian Political Science Association, Toronto, June 2006, p. 15).
72. Friendly and Beach, *Trends and Analysis*, pp. 65–66. Updates on this conflict are available from the CSN website, <<http://www.csn.qc.ca/CPE/index.html>>. See also *Économie sociale Québec: l'Association québécoise des centres de la petite enfance* (AQCPÉ); *la Fédération des travailleuses et des travailleuses de Québec*.
73. The Child Assistance payment for children under 18, introduced by the Liberals in January 2005, is a refundable tax credit, with the amount determined by family income. For a detailed description, see the *Régie des Rentes, Le Paiement de Soutien aux Enfants*, <[http://www.rfq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/programmes/soutien\\_enfants/paiement/](http://www.rfq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/programmes/soutien_enfants/paiement/)> (accessed 8 December 2007).

74. Quebec, National Assembly (Yves Séguin), *Discours sur le budget*, (30 March 2004), <<http://www.budget.finances.gouv.qc.ca/budget/2004-2005/fr/pdf/DiscoursBudget.pdf>> (accessed 9 December 2007), pp. 8–10 (italics added).
75. AQCPE, “The Real Issues in the Thérberge Reform,” (2 November 2005; posted 11 November 2005), <[http://action.web.ca/home/crru/rsrsc\\_crru\\_full.shtml?x=82931](http://action.web.ca/home/crru/rsrsc_crru_full.shtml?x=82931)> (accessed 8 December 2007).
76. See Christa Japel, Richard E. Tremblay, and Sylvana Côté, “Quality Counts! Assessing the Quality of Daycare Services Based on the Québec Longitudinal Study of Child Development,” *Choices* 11/5 (2005), pp. 1–44; Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky, *The Quality Gap: A Study of Nonprofit and Commercial Child Care Centres in Canada* (Scarborough, ON: Division of Management, University of Toronto, 2004), <<http://childcarepolicy.net/pdf/NonprofitPaper.pdf>> (accessed 8 December 2007).
77. Jenson, “Rolling out or Back Tracking,” p. 23.
78. See, for example, *The Early Years Study — Reversing the Real Brain Drain*, co-chaired by Dr. Fraser Mustard and Margaret Norrie McCain (Toronto: Government of Ontario, Children’s Secretariat, April 1999), and F. Mustard, M. McCain, and S. Shanker, *Early Years Study II — Putting Science into Action* (Toronto: Council for Early Child Development, 2007).
79. In 2000, the federal government negotiated the Intergovernmental Agreement on Early Childhood Development Initiatives, offering \$2.2 billion to the provinces for a range of programs over a five year period. In 2003, the Multilateral Framework Agreement extended another \$1.05 billion over five years to the provinces for Early Childhood Learning and Care programs. The provinces were not obligated to spend any of this money on the provision of regulated child care spaces.
80. We refer here to the commodification of the labour of women and unemployed persons who previously performed unremunerated (noncommodity) labour in the private sphere, or who were otherwise able to live outside of wage-labour relationships due to various kinds of state support (decommodified labour). See Claus Offe, *Contradictions of the Welfare State*, John Keane, (ed.), (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1984).
81. See Esping-Andersen’s prescriptions for welfare state reform in Chapter 9 of his *Social Foundations of Post-Industrial Economies* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), and the overview of feminist criticisms of this work provided by Mahon, “Gender and Welfare State Restructuring.”
82. Just before leaving office, Premier Landry characterized the four-day week as “an idea whose time has come, especially for employees with young children,” and a measure that concerns not only employment standards but also “parenthood, natality, family.” (“PQ promises four-day work week if re-elected April 14,” PQ press statement posted to the website of the National Union of Public and General Employees, <<http://www.nupge.ca>> (accessed 10 April 2003)).