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**Quebec’s Policies for Work-Family Balance: A Model for Canada?**

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Quebec’s policies on child care, parental leave, and other measures to

improve the work-family balance are often presented as a model for the

rest of Canada. This chapter will compare and assess recent changes in

both Quebec and at the federal level in Canada to ascertain the extent

to which public policy addresses problems related to the balancing of

work and family. In particular, it will examine the ways that current

policies at the federal level and in Quebec affect gender equity in the

labour market and the family.

The chapter will first set out a typology of family policies based on

the classifications developed by Hantrais and Letablier (1996). Second,

it will present a brief history of federal and Quebec policies regarding

parental leave and child care services while attempting to situate them

in relation to this typology. Recent federal policy orientations reflect a

vision that differs greatly from Quebec’s on family policy goals. I argue

here that the rest of Canada and the federal Conservative Party are

pursuing a conservative or laissez-faire doctrine, while the federal Liberal

Party seems to favour a policy aimed at alternating between work

and family, which is also a conservative position. Quebec generally favours

a policy of work-family balance that involves a combination of

work and family and parental responsibilities, although the Action démocratique

du Québec (ADQ) had proposed

a policy that would have moved Quebec in a conservate direction. In Quebec, a shift to the right may, however, be difficult for any government

to accomplish because of the extent to which new programs have

encouraged paternal leave.

In January 2006, the government of Quebec established a new parental leave insurance plan (QPIP), thereby implementing a different policy from that of the rest of Canada. Parental leave is now more flexible (either a shorter leave with a higher earnings replacement benefits rate or a longer leave with a lower earnings replacement rate), with three to five weeks of the entire leave period (of almost one year) reserved exclusively for fathers. There seem to be political forces pulling in different directions at the moment, and since the present Quebec government is a minority government, family policy is

high on the agenda.

The third objective of this chapter is to present available data on the

use of parental leave and child care services as evidence of the impact

of these policies on equity issues. This chapter will argue that Quebec’s

child-care and parental-leave policies would be good models for the

rest of Canada. Data on parental leave show that the majority

of users are still women, despite increasing participation in child care, as well as in play and educational activities, on the part of fathers. Although

the extension of parental leave to one year throughout Canada,

in 2001, was viewed by some as constituting considerable progress in

terms of employment equity, this policy could further reinforce

traditional mothering roles without having a strong influence on

fathers’ participation in parenting, and thus negatively affect

the goal of labour force equality. Low-cost child care in Quebec ($5

a day per child at the beginning of this program, raised to $7 a day per

child in 2003, versus approximately $30 a day per child before government

funding was introduced) is a progressive measure that seems

to have affected female labour force participation rates and child-care

enrolment.

Since the new parental leave came into effect, Quebec has noted an

increase in births, which were up to 82,500 in 2006 in comparison with

76,250 the previous year. This is the highest increase (8%) since 1909. It

is clearly too early to attribute this increase to the new regime, especially

since some parents may have slightly delayed giving

birth to be able to take advantage of the new regime. Nevertheless, the

fertility rate in Quebec increased to 1.6, which is higher than the Canadian

average, and up 0.1 point from the previous year. In the context of

an aging population, fertility rates are of interest. The evidence in this

chapter will demonstrate that it is mainly because of the more inclusive

characteristics of the parental-leave program that this program should

be envisaged for implementation elsewhere. The new parental-leave

policy is more inclusive in that it provides more mothers with coverage

(e.g., it includes the self-employed) and means a higher probability that fathers

will participate in parenting because some weeks of leave are reserved for them. Parental-leave policy is not the only element necessary to facilitate work-family life balance, however: child care, flexibility of working time, and

telework, among other measures at the firm level, are also important (Tremblay 2002; Tremblay et al. 2006a; 2006b; 2006c; 2007b). If well designed, though, parental leave can contribute significantly to fathers’ involvement in the care of children, the sharing of family responsibilities, and thus work-family balance.

**National Models**

The forms that work-family relationships take vary according to country

and geographical region, with northern and southern Europe holding

clearly opposite positions, as do the United States and northern Europe.

The work-family relationship takes on very different forms depending

on social, demographic, and cultural contexts, as well as the public

policies in place (and the latter is our main research interest in this

chapter).1 Most countries are linked to a model without perfectly fitting

it, and this is also true of Quebec and Canada, as we will see. [footnote is the same as in the Cohen book?]

*Work-Family Balance or Cumulative Model*

In the countries that draw on the work-family balance, or cumulative

model, the aim of public intervention is to balance the demands of family

life and work by allowing individuals, both women and men, to

remain employed while also meeting their family responsibilities. In other

words, the work-family balance, or cumulative, model makes it possible to combine family with employment without having to sacrifice one for the other. This

model offers the best quality and the greatest variety of public measures

for adjusting the work-family relationship, that is, accessible

and highly developed public child-care services, excellent workingtime

arrangements, and paid and flexible parental leave.

In countries that draw on this model greater importance is given to

the equal treatment of men and women than in countries that draw on

other models. Laws and public policies related to work-family balance

apply to both men and women, to encourage a more equal sharing of

both work-related duties and family responsibilities. Measures related

to parental leave, for example, provide for special incentives to encourage

men’s participation. This type of family policy is based more on the

notion of citizenship to the extent that it is first and foremost a policyCohen\_

of gender equality and a childhood policy, since children are considered

to be future citizens. In a nutshell, the work-family balance model underpins

a policy of social integration (Hantrais and Letablier 1995: 44).

Countries such as Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Iceland fit into the

work-family balance model (Tremblay 2004; 2005)

*Work-Family Alternating Model*

The main aim of the work-family alternating model is not to integrate

family with work, as in the work-family balance model, but rather to

encourage employed parents, generally women, to opt for a strategy

of entering and exiting the labour market to balance work and family

by giving priority to one sphere over the other at different times.

The state encourages women to leave their jobs or reduce their work

hours in order to take care of their children, and then to return to the

labour market later, most often on a part-time basis when the children

reach school age. This policy approach generally affects only mothers

because, although it is desirable that work and family responsibilities

be shared more equitably by both parents, it is rare that fathers leave

their work or reduce their work hours to devote themselves to the family

(Tremblay 2002; 2004).

Countries oriented to the work-family alternating model share a conception of the family that is based on the gendered division of work, relying mainly on the mother’s role in linking work and family. They share a ‘privatist’ assumption about the

responsibility for raising children, in the sense that public intervention

leaves families with this exclusive responsibility. The work-family alternating

model covers countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and, in some aspects, France. Germany, for example, offers little support for child care and has fiscal incentives for mothers to stay at home. Programs described as ‘cash for care,’ which give financial incentives to mothers who take care of children or who do not use the public child

care system when available, are measures that fit into this model. They

contribute to women staying at home, often for a few years, since the

programs sometimes have higher incentives as the years go by or for a

third or subsequent child.

*Non-Interventionist Model*

Countries oriented to the non-interventionist model are characterized

by the virtual absence of any state measures for adjusting theCohen\_

work-family relationship. Among these countries, a distinction should

be made between those in which there is little or no state intervention

due to insufficient resources, as has been the case, for example, in some

southern European countries (Spain, Greece, and Portugal), and those

in which state intervention is weak based on principle, as in the United

Kingdom and the United States. Both cases result in a purely privatist

conception of the work-family relationship, where any accommodation

between the two spheres is left entirely up to the initiative of individuals

and employers. In this latter case, it can be concluded that

collective bargaining at the company level must compensate for the

lack of public policy and state intervention. This third model is characterized

by weak state measures for adjusting the work-family relationship.

Canada is often associated with the United States as representative

of a non-interventionist model, but there are significant differences

between the two countries, in particular with regard to the provision of

the one-year parental leave and, until the January 2006 election, a proposed

national child care program (which was, and remains, already

in place in Quebec).

These different models have distinct effects on women’s participation in the labour market (Cette et al. 2007). The work-family balance model yields

the most positive results for women’s participation in the labour market

in terms of the rate of participation, stability of employment, and number of hours

worked each week. The work-family alternating model also produces

positive results for women’s participation in the labour market, but

causes more frequent interruptions in employment, in addition to reducing the number

of weekly work hours – both factors having consequences for

women’s income, skills level, career opportunities, and so on. In contrast,

the non-interventionist model yields more diversified results,

depending on the context of the particular country – the nature of gender relations,

specific historical conditions, and the national economic situation,

among other factors. This non-interventionist model usually has a

more negative impact on fertility and labour market participation, but

situations vary.

**The Situation in Quebec**

Quebec is close to the work-family balance model. . In practice, not allCohen\_

policy measures meet expectations, and much remains to

be done to catch up with the situation in the Scandinavian countries, but Quebec

nevertheless clearly stands apart from the rest of Canada, and especially

from the United States, where the model of non-intervention

predominates. Even so, there are some threats to the Quebec model: for

example, the Liberal Party envisages an increase in childcare rates in 2015. The majority of the population, however, including

mothers in the labour force, strongly favour maintaining the public

child-care system as well as developing more measures to strengthen

the work-family balance model. The high labour-force participation rate

of women with children under 6 years of age seems to confirm

the need and support for the cumulative, or work-family balance,

model.

*History of Policies*

The Quebec government’s interest in family policy can be explained

by two main factors: (1) sociodemographic changes, especially involving a drop

in fertility, a decline in marriage, and an increase in marital instability;

and (2) an increase in mothers’ participation in the labour force. Women’s

increased labour force participation makes it essential to think

about family and work-family balance policy and explains

the recent gains achieved by policies fostering this objective. Although

the demographic changes are not unique to Quebec, their pace in Quebec

represents a special case within Canada, and the measures adopted

over recent decades also make Quebec a distinct case within Canada.

The 1960s were a socially determining period for Quebec. The government

became increasingly interventionist, and the significant social

changes that took place during this time are often referred to as the

Quiet Revolution. Feminism became an important social movement,

and women’s participation in the labour market increased markedly.

Over the years, public policies gradually began to take this fact into

account. Laws and measures such as maternity leave and subsidized

child care, came into being as a result of the struggles of the women’s

movement and other popular movements. The first interventions regarding

maternity leave came from the federal government. In 1971, the

eligibility criteria for the Unemployment Insurance (UI, after 1996 Employment

Insurance or EI) program were broadened to include a seventeen-week maternity leave, whereby fifteen weeks were paid at 60 per cent

of insurable earnings (now reduced to 55 per cent, but with the length

of parental leave increased to about one year). This EI program, which

still constitutes the only income security for many Canadian women,

nevertheless contains important limitations that the new Quebec Parental

Insurance Plan of 2006 addresses, as will be seen below.

From the 1980s onwards, the Quebec government began to take a

close look at the transformations in the family and women’s participation

in the labour market, publishing many policy statements over the years (see, e.g., Tremblay 2008, 2004). An important 1987statement on family policy was behind the creation of the Conseil de la famille, which became the Conseil de la famille et de l’enfance (Council of Families and Children). Together with the Conseil du statut de la

femme (Council on the Status of Women), this organization was among

the most vocal on public-policy issues concerning women, family, and

child care. Over the years, these two organizations published many

analyses and called for policy changes; they were largely supported by

women’s groups and activists on gender equality. All these endeavours

were important over the 1980s and 1990s, but the concrete measures

were slow in materializing, except for some support for child care.

Then, in 1997, a review process that took place in many government

organizations led to the establishment of three goals: (1) to ensure

equity through universal support provided to families and increased

assistance to low-income families; (2) to facilitate a balance of parental

and work-related responsibilities; and (3) to foster child development

and promote equal opportunities (Québec 1997a: vii).

These goals were made top government priorities but, except

for support to child-care services and the federal parental leave

program, a number of years went by before concrete measures were proposed.

The Quebec government asserted that it had to obtain federal

government funding to proceed with the new proposed parental-leave

plan. An agreement was concluded in 2005 and, in January 2006, Quebec

was able to implement its own Quebec Parental Insurance Plan. The

work-family balance policy, however, which had been the object of consultation

since 2003, and which did not require that funds be transferred,

was nevertheless set aside by the Liberal government of Quebec, possibly because of

opposition from employers, since a few employers’ organizations were

quite vocal in opposing any governmental intervention.

An explicit work-family balance policy, as envisaged in the 1997 review

process, is to this day the main element missing that would situateen\_

Quebec clearly in the work-family balance, or cumulative, model.

Indeed, while child-care support is important, and comes first in the

demands of Canadian mothers for a work-family balance, Quebec parents

are more and more requesting that employers actively facilitate a

work-family balance, with measures such as working-time flexibility,

telework, flexible career plans, and the like. The demand for a work-family

policy and for incentives and pilot projects along these lines remains

present in Quebec.

*Maternity Leave*

In Quebec, up until January 2006, the financial support provided to

mothers who were expecting a child or had had a child came from three

different income replacement programs. One fell under federal jurisdiction

(Canada) and the other two fell under provincial jurisdiction

(Quebec). The federal Employment Insurance program was the main parental-

leave benefits program administered by Human Resources and Social

Development Canada (HRSDC). Benefits were paid to parents after a

fourteen-day waiting period. The allowance corresponded to 55 per

cent of insurable earnings. This leave, which used to last six months,

was extended to one year in January 2001, and could be shared by both

parents; however, unlike Sweden, incentive measures to encourage fathers’

participation did not exist.

The Quebec Maternity Allowance Program (PRALMA) was under

the responsibility of the Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity

(MES). Instituted to cover the fourteen-day waiting period imposed by

the federal EI program, PRALMA offered a $360 maternity allowance

to mothers who were eligible for employment insurance. Although not

an immense amount, this program nevertheless supported low-income

parents and would surely be welcomed by many Canadian mothers.

The new Quebec regime covers the fourteen-day waiting period, and

this program is thus no longer necessary, since it has been integrated

into the new regime.

The Quebec Safe Maternity Program is administered by the Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CSST, or Occupational

Health and Safety Board), and it allows a pregnant worker to stop

working if her workstation or position poses risks for her own health or

that of her fetus. During the first week of compensation, the employee

receives her full salary from her employer. Subsequently, she receives

compensation from the CSST through benefits that correspond to 90

per cent of her net income. This program is still in effect in Quebec.

The Labour Standards Act in Quebec stipulates that working women

have the right to a maternity leave of eighteen weeks. Tthis leave is

unpaid, however. This is the minimum to which women are entitled, in any case.

But if eligible for the new program, women are entitled to benefits.

*Paternity Leave*

Paternity leave, in particular paid leave reserved for the father, is not

very common worldwide, although it exists in Norway, Finland, and

Sweden (2 months), as well as in Iceland (3 months). In general, where

there is paternity leave, the tendency is to integrate it into general parental

leave. In Canada, parental leave was extended in 2001 within

the EI program, with the expectation that parents could share the leave

between them. But there is still no financial incentive or time reserved

specifically for fathers under the federal program. In Quebec, however,

since January 2006, fathers have the right to take a three- to five-week

paid paternity leave, based on the option chosen (longer leave with

lower benefits or shorter leave with higher benefits). Combined with

the parental leave, which has been extended to one year, this measure

may favour a greater sharing of the leave between mothers and fathers --

as has been observed in the Nordic countries -- especially given the additional

incentive offered by Quebec (better paid leave that is not transferable

to the mother). Some analysis on the take-up of parental leave

in Europe, however, indicates that fathers use what leave is reserved for

them, but little more (Moss and O’Brien 2006). If the time reserved for

them is long enough, as in Iceland – where three months are reserved

for the father, three for the mother, and three can be shared – public

policy can clearly lead to more sharing of parental responsibilities.

*Parental Leave*

Parental leave is in principle aimed at men as well as women, although

in reality it is mainly used by women. In relation to the goal of furthering

gender equality, parental leave is supposed to play a key role because it should help to distinguish between the physiological demands

of pregnancy and childbirth on women -- demands for which maternity

leave was designed -- and the care and raising of children.

Ultimately, the role of parental leave is to allow both parents to balance

their work and family lives. It is essential that men participate in

the same way as women; otherwise, parental leave translates into

a kind of extended maternity leave and thus reproduces the traditional

division of roles and related economic inequalities between men and women.

Because the Canadian government has not introduced any

measures to encourage fathers’ participation, however, the latter has not increased

greatly since extended parental leave was introduced. As women generally

earn less than men, and the arrival of a child generally represents

considerable expense, the lower earner usually takes care of the baby.

Parental leave was extended in 2001, and in the years 2001–04 only about

10 per cent of fathers took some part of parental leave,

and on average they took less than one month. The Quebec plan was

designed to remedy this problem by introducing clear incentives, that

is, a period reserved specifically for fathers.

*The 2006 Quebec Parental Insurance Plan*

Since 1997, Quebec had been trying to adopt a parental leave plan that is

distinct from that of the federal government, and it requested that

the sums needed for this purpose be transferred to it from the federal

scheme. Following an agreement reached in 2005, the new Quebec Parental

Insurance Plan came into effect in January 2006. The new QPIP

has a number of advantages in terms of the population that is covered, flexibility

in taking the leave, and the earnings replacement benefits rate,

as will be seen below.

In Quebec the QPIP replaces parental leave measures under the federal

program. The new provisions do not change the provisions stipulated

in Quebec’s Labour Standards Act, which specify the duration of

maternity leave (18 weeks) and parental leave (52 weeks) for a total of

70 weeks without salary, as well as the rights and obligations related

to departure from and return to work. The new QPIP does, however,

introduce four major changes.

The first change provides for weeks reserved for the father that cannot

be transferred to the mother, which is an innovation in Canada and

North America. Quebec fathers are now entitled to a three- to five-week

paternity leave with higher benefits than under the federal program,

since the income-replacement rates and maximum eligible earnings

have also been increased. In contrast, the federal parental leave program

provides for a leave that can be shared by the father and the mother.

Statistics Canada survey data indicate that this measure has notCohen

been enough to increase fathers’ participation since mothers still took an average of eleven months off in 2004 and only about 11 per cent of

fathers took part of the leave that year (Table 2 below). Data from 2005 indicate an increase in fathers’ participation, to 14.5 per cent. In Quebec, the

take-up of leave by fathers was 22 per cent in 2005, and with the new

QPIP leave scheme, this has increased to 78 per cent in 2011.2 [where is this footnote? Not necessary, can put reference : Tremblay, 2012a,b ]

The second change involves the increased income offered by the

QPIP. In addition to abolition of the fourteen-day waiting period

stipulated under the federal parental leave program (2 weeks without

benefits, as is the case with EI, with which this program is associated),

the new QPIP increases the maximum insurable income to $66,000, and

not $45,900, as is the case with the federal parental leave. This has been

shown to be important for fathers’ participation, since countries where

replacement earnings rates are higher have higher participation of

fathers.

The third change relates to the introduction of more flexibility in the

QPIP, since parents now have two options: a basic plan (longer leave

with lower benefits) or a special plan (shorter leave with higher benefits).

The latter might interest those who need a higher earnings replacement

rate (especially if their employment income is relatively low)

or who cannot afford to miss work for very long because of various

personal or work-related reasons. The federal program provides

for benefits corresponding to 55 per cent of the maximum insurable

income ($45,900) during the 15 weeks of maternity leave and 35 weeks of parental leave (accessible to both parents, but with afourteen-day waiting period in each case). The new Quebec basic plan

offers benefits of 70 per cent of the average weekly income for 18

weeks of maternity leave and five weeks of paternity leave. The

QPIP offers two options for parental benefits, that is, either 70 percent

of earnings for 25 weeks and 55 per cent of earnings for another 25

weeks for the basic regime or 75 per cent for 40 weeks in the special  
 regime. Adoption leave can be shared by both parents, and provides for

either twelve weeks of benefits at 70 per cent of earnings or twenty-five

weeks at 55 per cent.

**Table 1 Parental Leave Benefit Plans, 2012**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Canada**  **Employment Insurance** | **Québec *basic plan*** | **Québec *special plan*** |
| **Eligibility** | 600 hours | $2,000 earnings | |
| **Self-employed workers[[1]](#footnote-1)** | Covered only since 2011  (6000 $ minimum earnings) | Covered since 2006 | |
| **Basic replacement rate** | 55 % for 50 weeks | 70% for 25 weeks  55% for 25 weeks | 75% for 40 weeks |
| **Low income replacement rate** | Up to 80 % | Up to 80 % | |
| **Maximum insurable earnings** | CAN$45 900 | CAN$66,000 | |
| **Waiting period** | 2 weeks (per couple) | None | |
| **Duration2** | 15 weeks maternity  35 weeks parental  No paternity leave | 18 weeks maternity  32 weeks parental  5 weeks paternity3 | 15 weeks maternity  25 weeks parental  3 weeks paternity |

Adapted and updated from “Child Care Spaces Recommendations” Report from the Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Government of Canada’s Child Care Spaces Initiative, Government of Canada, January 2007.

1 Under both plans, a net family annual income of less than $25,291 is required to be eligible.

2  Maternity and Paternity leave are non transferable individual entitlements. Parental leave is a shared entitlement.

The QPIP special plan provides for higher earnings replacement

rates, but for a shorter period. Under this plan, maternity and paternity

leave benefits are equivalent to 75 per cent of the weekly salary and are

paid for fifteen weeks and three weeks, respectively. Parental leave is also

compensated at 75 per cent for twenty-five weeks and can be shared

by the father and the mother. Under this special plan, the mother can

receive benefits for a maximum of forty weeks (versus 50 in the basic

plan), and adoption leave can be shared by both parents, for twenty eight

weeks at 75 per cent of earnings.

Lastly, it must be underlined that the new QPIP is more accessible

and will allow more parents, including self-employed workers and

students, to receive benefits since it no longer requires individuals to

have worked 600 hours over the previous 52 weeks, but simply

to have earned an insurable income of $2,000. The funding of this program

is based on additional contributions that employers, employees,

and self-employed workers must pay into the QPIP. Employers and

employees, of course, continue to contribute to the federal EI program

for unemployment coverage.

It is still too early to assess the full impact of this new QPIP

on fathers’ participation in parental responsibilities, since the experience

of Nordic European countries has shown that it takes a few years

for fathers’ participation to increase. However, based on what has been

observed in other countries that have introduced a paternity leave period

not transferable to mothers (Moss and O’Brien 2006), it is clear

that there should be an increase in the participation of Quebec fathers, at

least for these reserved weeks, and recent data show that 78per cent of fathers participate and, on average, they take 7 weeks of leave. Because the earnings replacement rate has been increased, it is now easier to take the leave at a time when financial needs are considerable. In the rest of Canada, the rate of uptake was increased

to 23 per cent by 2006, in part because of Quebec fathers taking leave with the new regime there. In Quebec, 32 per cent of eligible fathers took leave under EI in 2005. This rate increased to 78 per cent in 2011 with the new Quebec Parental Insurance Plan.

We have so far discussed only paid leave, but it should be underlined

that the Quebec Labour Standards Act was also revised in

2003 to take families’ needs into account and to protect the part of the

workforce not eligible for paid parental leave. In Canada, 75 per cent of

mothers who have a child under 12 months of age have insurable employment,

entitling them to maternity leave and parental leave benefits

(under the federal plan; Statistics Canada data for 2003, 2004 and 2005

present the same percentage). In Quebec, workers who do not have access

to this plan, nevertheless have rights under the Labour Standards

Act, which provides for a number of rights related to departure from

and return to work. Due to limited space, it is impossible for us to reportCohen\_

on all aspects of this issue; however, it should be pointed out that

since May 1, 2003, employees in Quebec have the right to miss ten days

of work (instead of 5 days, as was previously the case) in order to assume

family responsibilities.

*Use of Parental Leave by Canadian Women*

We will now examine the effect of the 2001 extension of parental leave to one year, under the federal program (Pérusse 2003; Marshall 2003). Table 2 presents some

interesting data (despite the fact that Statistics Canada’s Employment

Insurance Coverage Survey focuses mainly on mothers, and considers fathers

only as spouses who might take up part of the leave;

it is hoped that with the incentives offered to fathers in Quebec, more

interest will be shown in their leave patterns). Table 2 shows that, in

2004, about three-quarters of mothers who had a child aged 12 months

or less had insurable employment, entitling them to parental benefits;

almost 66 per cent of these mothers received benefits, while about 35 per cent did

not. Among those who did not have insurable employment, 9 per cent

were self-employed -- a situation remedied by the QPIP since it makes

self-employed or independent female workers eligible for the plan in Quebec.

It should be pointed out that under the new QPIP, individuals -- including

self-employed female workers -- are required to have worked 200 hours during the previous year. It is also interesting to note that, whereas the average duration of

leave was five months before the federal government extended the period

of parental leave in the EI program to one year, it is now 11

months: in 2004, over 62 per cent of women took a nine- to twelve-month leave and almost 17 per cent took more than 12 months, while fewer than 12 per cent took between five and eight months and fewer than 9 per cent took from zero to four months.3 [where is the footnote?]

Thus, even though the parental leave under the federal plan can

theoretically be equally shared between the two spouses, women have extended their duration of parental leave

while men have not made a lot of effort to take this leave.

The first part of this I don’t understand and the second part is repetitive since the new figures were discussed earlier in the paper. I propose that I omit this?? OK

The higher rate of taking up parental leave by Quebec fathers, even before

the new regime, suggests that

Quebec fathers are more interested in participating in child care. (Tremblay 2003, 2012a,b,c). Indeed, it may be that the important coverage given to work-family issues in the media over the years and in recent elections in Quebec, but also the very strong commitment of women’s groups, unions, and government bodies (e.g., Conseil du statut

de la femme, Conseil de la famille et de l’enfance), explain the fact

that Quebec fathers feel more comfortable in taking time off for their

children, despite potential impacts on their careers (Tremblay and Genin, 2011, 2010). Some of our research highlights that fathers are not

fully comfortable in taking time off or with flexible working-time arrangements

in some firms or sectors (Tremblay 2003, 2012b), but it nevertheless

seems easier, or more legitimate, to take paternity leave in Quebec than

in the rest of Canada.

Since our aim is to classify Quebec in relation to the main models of

work-family balance described at the beginning of this chapter, some

elements of child care services will now be presented.

**Child Care**

Child- care services constitute a fundamental measure for balancing

work and family. The number of day- care spaces, the operating hours

of child- care centres, their geographical locations, and their costs are

constant concerns for employed parents. These factors have

a direct effect on the time-management problems faced by parents. An

effective child-care system allows parents to better plan their schedules

and it can reduce tensions between family and professional responsibilities.

Thus, we will briefly describe the situation in Quebec in this regard.

Since the 1990s, a network of child- care centres has been created

in Quebec to provide educational child-care services to children four years

of age and under. Child-care centres and day care in family homes provide reduced contribution services (currently $7 a day per child, but with increases planned for 2015) for children and babies. The number of child- care spaces is far too low to meet the demand and needs, however. The number of spaces is insufficient, and the operating hours too restrictive, for many parents who work on nonstandard schedules especially. A survey by the Institut de la statistique du Quebec (Québec 1997b) revealed that 28 per cent of parents would like services

to be more easily accessible in the evenings, nights, and on weekends.

This proportion corresponds to the proportion of parents who work on

a casual basis or on non-standard schedules. Moreover, school holidays

and after-school hours represent care issues for a great number of parents.

Despite these criticisms, Quebec parents are strongly attached to

their network of child-care services, and years ago they reacted negatively when the

federal Conservative government proposed to cancel the contributions paid to Quebec for

these services and offer instead $1,200 per year for each child under

Table 11.1 Eligibility of Mothers for Maternity and Parental Benefits and Duration of Leave

2004

Mothers with child aged 12 months or less (*n*) 350,000

With insurable employment (%) 74.3

Received maternity or parental benefits (%) 65.9

Did not claim or receive maternity or parental benefits (%) 8.4

Without insurable employment (%) 25.8

Had not worked in two years or more (%) 16.6

Other (includes self employed) (%) 9.1

Mothers who received maternity or parental benefits as a

proportion of mothers with insurable employment (%) 88.7

Mothers with known return plans or already returned to work,

paid employees only (*n*)a 211,000

Average duration of planned leave (months) 11

Median duration of planned leave (months) 11

0 to 4 months (%) 8.9

5 to 8 months (%) 11.6

9 to 12 months (%) 62.7

More than 12 months (%) 16.9

Spouse or partner claiming or intending to claim parental benefits 33,000 30,000

Mothers with spouse claiming or intending to claim benefits (%) 9.5

a Excludes mothers who have not worked in two years and self-employed mothers, since

the survey does not provide information on their intentions to return to work.

*Source*: Statistics obtained by the author from Statistics Canada division responsible for

employment insurance survey data.

[See book page for formatting of this table, but omit year 2003]

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the age of six to women who stay at home to care for their children – a plan it implemented. The Quebec child-care services network took action to defend

its gains, and the Quebec government has recognized that public

support for child care is such that it needs to be maintained, and even

the number of places for children increased, over the coming years.

Researchers at the Université de Sherbrooke (Audet et al. 2006) conducted

a preliminary analysis of the Conservative federal government’s policy reform

(replacing child-care services funding with an annual subsidy of $1,200 for each child under age 6, paid directly to parents). Audet and colleagues (2006) assessed the impact

that this policy would have on poverty and inequality should the

Quebec government decide to reduce current public funding of child

care services, something that had effectively been envisaged by Quebec.

According to the authors, although the effects on poverty and inequality

in the general population are not highly significant, the effects increase in

scale when the population targeted by these policies is considered : couples with children and lone mothers are obviously most affected. In the case of the latter, Audet and colleagues predict that observed poverty, based on an index that captures all the dimensions of poverty, may increase by 60 per cent. This may, of course, have consequences for women’s labour force participation and fertility: it could lead to an

increase in labour force participation, to the extent possible, but also to

a decline in fertility.

[Omit? I think this is not to the point of the article, so would like to omit it. -- Data from the Workplace and Employee Survey of Statistics Canada

(Tremblay et al. 2007a; 2006a; 2006b) indicate that Canadian parents of

young children do not necessarily have access to better living conditions

than non-parents do because the availability of child care, elder

care, and other measures appear to be related more to the type of fi rm

than to the presence of children. This is also one of the elements that

clearly infl uences women’s participation in the labour market and

equality in the labour market, and while it would take too long to go

into this here, we fi nd it important to mention the important impact of

working hours and the possibility of working arrangements on participation

and equality, beyond the impact of child care and parental

leaves.]

**Conclusion**

The effectiveness of the Quebec and the federal Canadian models in

terms of the work-family relationship can be assessed by comparing their results with those obtained in other countries that implement other

models, in particular in terms of women’s labour- market participation

rates. An analysis of women’s rates of participation in the labour market

in Quebec and across Canada shows that these rates are increasingly

high, in particular for women of childbearing age and for women

who have children. Currently, two-thirds of Quebec adult women are

in the labour market, and the rate is higher than that in some Canadian

provinces (e.g., Ontario). Consequently, the number of dual-earner

families, that is, the number of families in which both parents work, has

increased considerably. The proportion of employed women who had

children between the ages of 3 and 5 years was 41 per cent in 1976; by

1991 this proportion had increased to 68 per cent, and it has remained

steady ever since.

In the 1990s, public policies, both federally and in Quebec, tended to

evolve towards the work-family balance model. The federal government’s

extension of parental leave, under its Employment Insurance

program, to around one year brings it closer to the work-family alternating

model – or the conservative model -- however. Similarly, the newer federal

program that pays a lump sum of $1,200 per year per child to all mothers

of children under 6 years of age, including those who do not enter

the labour force, places Canada firmly in the conservative model, which

favours alternating work with family and, in particular, the withdrawal

of women with young children from the labour market.

With its child-care service network and its new Parental Insurance

Plan, Quebec more closely resembles the work-family balance model,

especially since it provides more flexibility in the duration of the various

kinds of leave. In addition, if the incentive to fathers’ participation

leads them to exceed the three to five weeks of leave specifically

reserved for them, Quebec could be considered to be resolutely in line

with the work-family balance model in which family responsibilities

are shared by both parents. Finally, it must be said that, while a good

model for the rest of Canada, Quebec is still far from the Scandinavian

standard, since its parental leave time (including the time reserved for fathers)

is shorter. Furthermore, some political parties in Quebec (namely, the ADQ,

which came second in the 2007 election but has now disappeared as a party) have proposed policies that are quite conservative, such as ‘cash for care’ – $100 a month for parents of children who are not in the day care system -- or a ‘baby bonus’ of $5,000

for the third (or subsequent) child. While this kind of approach may be attractive

to stay-at-home moms, it is very risky for those less educated to stay

out of the labour market for many years, because they lose their marketable skills and often are at greater risk of poverty, especially if they end up asCohen\_

lone mothers and it obviously did not have much success. In any case, Quebec’s family policy appears to be somewhere

close to the Nordic model at the moment, although the ADQ’s

propositions would bring it closer to a conservative alternating model,

were they ever implemented. Finally, the absence of working-time policy measures

is a weakness of both Quebec and Canadian policy regarding work- family

issues. A a national child care system and measures such

as the new parental leave of Quebec would certainly be an improvement

for women and men with children in other provinces of Canada.

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1. As we wrote in Doucet, Lero and Tremblay (2011) : « On 3 November 2009 the Government of Canada introduced [Bill C-56](http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Sites/LOP/LEGISINFO/index.asp?Language=E&Chamber=N&StartList=A&EndList=Z&Session=22&Type=0&Scope=I&query=5954&List=toc-3), which proposed to extend EI special benefits to the self-employed on a voluntary, ‘opt- in’ basis. The legislation, which was passed in January 2010, allows the self-employed to claim, starting January 2011, federal EI special benefits: Maternity (up to 15 weeks of benefits), Parental (35 weeks), Sickness (15 weeks) and Compassionate care (6 weeks). Unlike the Canada Pension Plan, where the self-employed pay both employee and employer contributions, under this system the self-employed are only expected to contribute the employee portion of the cost, which would be around CAN$750 (€566) for 2010. A further requirement is that the self-employed person will have earned at least CAN$6,000 (€4,526) in net income in the previous year. Self-employed individuals who wish to be eligible for EI special benefits must register at least one year before claiming benefits. Once the self-employed person opts into the programme and receives an EI benefit, he or she cannot opt out again. Coverage of the self-employed in Québec has been in place since the adoption of the new regime in 2006. » See : Doucet, Lero and Tremblay (2011)

   [what is this footnote connected to??????] It is not at the end and the no. 1 footnote is near the beginning] it is attached to the top line left in the above table, with the expression “self-employed workers” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)