

INCREASING ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN CANADA:

The Case for a More Equitable System for Canadians Under 5

BY MEGHAN SAVIGNY

A major research project presented to OCAD University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design in Strategic Foresight and Innovation

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**INCREASING ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
AND CARE IN CANADA: THE CASE FOR A MORE EQUITABLE
SYSTEM FOR CANADIANS UNDER 5**

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Degree: Master of Design in Strategic Foresight + Innovation, OCAD University (2017)

Abstract:

Canada lacks a national plan for early childhood education and care (ECEC). Despite being a wealthy nation, in a UNICEF analysis of 25 wealthy countries Canada ranks last for meeting benchmarks set for standards and quality in early childhood education and care. The demand for safe, regulated ECEC is high in Canada, yet there are only spaces available for 24.1% of children under the age of five.

Using research methods such as a literature review, semi-structured interviews and system mapping, this project explores the history of child care policy in Canada and examines its current system through the use of system maps and infographics. Other nations' philosophy and delivery of early childhood education and care is explored in order to identify opportunities for Canada's system to be improved and reformed. Some of the common criticisms of public investment in ECEC are tackled to demonstrate how high quality ECEC has shown to not only be self-financing but can yield a high return on investment, and benefit women and children in the short and long term. Finally this project proposes a revised way to allocate existing public funds in order to deliver a universal ECEC system in Canada.

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INTRODUCTION

Like many Canadian parents, I began the search for child care months before the birth of my first child. Very early on in my anxiety-inducing quest I discovered the truth about regulated early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Canada: it is neither accessible nor affordable.

Unlike other comparably wealthy nations Canada lacks a plan for pre-school aged children. There is no federal mandate for the education of very young children, nor is there a national plan for their care. Child care varies by province, from Quebec where there is a provincial funded low-fee program to Ontario where 75% of regulated child care spaces are delivered in private, for-profit centres and are therefore financially out of reach for the majority of families.

Child care is a necessity for any parent who wishes — or must — participate in the paid workforce, yet licensed and regulated child care in Canada is treated as an expensive consumer commodity. Wealth buys access. In Toronto it is common for a regulated space for a child 12 – 18 months to cost \$2,000+ per month. It is simply out of the question for many families, of all income brackets, especially considering many families require care for more than one child. Inaccessible and unaffordable regulated ECEC sets into motion two scenarios that perpetuate

cycles of poverty and disadvantage:

First, children from low to middle income families are more likely to be cared for in unregulated settings; with older relatives, neighbours, or in unlicensed family day/child care homes. Some could very well be high quality, but many are not, and without public oversight, the risks to children are high. Providers may not have appropriate training and experience to care for children, environments may be unsafe or unsuitable for children, they may be overcrowded, and they may lack engaging age appropriate activities. When children reach school age, those who have benefited from high quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) are poised well to succeed, having already engaged in social and educational spaces and experiences.

Second, reconciling the cost of child care may not be financially plausible for single parents families and those in low to middle income brackets, forcing some parents (most commonly women) out of the paid workforce and dependent on social assistance. The lack of affordable and accessible child care perpetuates generational cycles of poverty.

In this project I explore the history of child care policy in Canada and examine its current system through the use of system maps and infographics. I also examine how other countries regard and approach early childhood education and care in order to identify opportunities for Canada's system to be improved and reformed. I tackle some of the common criticisms of public investment in ECEC and demonstrate how high quality ECEC has proven to not only be self-financing but can yield a high return on investment, and benefit women and children in the short and long term. Finally, through mapping and visualization, I propose a revised way to allocate existing public funds in order to deliver a universal ECEC system in Canada.

METHODOLOGIES

AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY

As a working parent with two children under the age of five I have become personally familiar with the struggle Canadian families face to secure high quality, regulated and affordable child care. My own experiences and personal observations formed the impetus for this project and confirmed much of the statistical findings throughout the course of my research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The foundation of research for this project was a literature review, drawing on peer-reviewed publications, national and international reports, and journals and articles including, but not limited to, the following topics:

- Child care in Canada and other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations
- The impact of affordable and accessible child care on economic outcomes for women, children, and communities
- High quality early childhood education as an intervention for disadvantaged populations
- Public versus private delivery of child care and the implications for children and families

One of the primary discoveries from the literature review is how governments of other nations approach educating and caring for children under the age of five.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Interviewing those closest to this issue was critical for this project. The format for all interviews was semi-structured, with a set of pre-determined questions but also allowing participants to elaborate with their responses and provide the opportunity to share personal experiences.

The first group interviewed were parents of children five and under who were cared for in a child care setting. Most children were enrolled in regulated child care, while some were in unregulated settings. Some of those families in unregulated child care arrangements were there by choice, however, most were forced in that direction because they could not afford regulated child care or because they couldn't find a regulated space in the timeframe needed. Some of the interview questions include:

- The circumstances that lead to their decision to seek child care for their child(ren)
- What qualities were important in a child care environment during their search and details about the overall experience of searching for child care
- What factors led to their ultimate selection in a child care provider, how satisfied they were with their current arrangement and what they might change about it if they could
- How affordable it is for their family and what impact paying for child care has on the household's finances
- Reflections they wish to share about the overall experience

All parents reported a sense of anxiety and stress while searching for child care. Needing to find a place that "felt right" was important, but confronting the high cost of care and the scarcity of spaces forced some families into arrangements they would not have selected had alternative options been available. Most families reported shuffling children from one provider to the next as spaces became available, as subsidies became available, or because child care providers closed their doors forcing families to scramble to make other arrangements. The high cost of regulated child care prevented many families from enrolling their children with their desired provider, and subsequently forced them to elect for a more affordable alternative

in an unregulated home day care setting. Most families put their children on more than one waitlist for regulated, centre-based care. Not-for-profit, regulated, centre-based care was the most difficult to secure and had the longest waitlists.

The second group interviewed were early childhood educators (ECE) employed by a regulated child care provider. Among those interviewed were staff in for-profit and not-for-profit child care environments. Interview questions for this group included:

- Questions about the environment; the pedagogy, the level of family involvement, and the curriculum at their place of employment,
- Questions about finances; how much a space costs, how that rate is set, and what, if any, financial supports are available to families,
- Relationship with the Ministry responsible for the oversight of child care, and the ongoing requirements to maintain licensing standards,
- Invitation to share their opinions, observations, critiques and hopes overall for child care in Canada,

The responses from this group detailed the differences between for and not-for-profit child care centres. For example, not-for-profits typically, but not always, operate through a larger not-for-profit organization with a mandate to support children and families and therefore are inclined to follow provincially recommended curriculum, make an effort to keep parent fees as low as possible (or spaces are subsidized by the larger organization) and serve families across the socioeconomic spectrum. By contrast for-profit centres may be owned and operated entirely as an investment tool, with parent fees set at the maximum the market will bear and with no financial support measures to help families who are unable to afford the fees. In Ontario, for-profit centres are not eligible to receive public child care subsidies, so these centres are simply not an option for many families. For-profit centres may not elect to follow recommended curriculum and are less likely to be held to educational and family support standards set by a governing organization.

CARD-SORTING EXERCISE

At the end of the semi-structured interviews parents perform a card-sorting exercise. They were given a stack of cards with qualities that might factor into a family's search for child care, such as "Proximity to Work/Home/School", "Affordable", "Regulated/Licensed", "Staff Qualifications". They were also provided with blank cards where they could write qualities that were missing in the assortment but were important to them. Parents were asked to perform the card sort twice; the first time to organize the cards, which were relevant to them, in the order as they factored into their current search/current child care arrangement. They were then asked to perform the card sort a second time, but this time to imagine their ideal child care setting for their child, without the constraints of cost and space availability.

The first time parents performed the card sort, "Affordable", "Subsidies Available" and "Space Available" were at the top of their list, meaning those factors were the most critical when they were choosing child care for this children. However, when the exercise was repeated and parents were urged to imagine that the cost and availability were no longer obstacles, factors such as "Healthy Food" appeared, as did "Culture/Values", "Inclusive Environment", "Personalized Curriculum" and "Positive References". Without the constraints of cost and available space, parents chose qualities that would create a positive and enriching experience for their child.

SYSTEM MAPS

System mapping was used extensively during the research and synthesizing phases of this project, in particular to understand and compare governing oversight structures in various jurisdictions. Mapping different levels of governments' responsibilities for the oversight, delivery and funding of child care visually demonstrates the extent of a society's collective responsibility for young children and their families. For example, by the age of one in Sweden children have a legally protected right to a child care space close to home and delivered

through the public school system with the same educational quality controls, funding and oversight that older child enjoy in that country. By contrast in Canada, there is no federal mandate for the care or education of pre school aged children. Until children reach school age (which varies depending on the province or territory) their care and education is the sole responsibility of parents to either provide themselves or to secure in a patchwork market environment of child care options. Provincial oversight that does exist is in the realm of basic health and safety protections for children as opposed to ensuring educational standards are met or that there is equal access to early childhood education for children across the socioeconomic spectrum.

CULTURAL PROBE

Finally, a cultural probe was used to join online conversations about child care with stakeholders across Canada. A twitter account titled "Child Care for Canada" was established and periodically published original info graphics either on child care statistics in Canada or related to current events on the same topic. This online conversation grew to include meetings and conversations with leading policy experts and researchers in Canada. In November of 2014 I joined 600 other Canadian and international delegates for the ChildCare 2020 conference in Winnipeg. It was a gathering that saw politicians, activists, economists, advocates, early childhood educators, academics, parents, and child care providers come together to discuss the challenges of child care in Canada and to envision opportunities for future improvements, particularly the goal of a national child care program for Canada.

The term “early childhood education and care” (ECEC) describes inclusive and integrated services that play multiple roles for children and their families. It signals a holistic concept that has become common internationally, although it has been slower to arrive in North America. The concept of blended early childhood education and care reflects the growing consensus that care and education are, as former UNICEF executive director Carol Ballamy has said, “inseparable”. Good ECEC programs are neither babysitting nor schooling – they are neither just for children nor only for parents. Well-designed early childhood education and care services can meet a wide range of objectives, including care, learning, and social support for children and their parents. ECEC is about a coherent approach to policy. It is about providing care that includes all children and all parents regardless of employment or socio-economic status. (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009)

CANADA IS IN A CHILD CARE CRISIS.

THERE ARE ONLY ENOUGH
REGULATED CHILD CARE SPACES FOR
24.1% OF CANADIAN CHILDREN UNDER 5.



FIG.1

Source: Friendly, M., Grady, B., Macdonald, L., & Forer, B. (2015)

WHILE **73.5%** OF CANADIAN MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN 5 AND UNDER PARTICIPATE IN THE PAID WORKFORCE.



FIG.2

Source: Friendly, M., Halfon, S., Beach, J., & Forer, B. (2013)

THE LAST YEAR CANADA REPORTED ECEC ENROLMENT NUMBERS TO THE OECD WAS IN 2010. **SINCE 2010 CANADA HAS NOT SUPPLIED EDUCATION STATISTICS ON CHILDREN UNDER 5 TO THE OECD.**

2010/2011 ECEC ENROLLMENT OF 3 YEAR OLDS

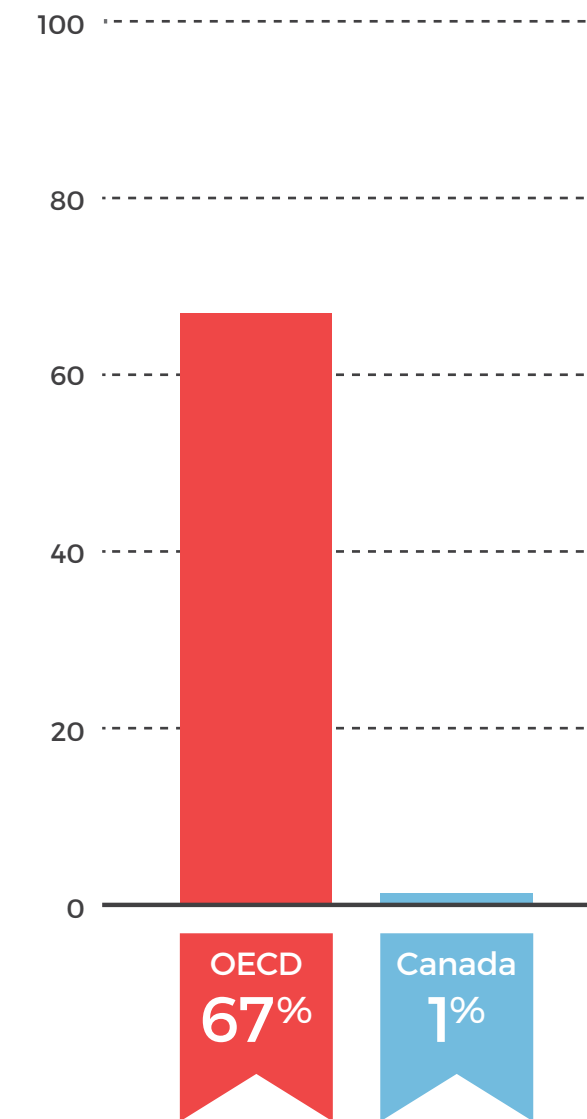


FIG.3

Source: OECD (2013), and OECD (2014)

UNICEF HAS ESTABLISHED **10 BENCHMARKS**
FOR QUALITY AND ACCESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION AND CARE.

**CANADA AND IRELAND HAVE TIED FOR LAST
PLACE AMONG 25 NATIONS, MEETING ONLY
1 OF 10 BENCHMARKS.**

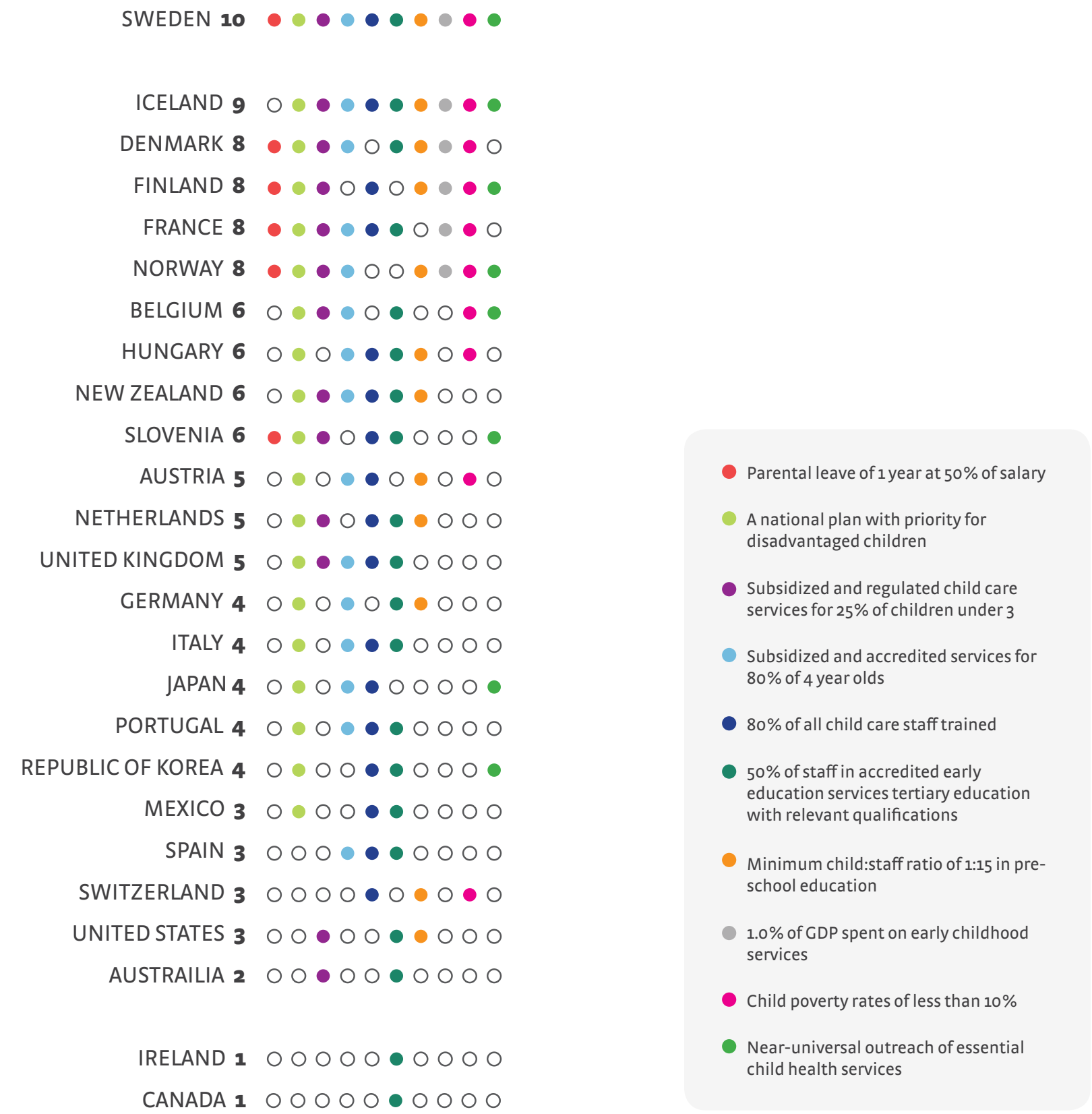


FIG.4

Source: The Child Care Transition: A League Table of Early Childhood Education and Care in Economically Advanced Countries (2008)

PARENT FEES FOR ECEC IN CANADA ARE AMONG THE HIGHEST OF ANY NATION. THE OECD AVERAGE FOR ECEC FEES IS 15% OF A FAMILY'S INCOME. HOWEVER, IN CANADA THE AMOUNT IS CLOSER TO 23%; 32% FOR LONE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS.

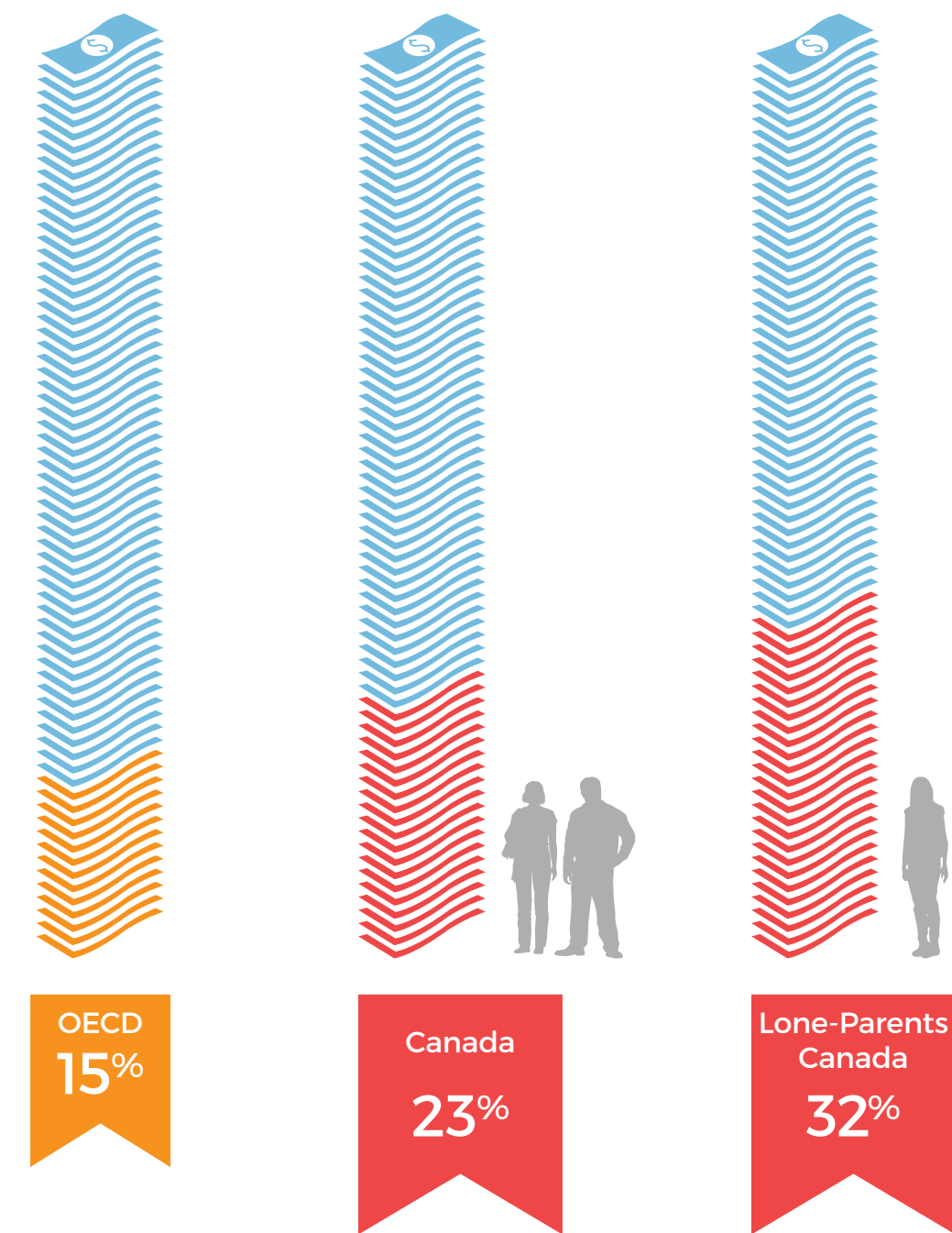


FIG.5

Source: Society at a Glance 2016: OECD Social Indicators

RESEARCH QUESTION:

HOW MIGHT CANADA USE EXISTING FUNDS TO DELIVER HIGH QUALITY, REGULATED, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (ECEC) TO MORE CHILDREN 5 AND UNDER?

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN CANADA



43%

of all regulated child care spaces in Canada are in the province of Quebec.



57%

of all regulated child care spaces in Canada are spread out across the rest of the provinces and territories.

CANADA

In a broad sense Canada's child care system is designed as a service for working parents, with some benefits for some children. Access to regulated care is low and varies greatly across provinces and indeed across cities. On average, there are only enough regulated child care spaces for 24.1% of Canadian children between the ages of 0–5 (Friendly, M., Grady, B., Macdonald, L., Forer, B., 2015). The exception is the province of Quebec, where 36.3% of children 0–5 have access to a regulated ECEC. In fact, in 2006 Quebec alone accounted for 43% of all regulated spaces across Canada (Bennett, J., & Tayler, C. P., 2006). The federal government neither tracks nor reports public investments in children before they reach school age, nor does it track and report the numbers of children ages 3 and 4 years old participating in early childhood education, a practice adopted by its OECD counterparts. (OECD, Education at a Glance Canada, 2014).

This is one of the key overarching characteristics of Canada's child care system; it is delivered in a market environment with government funding largely in the form of financial support to parents; by way of subsidies, tax breaks and cash allowances.

FIG.6

Source: Friendly, M., Halfon, S., Beach, J., & Forer, B. (2013)

THE HISTORY OF CHILD CARE IN CANADA

In 1942 the federal government introduced the Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement, a fifty-fifty cost sharing agreement between the federal government and participating provinces to fund child care centres. The policy was in response to the increasing demand for women to enter the work force during World War II. Initially the program was only available to industries that could demonstrate over three quarters of women were working in war production, however this requirement was quickly dropped (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009). Ontario and Quebec were the only provinces to participate in the cost sharing program. In Ontario, most of the child care programs

were publicly operated by municipalities, while a few centres were run by charitable organizations and community groups that received public funding (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009).

Unfortunately, federal funding of the Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement ceased when the war ended in 1945. Women who had contributed to the workforce and economy during the war were expected to withdraw and return to their domestic duties, thus Canada's only national child care program to date lasted just 36 months (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009). Interestingly though, many women did not withdraw from the workforce; the labour force participation of mothers never returned to its pre-war numbers (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009). In the absence of public investment following the end of the

Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement, child care spaces were largely created by for-profit entities, spouting up in the more affluent regions of the country and available to families who could afford it (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009). A survey on child care wasn't conducted until the late 1960s, at which point it was determined that 75 percent of regulated spaces in Canada were operating on a for-profit basis (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009).

In the 1960s and 1970s the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) allowed federal funds for child care as part of its social welfare funding delivered to the provinces and territories. Although child care was not an initial priority of CAP, community groups advocated for its incorporation into the welfare plan (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009). Thus, federal, provincial and

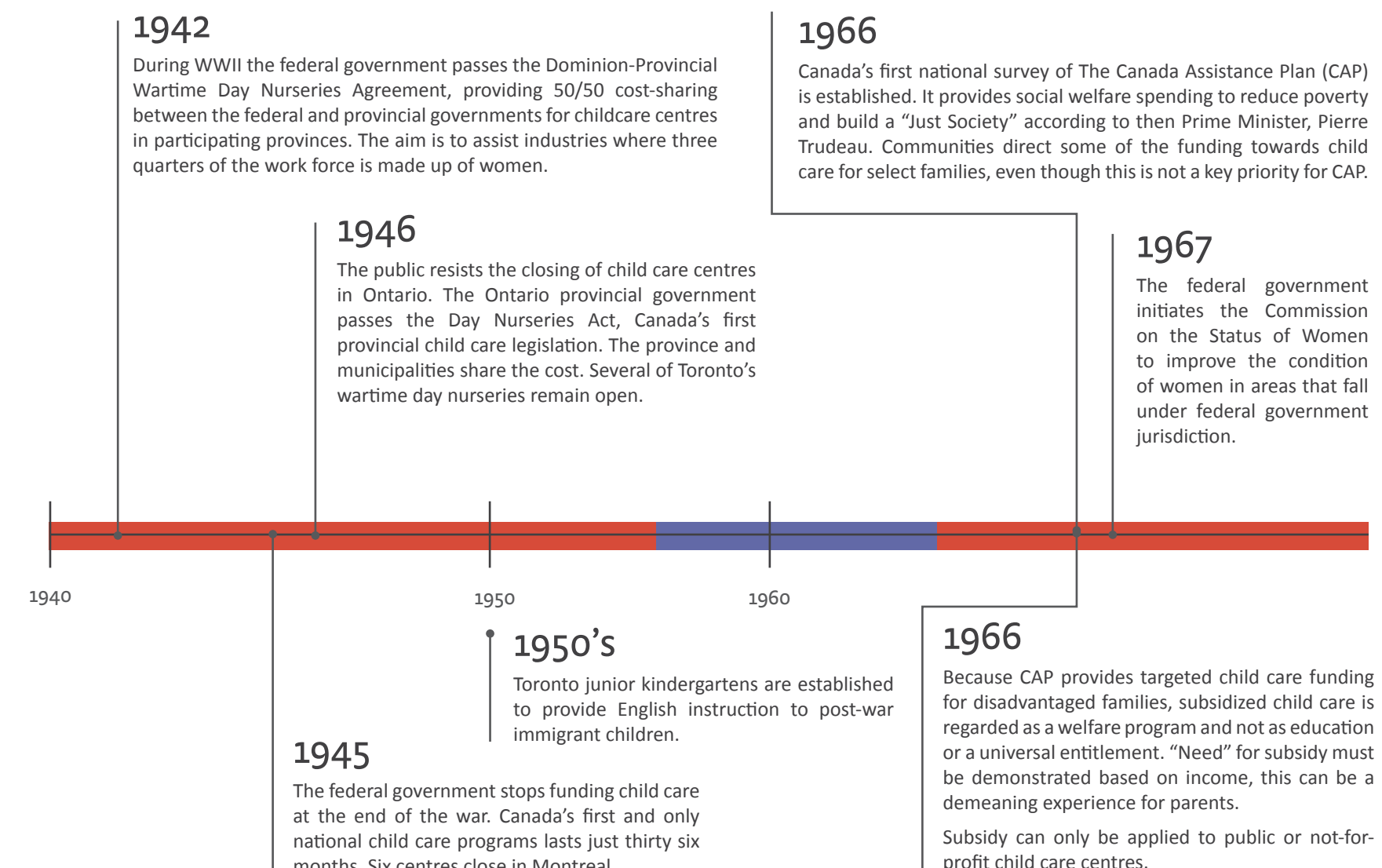
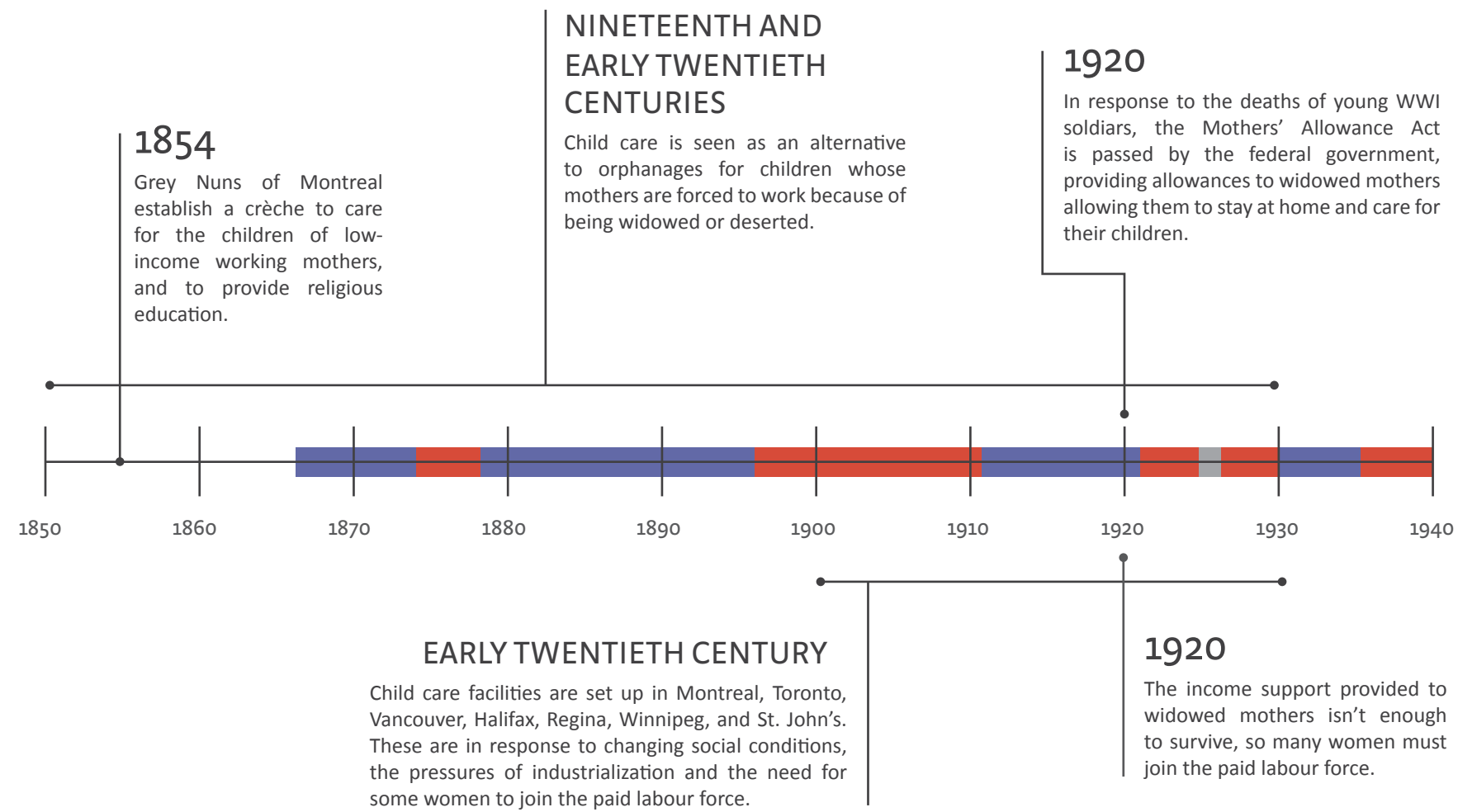
territorial governments began to share the costs of child care for select families deemed to be in need. As part of CAP, (a funding mechanism for social welfare provisions) the government's role in providing for child care therefore became a service targeted at the children of low-income families rather than an educational program to which all young children were entitled (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009). Many of the funds were delivered in the form of subsidies to families and included a caveat that only favoured public and non-profit regulated child care providers were eligible for cost-sharing (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009).

The child care provision in CAP ceased in 1987 when the federal Progressive Conservative party, in power at the time, proposed a national child care act, Bill C-144. The Bill favoured a new and limited funding scheme that for the first time made federal funds available to for-profit child care providers. In addition, it increased the child care expense deduction, placing greater reliance on tax-based measures to off-set the cost (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009). While the bill passed through the House of Commons, it

failed to pass the Senate.

There have been several political attempts to create a national child care policy. In the run up to the 1993 election, the federal Liberal party produced a detailed election platform *The Red Book* which proposed, among other things, a national child care program. The Liberals won the 1993 election and went on to enjoy ten years of a majority government yet never brought their national child care program to life. This may be due in part to a couple of factors; first, the growing national debt and deficit spurred concern about the health of the national economy so the governing Liberals implemented a drastic restructuring of the Canadian welfare system (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009). Second, the 1995 referendum on Quebec sovereignty saw nearly 50 percent of Quebec voters express their desired to separate from the rest of Canada. The results rattled the federal government and set the stage for the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA), a measure to repair Canadian Federalism following the Quebec referendum (Noel, A., 1998). More power was granted to the provinces

to shape their social policy landscapes while the federal government moved away from the direct funding of services to a reliance on the tax system to redistribute income (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009). As social services continued to be downloaded to the local level, and more onus was placed on individuals to be self-reliant, the market moved in to fill the gaps.



PRESENT DAY

Workforce participation by women with young children is high in Canada: 69.7% of mothers with children 0 –2 are employed outside of their homes, with that number jumping to 76.6% for mothers of children between the ages of 3 and 5 years. (Friendly, M., Halfon, S., Beach, J., & Forer, B., 2013).

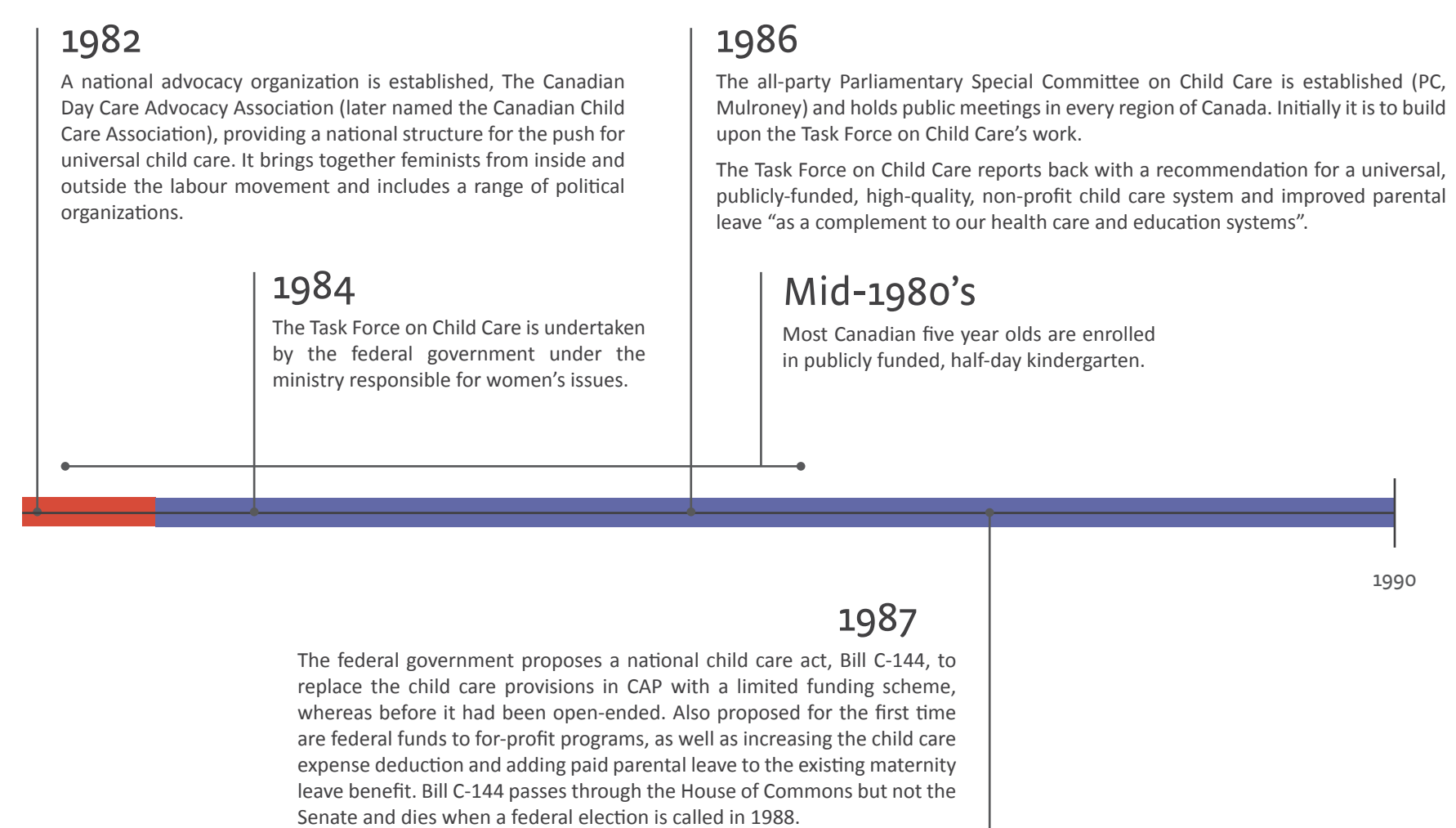
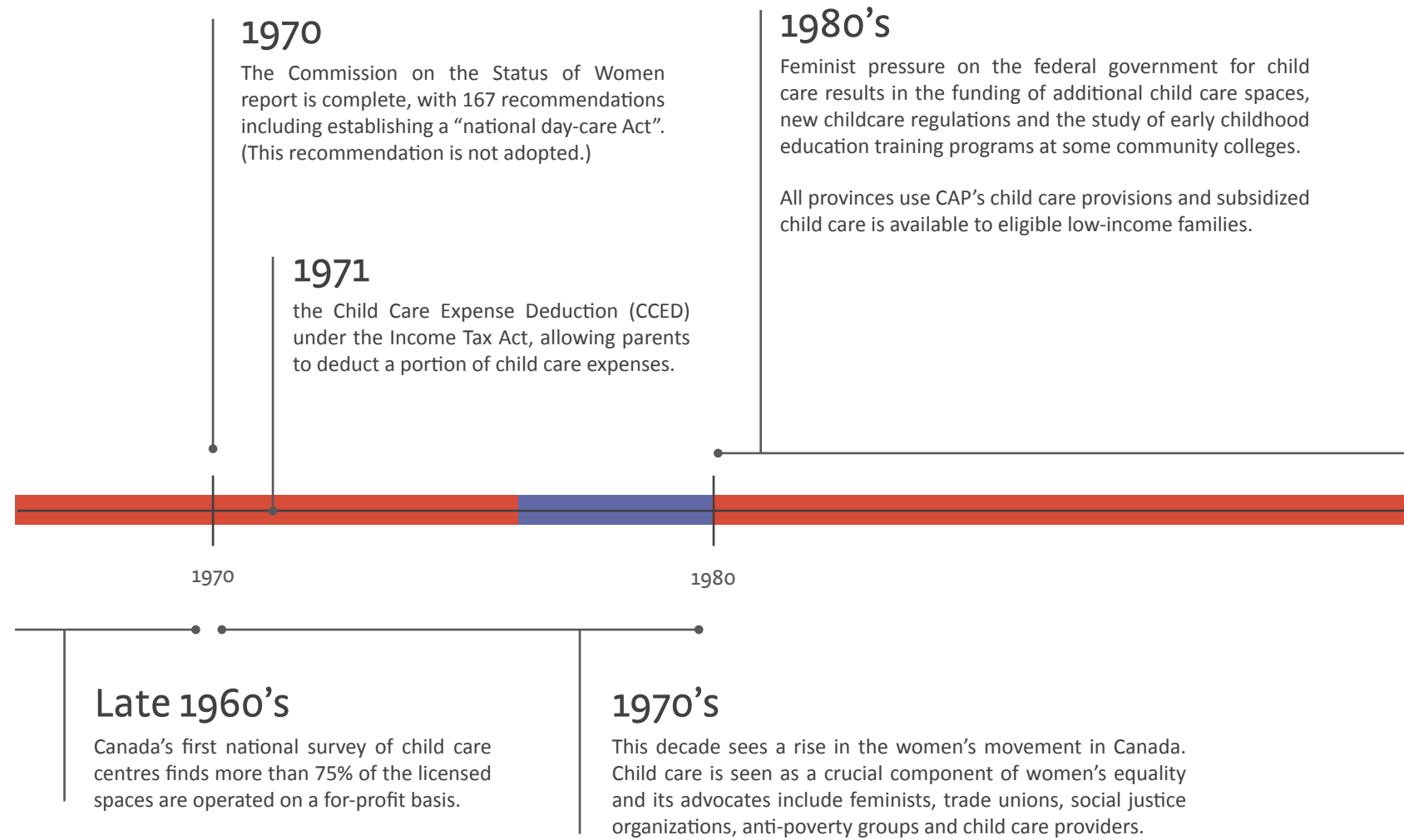
Parent fees for regulated ECEC are high in Canada. On average Canadian families pay \$8,590 annually for a child between the ages of 1 – 5. Fees are highest for infants between 12 and 18 months, with an average of \$761 per month, but can go as high as

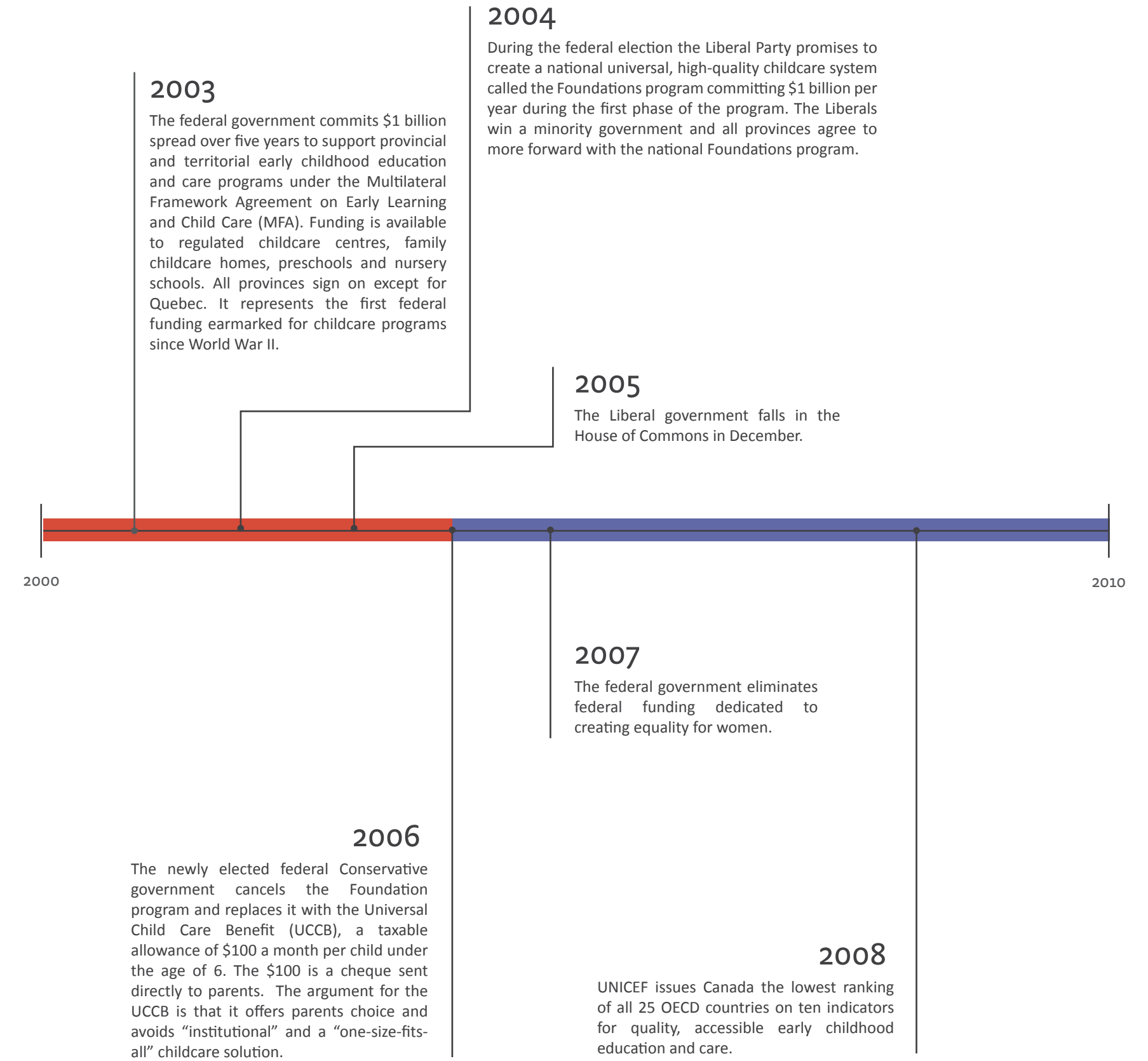
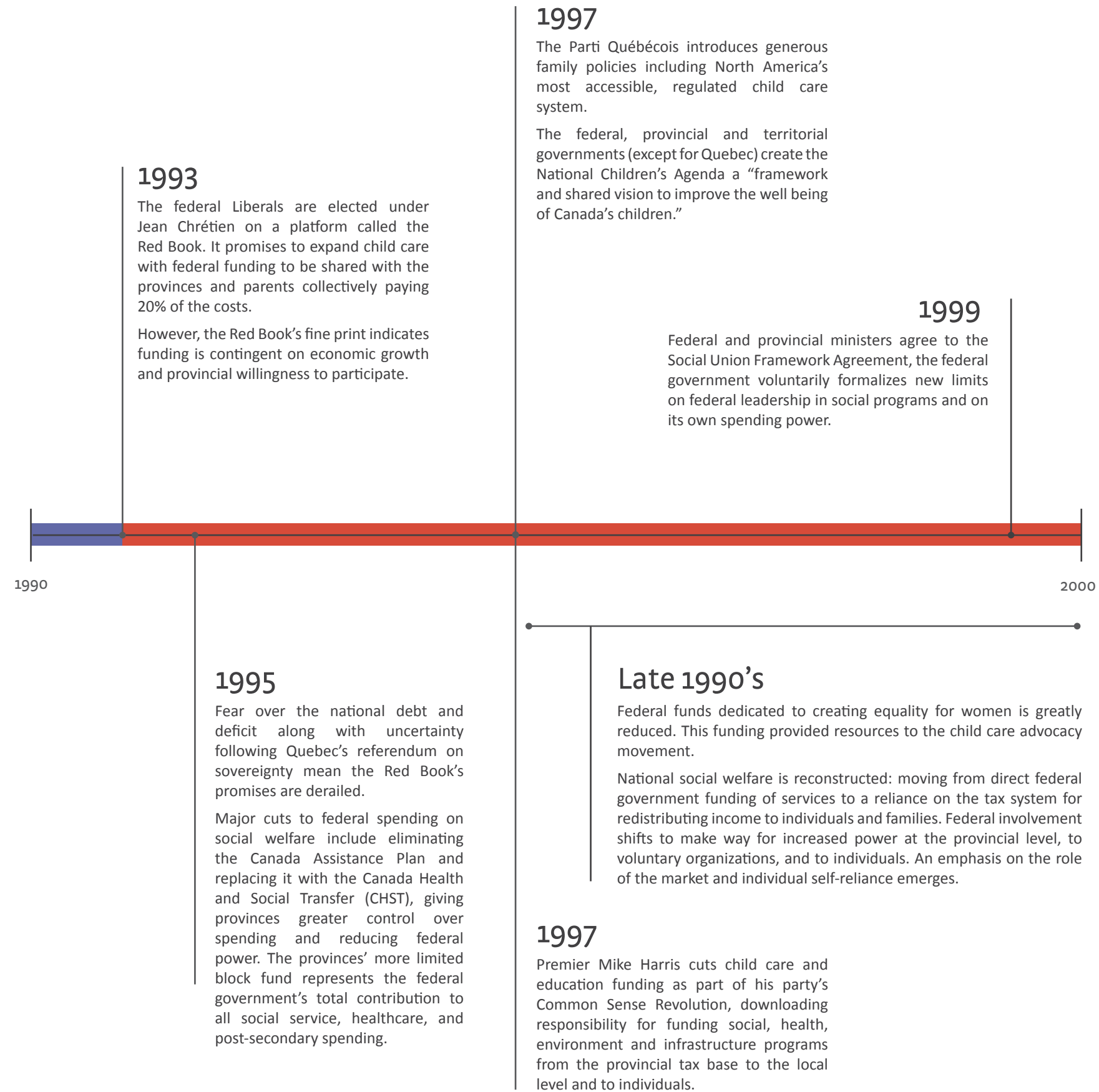
\$2,000 per month in some regions. Monthly fees for toddlers (18 – 30 months) average at \$701, while preschool spaces (30 months until school age; 4 or 5 years depending on the jurisdiction) are an average of \$674 per month (Friendly, M., Halfon, S., Beach, J., & Forer, B., 2013).

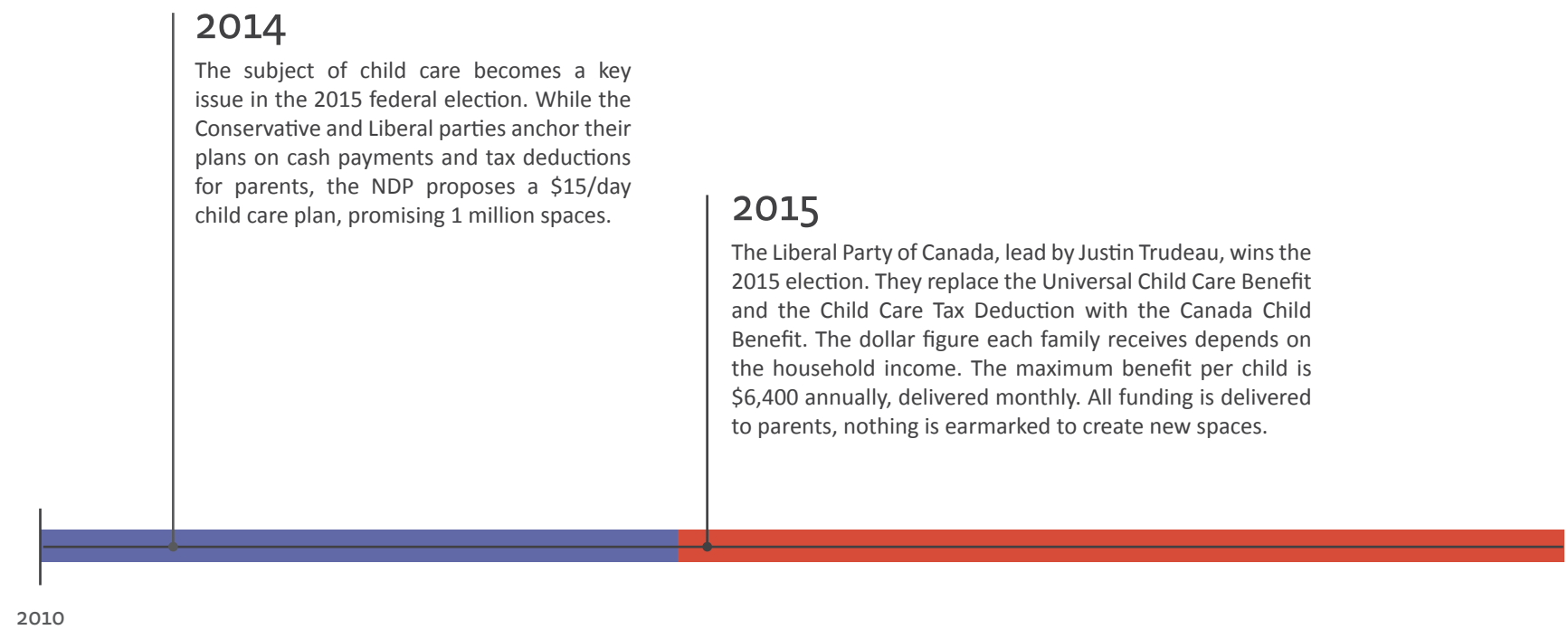
In all provinces and territories aside from Quebec, the public investment per regulated ECEC space in Canada is \$3,193; which includes funding by way of subsidies as well as the costs associated with regulation, plus capital and operating funds. In Quebec, however, the average annual parent fees at \$1,824 – \$7/day. In that province, the public

allocation of funds per regulated ECEC space is \$5,958 (Friendly, M., Halfon, S., Beach, J., & Forer, B., 2013).

Various curricula for ECEC exist in Canada but they vary by province and territory, and even in regulated settings, adherence is voluntary. Government regulation of ECEC is primarily in the form of health and safety oversight; ensuring that employees have the appropriate screening and qualifications, monitoring child: staff ratios, and making sure safe food handling practices are followed.







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 Doherty, G., Friendly, M., & Beach, J. (2003).
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 Helping families. (n.d.).

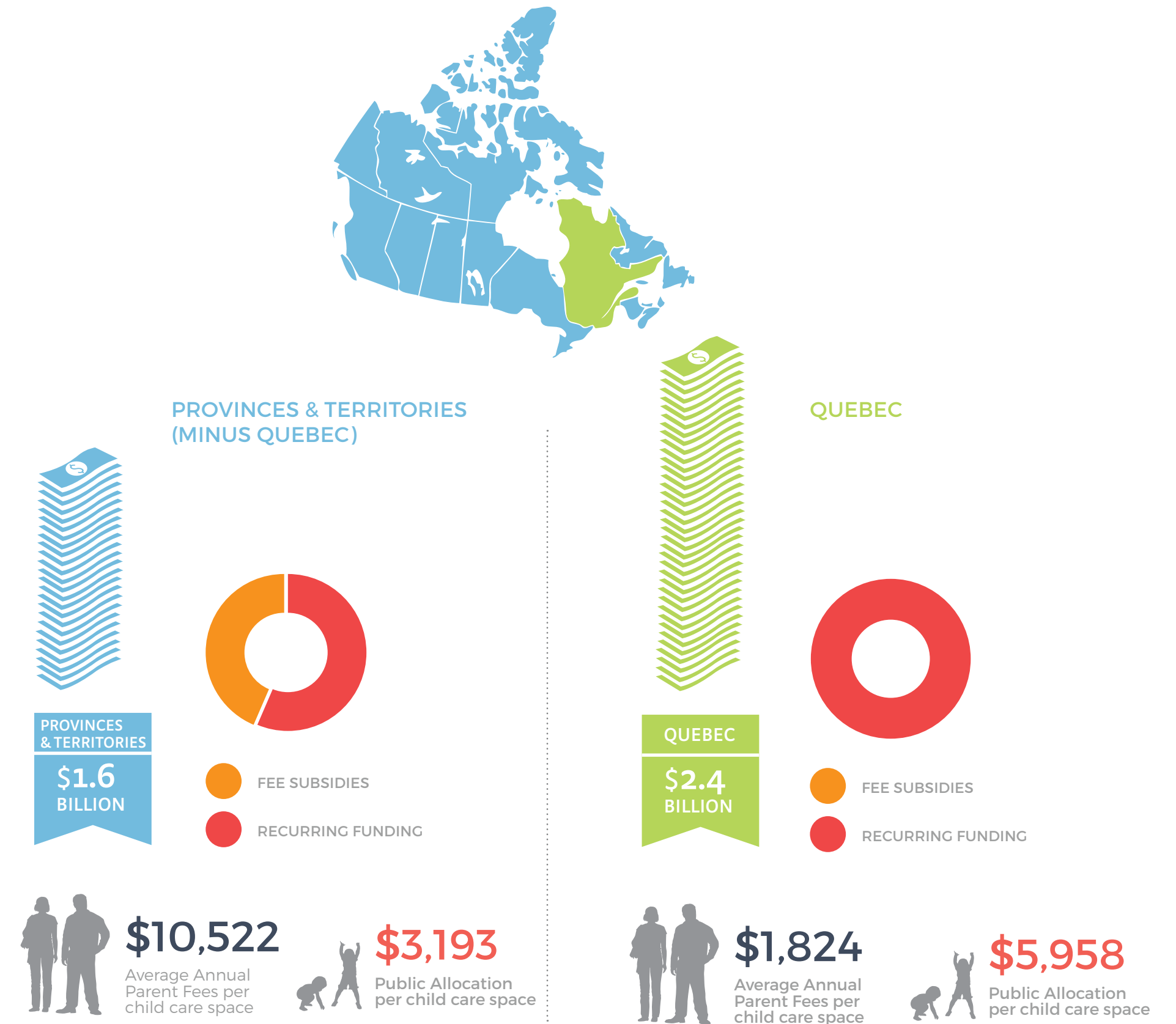
FIG. 7. PROVINCIAL PUBLIC FUNDS ALLOCATED TO CHILD CARE

THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

With the exception of First Nations, military, and new Canadians, Canada's federal government has no direct role in funding, mandating, or providing child care. Block funding for education and various other social services, in the form of the Canada Social Transfer, is delivered to the Provinces and Territories with no amount earmarked for child care. Responsibility for child care thereby falls entirely on provincial and territorial governments. Provinces and territories have sole discretion when it comes to allocating funds for child care. On average, 44% of provincial and territorial funds spent on child care are allocated to parent subsidies, while the remaining 56% of funds are spent on regulation, capital and operations. (Ferns, C., Friendly, M., 2014). Quebec, however, is the exception: as a result of their low-fee child care system 100% of Quebec's funding goes directly to funding spaces. (Ferns, C., Friendly, M., 2014).

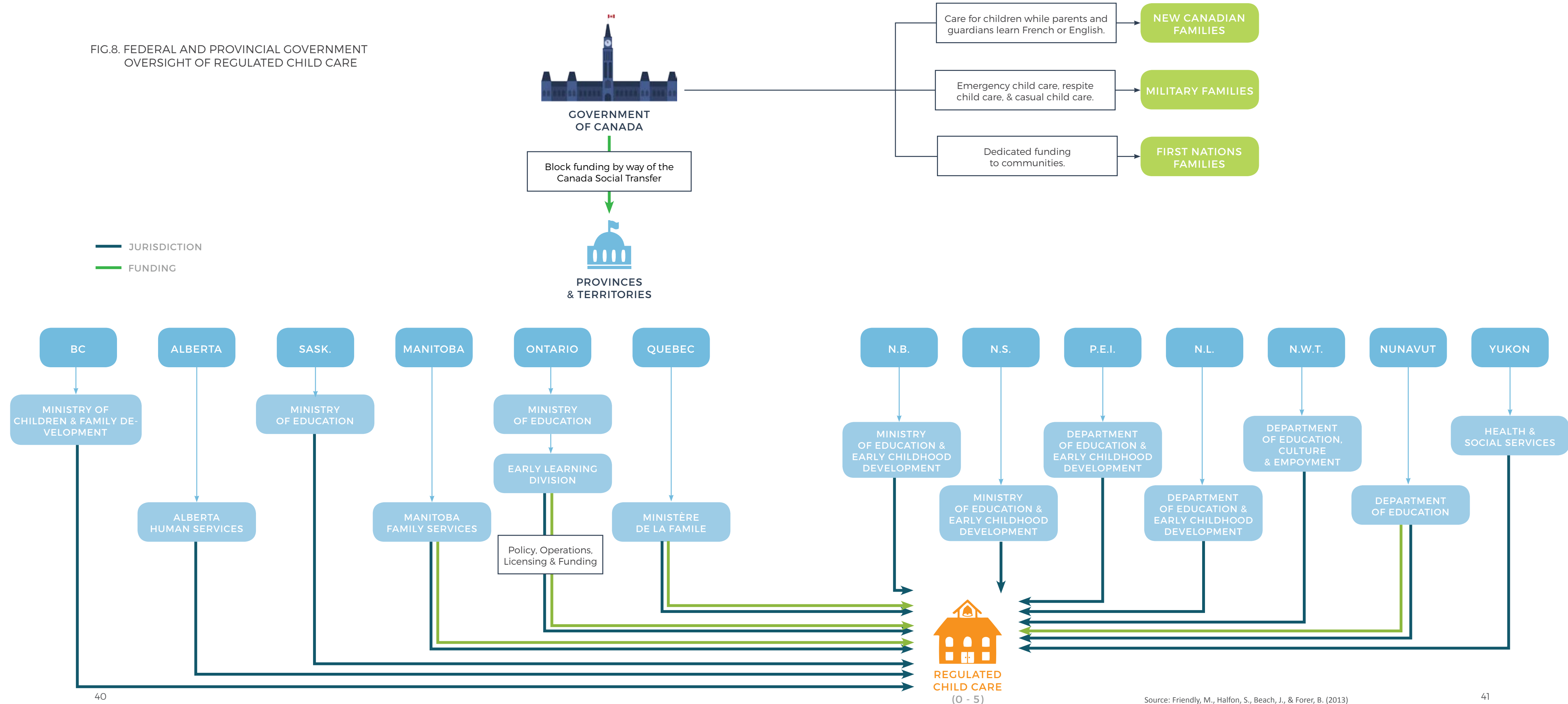
Ministry oversight also varies across the country. In some regions regulated child care falls under the jurisdiction of education departments, as is the case in Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova Scotia, PEI, NL, NWT and Nunavut. However, in other regions regulated child care falls under the jurisdiction of ministries responsible for children, youth, families, health and social services, as is the case with Alberta, BC, Manitoba, Quebec, Nfld and Yukon (Ferns, C., Friendly, M., 2014).

Municipal governments in Ontario have the delegated authority to provide and maintain child care services focused at the local level; in all other jurisdictions there is no local authority involvement. (Bennett, J., & Tayler, C. P., 2006).



Source: Friendly, M., Halfon, S., Beach, J., & Forer, B. (2013)

FIG.8. FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT OF REGULATED CHILD CARE



THE MARKET'S ROLE

Regulated early childhood education and care in Canada is a commodity, bought and sold in a market system, and vulnerable to the forces of supply and demand.

The cost of regulated ECEC varies across the country. In Quebec, where the province has introduced a low-fee system, the average annual parent fees are \$1,824. However, in Ontario, which records the highest annual fees, the cost is in excess of \$11,648 (Ferns, C., Friendly, M., 2014). In the city of Toronto an infant space, for a child between 12 and 18 months, can run upwards of \$2,000 per month.

Waitlists for a regulated space are common and often a family's first experience with ECEC. Families can expect to wait for a year or more to access an age appropriate space for their child.

Another critical element in this market system is the public subsidy; a monthly monetary support from provincial or territorial governments to help lower-

income parents pay for child care. The subsidy is intended to substitute for the parent's fee, and not to fund the child care program as a whole. (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009). In essence, it doesn't fund the system beyond bridging the gap for some families who can demonstrate financial need. In 2012, \$711 million was spent on subsidies, while \$920 million was spent in the way of recurring funding; on the regulation of ECEC and on capital and operational expenses. (Friendly, M., Halfon, S., Beach, J., & Forer, B., 2013). Subsidies are generally administered through provincial and territorial governments but in Ontario they're accessed through municipalities. Applying and qualifying for subsidies is an arduous process that comes with its own wait-times and further highlights the barriers many families face in accessing Canada's expensive regulated ECEC system. Qualifying for a subsidy does not guarantee a child care space, nor does it necessarily cover the entire cost of child care. Even after a subsidy is applied, many Canadian families still cannot afford regulated child care, leaving them instead to turn to unregulated yet more affordable alternatives (Friendly,

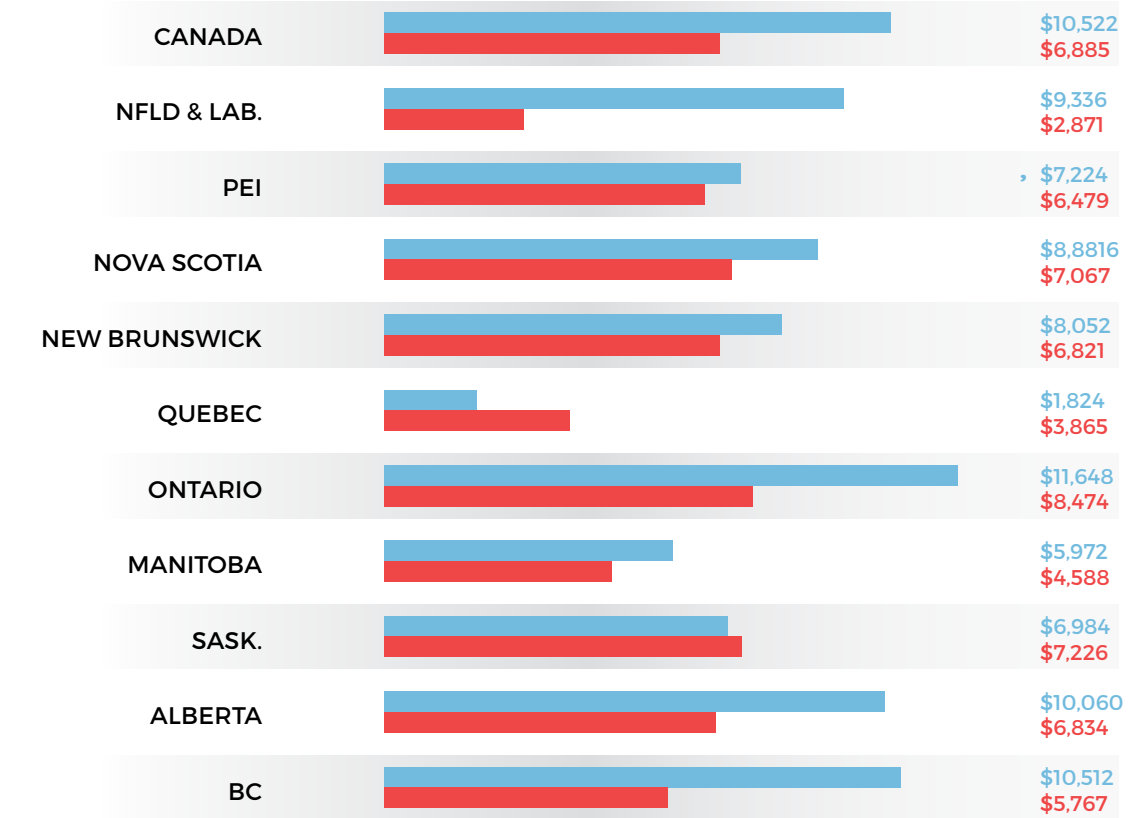
M., & Prentice, S., 2009).

A subsidy cannot be used for all regulated child care, many for-profit child care centres do not accept subsidies, or are deemed ineligible for subsidies at the provincial level due to their status as a for-profit entity. Except for BC, families can only use subsidies for regulated child care; eliminating any unregulated alternatives such as unregulated home care, care by a relative or a friend, or a nanny.

In Toronto, for example, families can apply for a child care subsidy from the City of Toronto with the following caveats:

- The family must live in the city of Toronto, be moving to the city, or be employed in the city.
- Each parent/guardian must either be employed, looking for work, in school, or planning to start school.
- On the application form families must identify three regulated child care centres they are interested in. All must accept subsidies and be deemed eligible to receive a subsidy.
- Families must submit either their

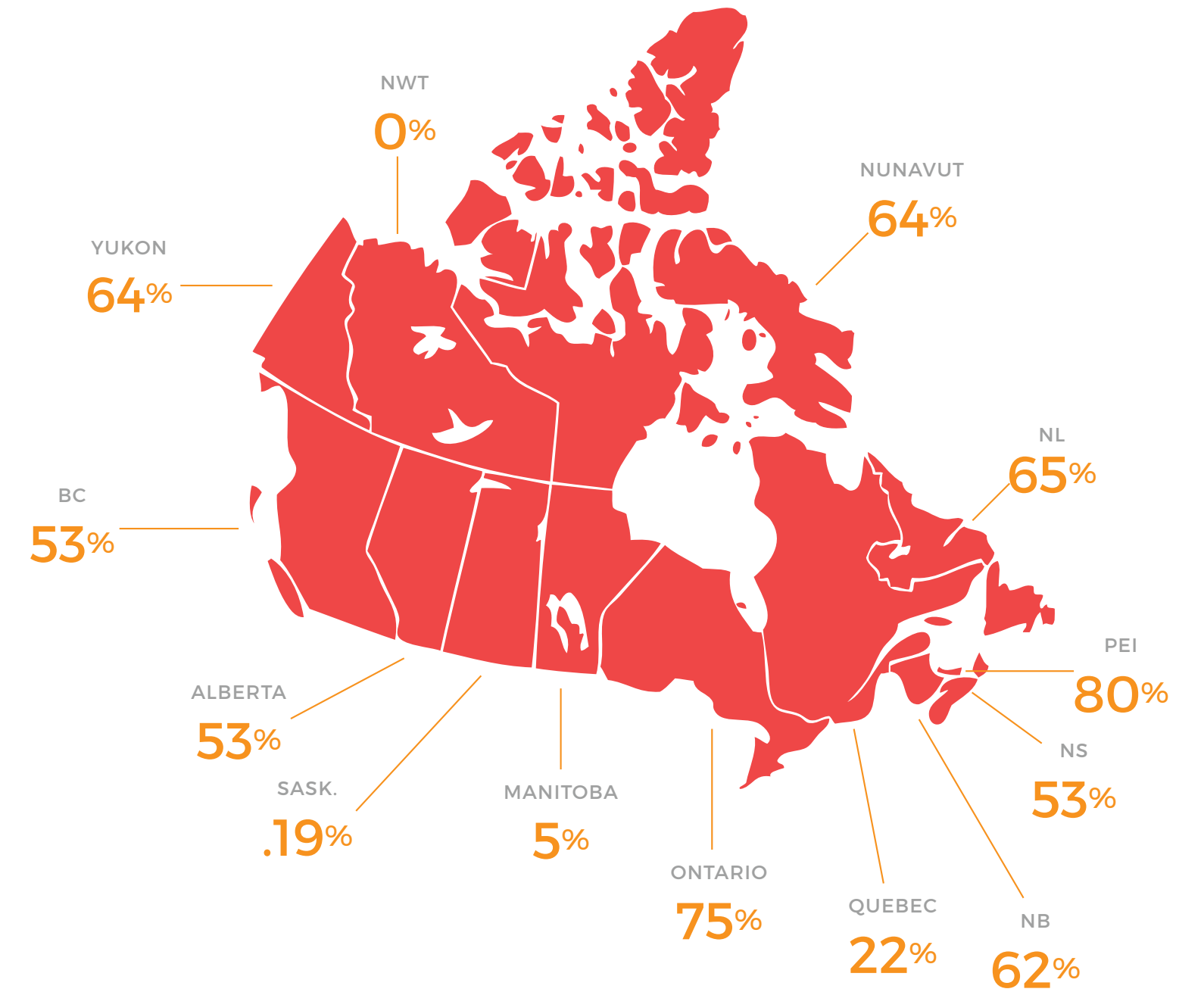
FIG. 9. ANNUAL PARENT FEES FOR CHILD CARE COMPARED WITH THE ANNUAL COST OF UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE TUITION IN CANADA



most recent Canada Child Tax Benefit statement (CCTB) or their most recent Notice of Assessment (NOA) or Notice of Reassessment from Revenue Canada.

Once a family's application has been approved they are then placed on a first-come, first-serve wait list. When the family reaches the top of the list they are given six weeks to locate a child care centre that has an available space for their child. If they are unable to secure a space in that timeframe they are then placed back on the wait list. Bureaucratic hurdles aside, the fundamental danger of targeted social programs that require a demonstration of need is two-fold: the sense of personal failure on the part of the individual seeking the service, and the stigma of public burden. By contrast, universally delivered social programs do not involve any humiliating loss of status, dignity or self respect (Burke, M., Silver, S., 2006).

FIG. 10. PERCENTAGE OF REGULATED CHILD CARE SPACES THAT ARE FOR-PROFIT



WHAT ARE OTHER COUNTRIES DOING?

While Canadians remain ambivalent about the appropriate types and the amount of public support for families with young children, our contemporaries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)—the world's richest countries—have changed the discussion from the need to mind the children of working parents, to stimulating all children. Driven by the massive body of research that points to the importance of the early years for future health, behavior and learning, they have invested heavily in early childhood programs, largely by including younger children in public education. At age 1, children in Sweden, Denmark and Finland are entitled to a preschool program, while at age 2, children in France and Belgium regularly attend preschool. Most countries in the European Union have set a target to provide at least two years of preschool for all children (McCain, M.N., Mustard, J.F., & McCuaig, K., 2011).

The following two countries, Sweden and Portugal, were selected to demonstrate how other nations meet the challenge of caring for and educating their very young citizens. Sweden is often held up as the shining beacon of social welfare states, with high taxes and a robust system of social support structures and a high standard of living. Portugal, however, is a nation without the wealth of many of its OECD counterparts yet it has managed to create an enviable early childhood education and care program. The systems in both nations are supported by all levels of government and delivered through legislation, with educational mandates and age appropriate curricula.



SWEDEN

Distinctions between day care and kindergarten were removed by the 1998 School Act, which sees all services for young children from ages 1 - 6 as “pre-school” (förskola) (Bennett, J., & Tayler, C. P., 2006). From their first birthday onward, by law, Swedish children have a right to a place in local ECEC centre (Bennett, J., & Tayler, C. P., 2006). Pre-school is offered to all children regardless of their parents’ employment status, and while parent fees do exist for children younger than 4, fees are waived for low-income families. (Bennett, J., & Tayler, C. P., 2006).

The curricula for pre-school and compulsory school are closely linked and are based on a mutual view of knowledge, development and learning (National Agency for Education, 2008). The pre-school curriculum is an ordinance with binding regulations outlining its purpose in forming the basis for lifelong learning and that it shall be enjoyable, secure and rich in learning for all children. (National Agency for Education, 2008). Pre-school is delivered with an emphasis

on respect for the child, and a view that childhood has value in and of itself and is not only a preparation for adult life. (National Agency for Education, 2008).

Sweden has a progressive parental leave policy, with 480 days that can be shared by both parents. Because of this, enrolment in förskola for 1 and 2 year olds is 45%, but by age 2 and 3 the enrolment jumps to 86%. By the time children reach ages 3 and 4, and 5 and 6, enrolment rates are 91% and 96% respectively. (Bennett, J., & Tayler, C. P., 2006).

Employment rates for women with children vary. For mothers with children under the age of 3 years, 44% work full-time while 36.2% work part-time. (Bennett, J., & Tayler, C. P., 2006). The average rate of workforce participation for mothers with children younger than 6 is 76.6% – identical to the overall average of women’s workforce participation. (Bennett, J., & Tayler, C. P., 2006).

Parent fees do exist for children under the age of 4, and covers about 9% of the total

costs to deliver pre-school. The fees amount to roughly 2% of an average household income. The maximum monthly rate for families with one child enrolled is \$135 USD, for two children it is \$107 USD per child, and for three children enrolled families pay \$54 USD per child, per month. (Bennett, J., & Tayler, C. P., 2006). On average, the public allocation of funds per pre-school space is \$6,915 USD (OECD, 2014).

Pre-school in Sweden is well developed, with stable government funding, low parent fees, and a well-educated workforce (National Agency for Education, 2008). Sweden is also the only nation to achieve all ten recommended UNICEF benchmarks when it comes to access and quality for early childhood services. (Adamson, P., 2008).

FIG.11. ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SWEDEN IN THE DELIVERY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE.

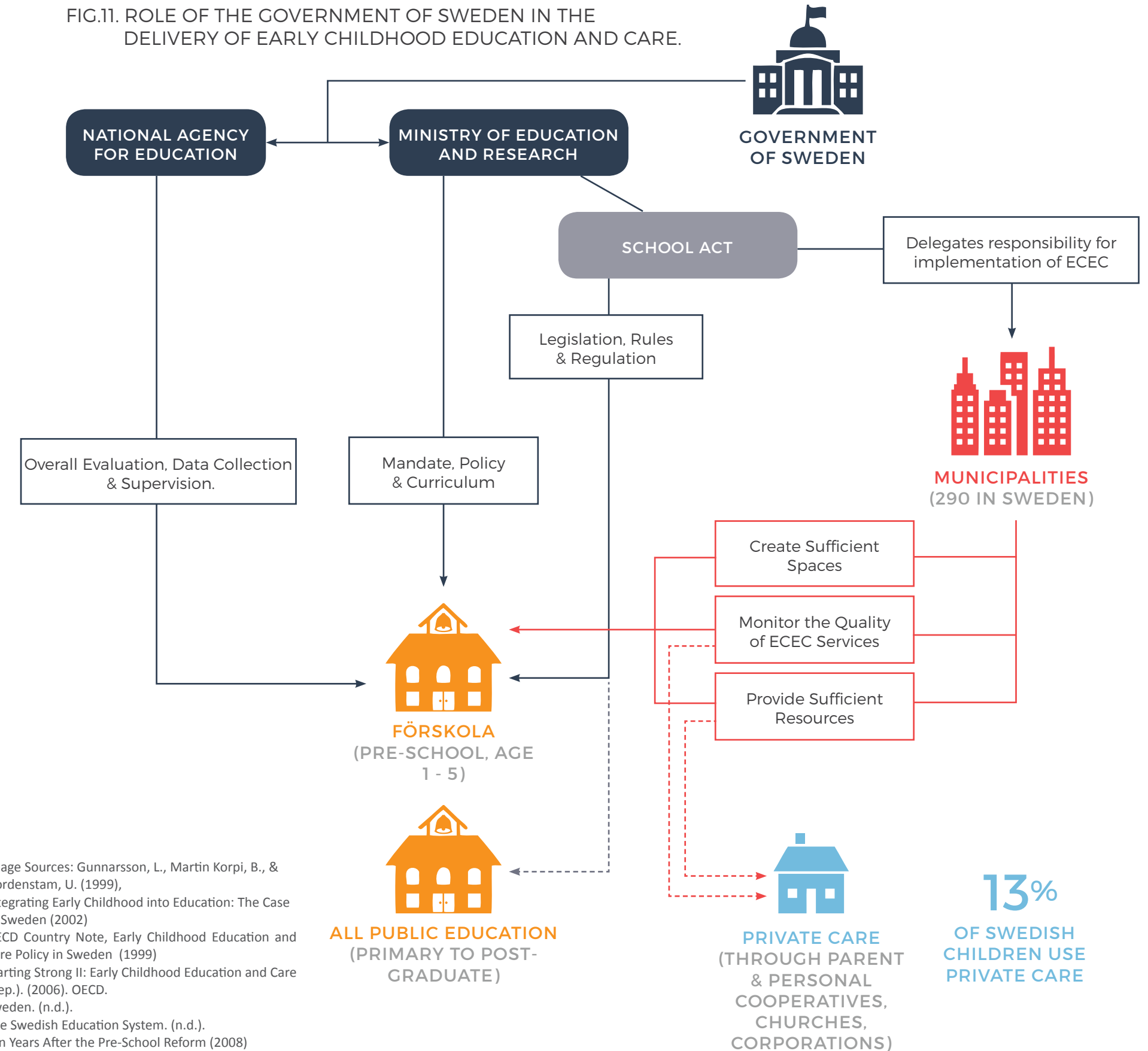


Image Sources: Gunnarsson, L., Martin Korpi, B., & Nordenstam, U. (1999), Integrating Early Childhood into Education: The Case of Sweden (2002) OECD Country Note, Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in Sweden (1999) Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care (Rep.). (2006). OECD. Sweden. (n.d.). The Swedish Education System. (n.d.). Ten Years After the Pre-School Reform (2008)



79.5%

There are enough regulated ECEC spaces for 79.5% of Swedish children under the age of 6.

FIG.12

Source: Bennett, J., & Tayler, C. P., 2006



PORTUGAL

From the age of three, children in Portugal are legally entitled to access jardim de infância (pre-school) (Bennett, J., & Tayler, C. P., 2006). While ECEC for children younger than three is less accessible and widely considered to be the responsibility of the family (OECD Country Note, Portugal), pre-school from 3 – 6 is free and considered a legal right (Bennett, J., & Tayler, C. P., 2006). The National Framework Law for Preschool Education states that pre-school is ‘the first step in basic education seen as part of life-long education and complementing the education provided by the family, with which it should establish close co-operation, fostering the education and balanced development of the child, with a view to his/her full integration in society as an autonomous, free and co-operative individual’ (NOTE, O. C., 2000).

Among its goals The National Framework Law for Pre-school Education states that pre-school aims to ‘contribute to equality of opportunity in access to education and for successful learning’ and that ‘the state has to provide support to areas in most need’. ‘Equality of opportunities implies that

families, independently of their economical conditions, should have equal access to any pre-school setting and by areas in most need: a) areas where the pre-school settings (both public and private) cover less than 50% of three-to-five-year-old; b) areas at-risk of school exclusion or social exclusion; c) areas affected by high proportions of school failure; d) urban areas with dense population’ (Vasconcelos, 2005)

The objectives of pre-school education are to stimulate the capacities of each child and to facilitate their development, contribute to their emotional stability, encourage each child to observe and understand the natural world and human society, to help in a child’s moral development, encourage integration in different social groups, develop expression and communication skills, foster hygienic and healthy habits and to detect early signs of disabilities or special gifts; directing the child to appropriate institutions or specialists whenever necessary. (Boal, M. E., 1999)

About 60% of three year olds attend jardins de infância, with that number rising to 90% by the age of five and six (Bennett, J., & Tayler, C. P., 2006). The delivery of pre-

school in Portugal has many forms and many organizational dimensions; including public and private, non-profit and for-profit, nationally and regionally directed, secular and religious orientation, charitable, co-operative and differing combinations of all of these. (NOTE, O. C., 2000). In addition to providing the educational component to children between 3 and 6, many settings offer educational activities and support for the entire family, especially in the form of socio-educational activities. (Boal, M. E., 1999).

Workforce participation by Portuguese mothers with children 6 and younger stands at 79%, higher than the average participation rate of all women between the ages of 15 and 64, which is 67%. Of mothers with children 3 and younger, 70.8% are employed. (Bennett, J., & Tayler, C. P., 2006).

While ECEC for children 3 and older is free, care for children younger than three averages about 11% of an annual salary. Average wage, \$14,288.71 USD – 11% = \$1,571.76



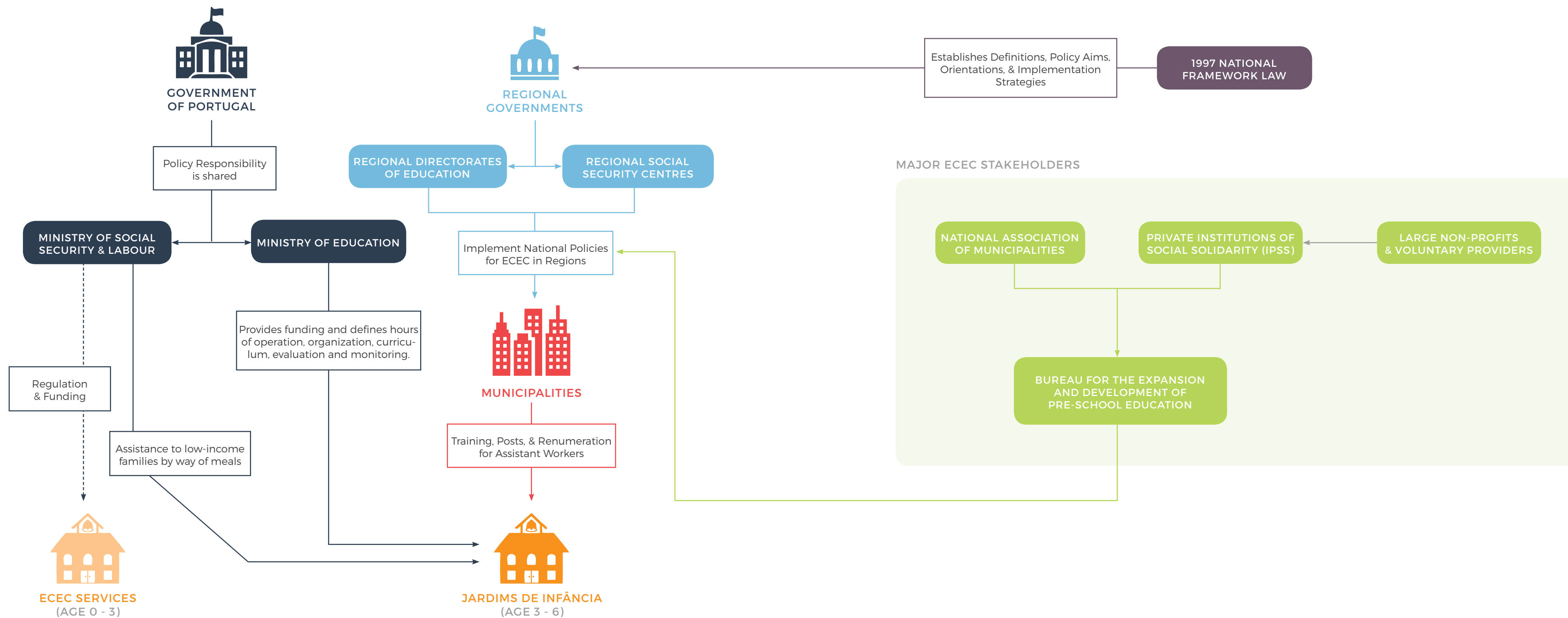
76.3%

The average access to regulated ECEC spaces for children between 3 and 6 in Portugal is 76.3%. For children 3 to 6 it is 60%, and jumps to 90% for children 5 to 6.

FIG.13

Source: Bennett, J., & Tayler, C. P., 2006

FIG.14. ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF PORTUGAL IN THE DELIVERY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE.

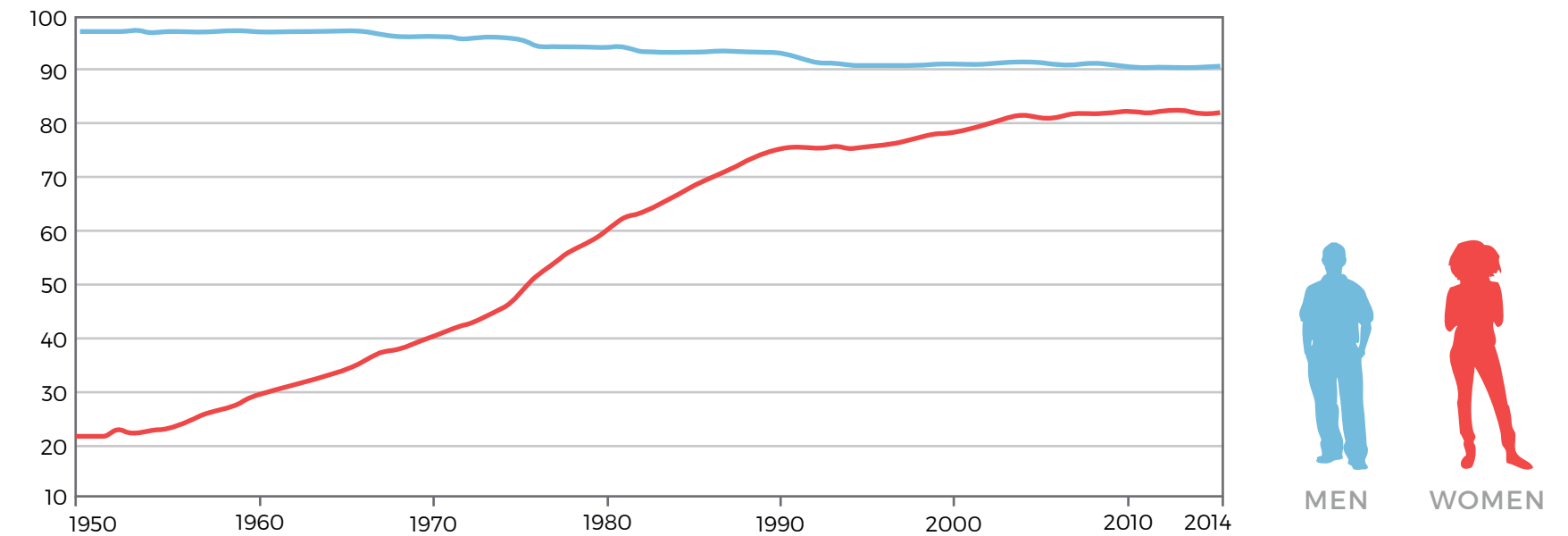


THE CHALLENGE WITH SOME EXISTING OBJECTIONS TO CHANGE

The following three ideological challenges to the notion of a universal child care program in Canada have been gleaned from conversations, the comment section of news articles, and online discussions. They are common objections to the suggestion that Canada needs a formalized plan for child care.

“MOTHERS SHOULD STAY HOME WITH THEIR KIDS.”

TABLE 1. WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION RATES OF CANADIANS AGED 25 - 54, BETWEEN 1950 - 2014



There are two dimensions to this argument. One concerns the child, specifically the attachment with their mother and how that bond might be damaged if mother and child are separated. The second dimension concerns the economic impact we might all feel as a nation if one parent from every two-parent household were to withdraw from the paid workforce.

The attachment argument suggesting mothers should stay home with their children stems from two beliefs, first, that separating young children from their mothers will prevent or damage the bond between mother and child, resulting in negative, long-lasting effects on a child's emotional and cognitive development. The second argument is that mothers are simply better than anyone else at establishing a strong social, emotional and educational foundation for their children (Cleveland, G., Krashinsky, M., 2003).

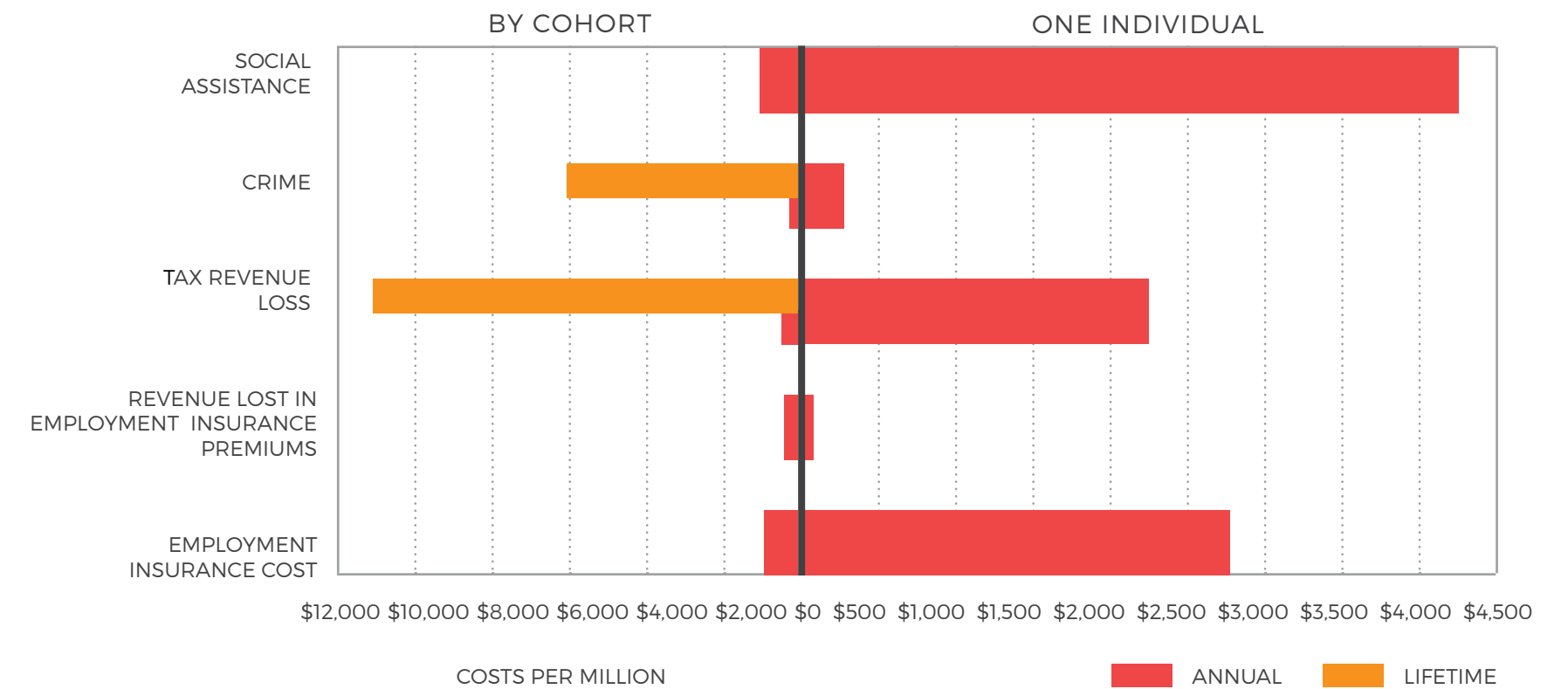
A study conducted in 1988 by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network (NICHD) set about to study the infant-mother attachment in 1,300 children from ten different locations across the United States. Researchers observed the bond between mothers and their 15 month old babies, factoring in data on the quality of both the child care and home

environment. The results of the study indicated that neither the amount nor the quality of the child care had detrimental effects on the infant-mother attachment. Attachment issues were only deemed to be a problem when a host of other risk factors were combined for a single family, such as poor quality care in the home (mothers found to be less sensitive to the needs of their child) or combined with poor quality child care or excessive amounts of non-parental care (NICHD, 1997).

In the past 60 years women's contributions to society and the economy have changed drastically. In 2009 women made up 47.9% of the labour force (Stats Can, Labour Market). The notion that women with children should stay home instead of participate in the paid labour fails to acknowledge the significant role women play in Canada's economy. Many women want to work, and many more depend on their ability to earn an income, not to mention Canada's economy depends on working women. The Vanier Institute of the Family calculates that if one parent in every two-income family were to stay home, federal and provincial tax revenues would plummet by roughly \$35 billion a year. (Toying with child care, 2006).

“WHY SHOULD I PAY TO BABYSIT YOUR KIDS?”

TABLE 2. PUBLIC COSTS OF HIGH SCHOOL NON-COMPLETION IN CANADA



This argument positions the choice to have children as a consumption decision, akin to buying a house or a car. Canadians are free to decide to have children, or decide not to, so parents alone should be the ones to shoulder the costs associated with child-rearing (Cleveland, G., Krashinsky, M., 2003).

There’s an economic case to be made in favour of investing in ECEC. High quality child care positions children for success throughout their lives. Children who are well cared for go on to excel in school, to stay in school longer and to ultimately become contributing and productive members of society. Additionally, the social gains of well-raised and well cared for children translate into socio-economic benefits for society. These children grow up to be creative and responsible adults; committing fewer crimes, leading healthier lives, participating in political discourse and more likely to themselves be better parents to the next generation (Cleveland, G., Krashinsky, M., 2003).

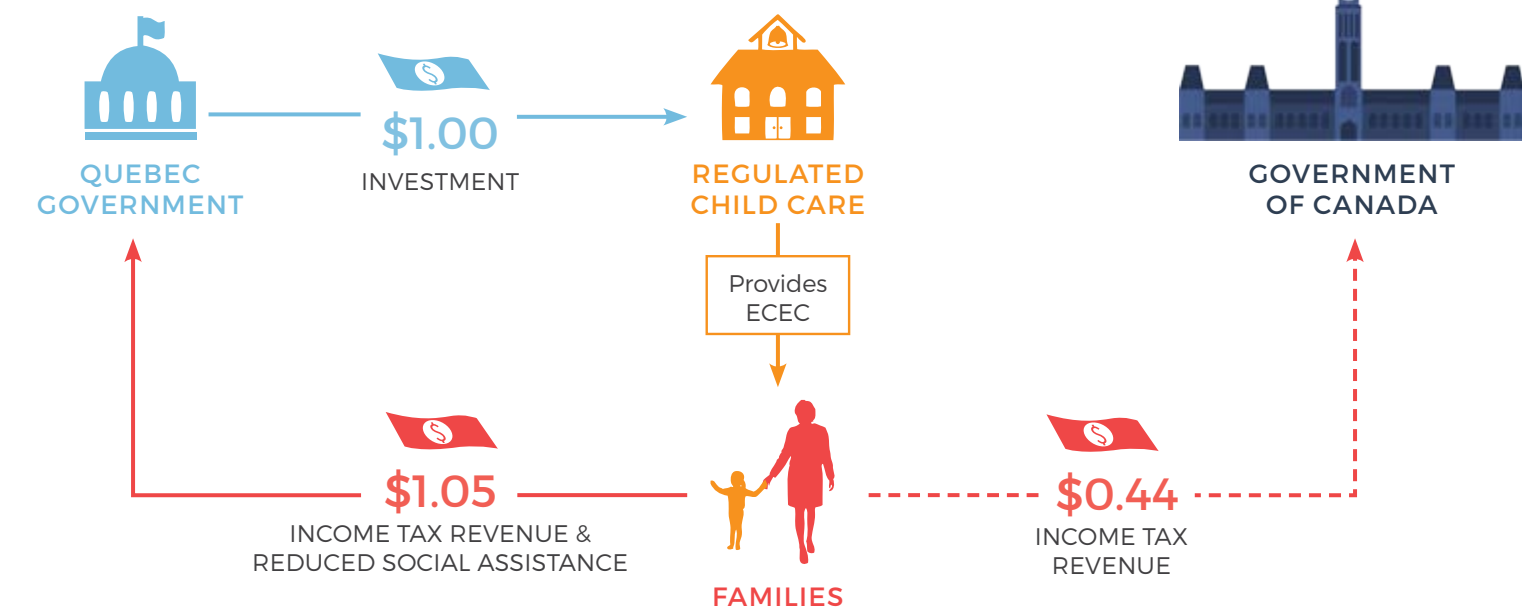
In economic terms, affordable and accessible child care makes it possible for parents to participate in the paid workforce; generating both income tax revenue and reducing the reliance on social welfare, which amounts to a double win to public coffers. If parents have access to more affordable ECEC they have more disposable income to contribute to their local economy.

Economics aside, a question to be contemplated in this context is, when do children become citizens? And as citizens, when do they become worthy of access to public resources? Children entering the public school system at age 4 or 5 (depending on the jurisdiction) draw on public resources, however, there’s a general understanding that educating children from kindergarten through to the end of high school is a wise allocation of public funds in order to position all of Canada’s future citizens for success. The public school system does not receive the same level of scrutiny as ECEC.

Image Sources: Mustard McCain and Hankivsky, O. (2008)

“CANADA CAN’T AFFORD UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE. MY TAXES ARE HIGH ENOUGH.”

FIG. 15. RATE OF RETURN ON QUEBEC’S LOW-FEE CHILD CARE SYSTEM, REPRESENTED BY EACH DOLLAR INVESTED.



In 1984, the federal Liberal government at the time assembled a Task Force to examine and report on child care policy. The Task Force returned two years later proposing a comprehensive program of publicly funded child care to be available to all children from birth. The price tag for this program was \$11 billion annually (Cleveland, G., Krashinsky, M., 2003). Factoring in inflation, that figure would amount to \$23,031,250,000.00 in 2015.

There’s no question that child care is expensive, and even more so for high quality child care. (Cleveland, G., Krashinsky, M., 2003). However, the price tag for a universal social program such as this cannot be understood in a vacuum. Canada’s population would collapse without future generations, and in their earliest years those future generations require care. As mentioned earlier, if all two-parent households opted for one of parent to withdraw from the workforce to care for young children the annual cost to Canada’s economy would be upwards of \$53 billion.

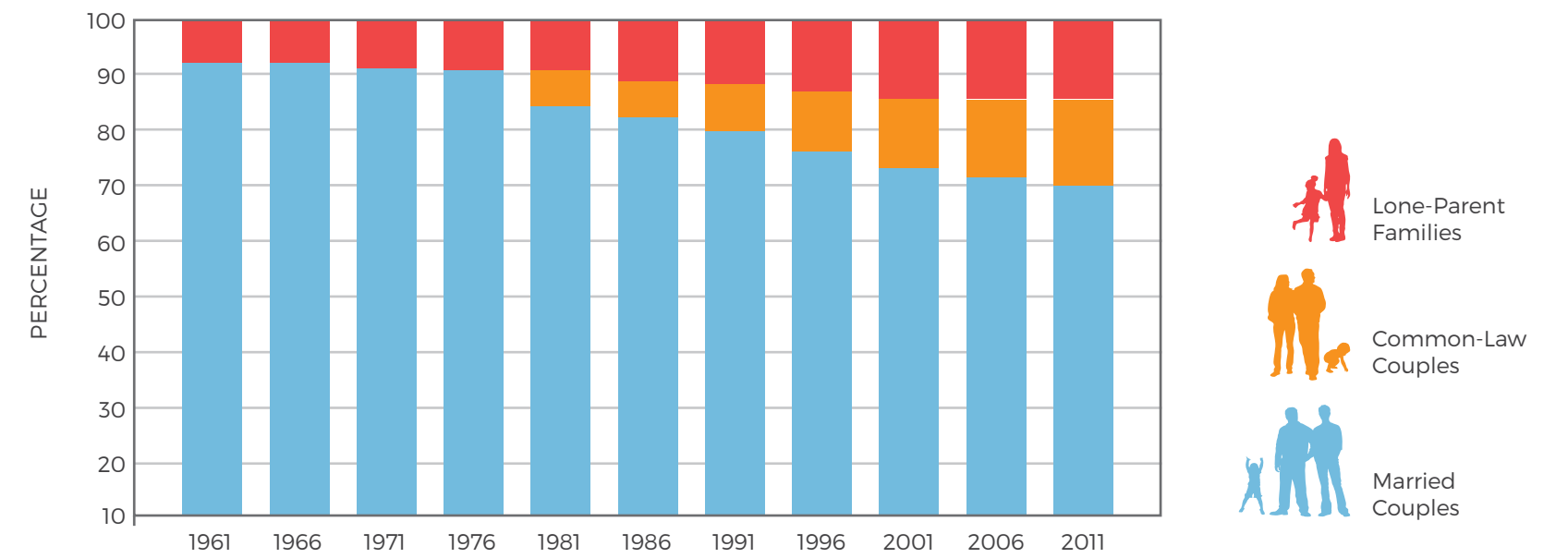
Over and over, investments in ECEC have proven to have a high rate of return, both in the short and the long-term. Economists who have studied Quebec’s low-fee child care system estimate that for every dollar invested, the provincial government receives a return of \$1.05, while the federal government – without having played any role in the policy creation – receives \$.44 for every dollar through increased income tax revenues (Fortin, P., Godbout, L., St-Cerny, S., 2011). These figures represent both savings in social welfare services due to an increase rate of mother’s participation in the workforce, plus an increase in income tax revenue generated by more women working.

Quebec’s rate of return is modest when compared with other studies examining the social and economic benefits of public investments in ECEC. The comprehensive High Scope/ Perry Preschool Project followed two select groups of children from identical socio-economic backgrounds over the span of 40 years. Both groups

were identified as at-risk due to the poor economic conditions in their community. One group received high quality ECEC while the other group did not. Over the span of the 40 year study the participation group far outperformed their non-participation peers in academic success, high school graduation rates, post-secondary attendance, rates of home-ownership and increased adult wage earnings. The participation group also required fewer educational interventions, they had fewer teen pregnancies, were less likely to be incarcerated, had lower rates of drug and alcohol use and were less likely to rely on social services (Schweinhart, L. J., 2004). Overall, the High Scope/ Perry Preschool Project demonstrated a return of \$8.74 for every dollar invested in the ECEC. The program costs were \$15,844 per child, and each participant represented an average return of \$138,486, factoring in savings in social services and revenue generated from income taxes (Fairholm, R., 2009).

DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

TABLE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF CANADIAN FAMILIES BY FAMILY STRUCTURE



Understanding the need for accessible and affordable child care means understanding the changing state of women and families in Canada. Family size, average age of first time mothers, family configurations, education rates, workforce participation, income distribution and employment expectations have undergone dramatic shifts in the past fifty years. There is a need for Canadian support measures to evolve in order to meet resulting demands.

CHANGES IN CANADIAN FAMILIES

Canadian families are changing. The expectation that one parent in a two parent household will withdraw from the workforce to care for young children is no longer an option for many families. Canadians are marrying older or not at all, having their first child later, and opting for smaller families. Many households are made up of adults who are not married: common-law families saw the biggest growth in their share of family types over the past decade. Almost half of common-law households now include children. (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009). Between 2006 and 2011, the number of common-law couples rose 13.9%, more than four times the 3.1% increase for married couples. (Statistics Canada, 2011). Common-law couples accounted for 16.7% of all census families. (Statistics Canada, 2011).

More than one in three legal marriages now end in divorce. One

TABLE 4. HISTORICAL BIRTH RATES IN CANADA

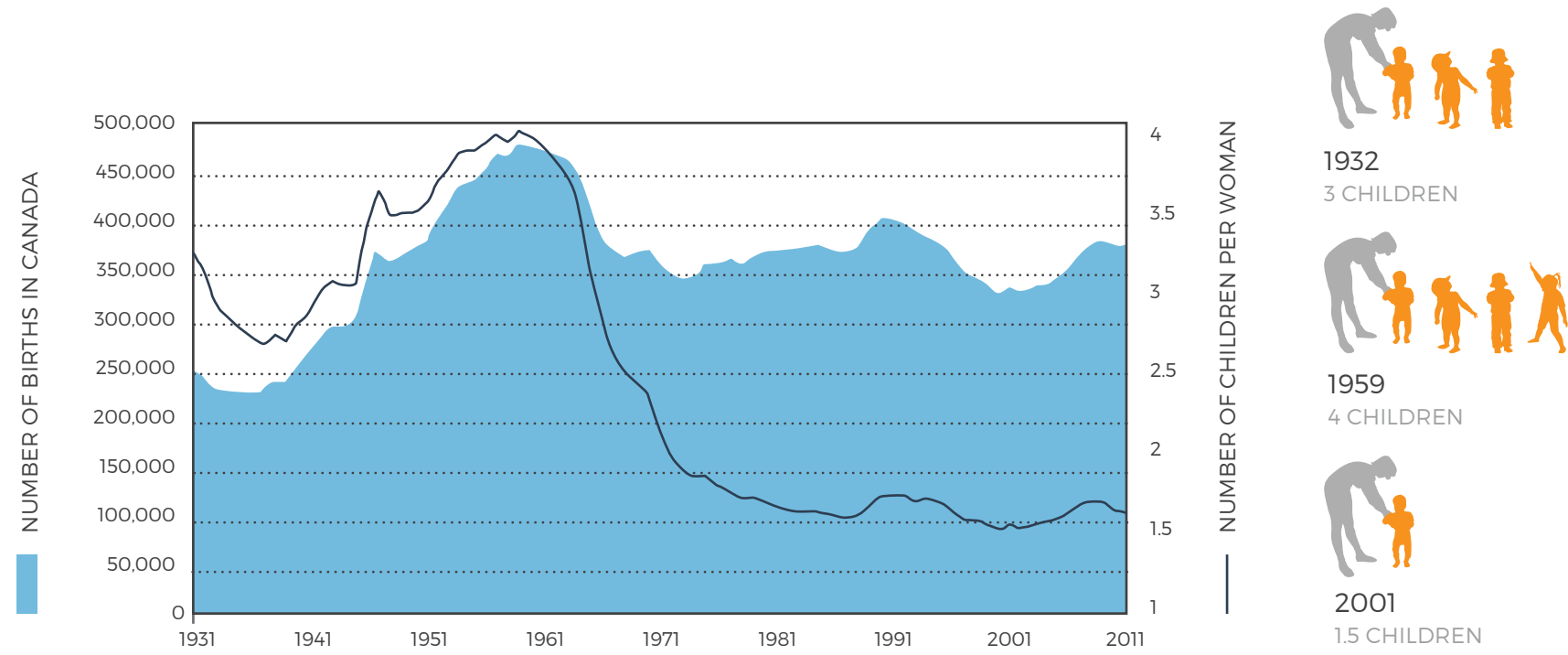


Image Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Births Database, 1926 to 2011, Survey 3231
 Statistics Canada, Demography Division, Population Estimates Program, Canadian Vital Statistics, Births Database, 1926 to 2011, Survey 3231

consequence is that more children than ever are growing up in a lone parent or in blended households. Parents raising children may live far from their extended families, making it impossible to draw on family networks to help with childcare. (Friendly, M., & Prentice, S., 2009).

Canada has more than 1.5 million lone-parent households. (Statistics Canada, 2011). Lone-parent families increased 8.0% between 2006 and 2011, representing 16.3% of all Canadian families. About 8 in 10 lone-parent families were female lone-parent families in 2011, accounting for 12.8% of all census families. (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Women are having fewer children overall and they are having them at older ages. In 2008, the average age of women at childbirth was 29.8 years; for first-time mothers, it was 28.1 years. The shift to childbearing at older ages that began more than forty years ago—the average age of first birth was 23.5 years in the mid 1960s—has continued into the late 2000s.

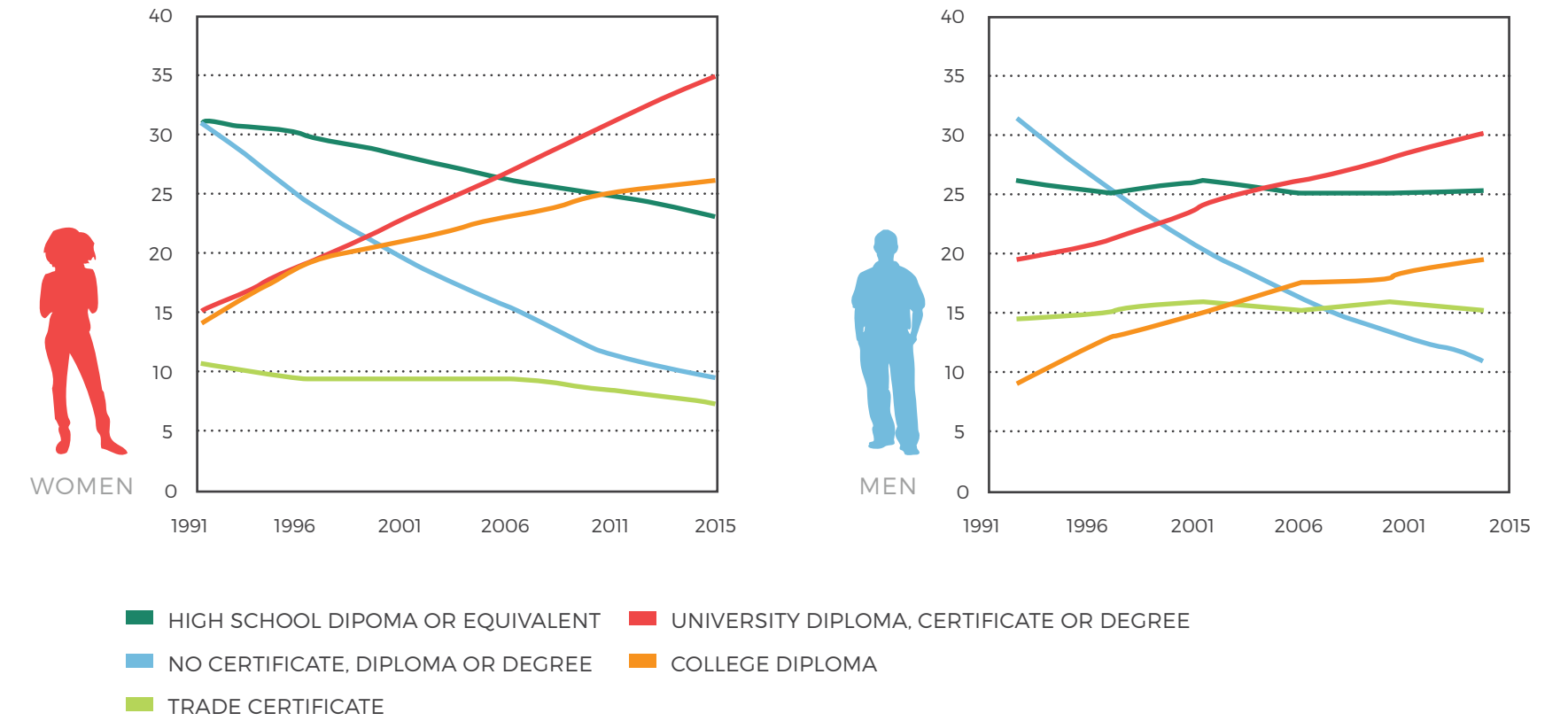
There is an increasing compression of childbearing as more women have their first child at older ages and then complete their childbearing in a relatively shorter period of time than in the past. Among the reasons that account for the delay in childbearing

are the pursuit of higher levels of education, labour force participation, and delayed union formation. Half of all births in 2008 were to women aged 30 and over, more than double the percentage in 1981 (24%). In 2008, 4.1% of births occurred among young women aged 15 to 19, down from about 8% in the early 1980s. (Statistics Canada, 2011).

WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND WORK FORCE PARTICIPATION

Education rates amongst women have been climbing steadily in Canada. In a survey of women between 1990 and 2009: In 1990

TABLE 5. DISTRIBUTION OF CANADIAN WOMEN AND MEN AGED 25 - 64, BY HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINMENT



26.6% of women had a post-secondary certificate or diploma, compared to 2009 when 37.2% did. In 1990, 13.7% of women attained a university degree, whereas in 2009, 28.1% of women do. (Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 1990 to 2009).

Women are pursuing higher levels of education, which increases their productivity outside the household. This is reflected in recent statistics showing that women are now in the majority in areas of high education – law and medicine being two examples – that were formerly almost the exclusive domain of men. These high

skill jobs are more complex and require fewer absences from the labour market. The increased connection to the labour force makes the economic gains from education more significant, so the causation runs both ways; more education makes work more attractive, and the greater inclination to work makes higher levels of education more attractive.

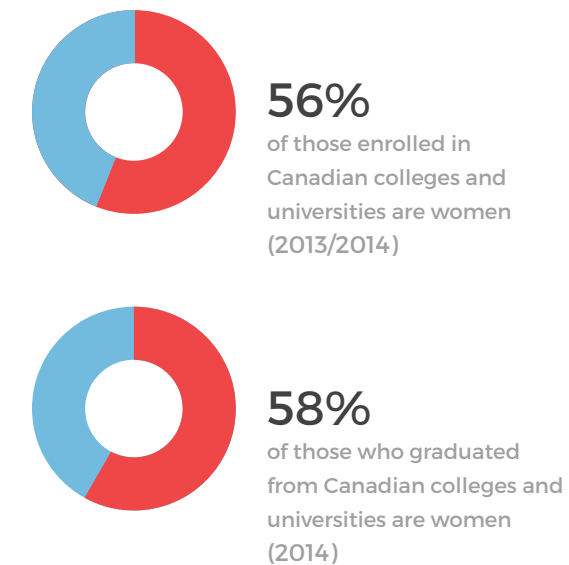


Image Sources: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Annual Average, 1991 to 2015
 Statistics Canada, Women in Education: Qualifications, Skills and Technology, 2016

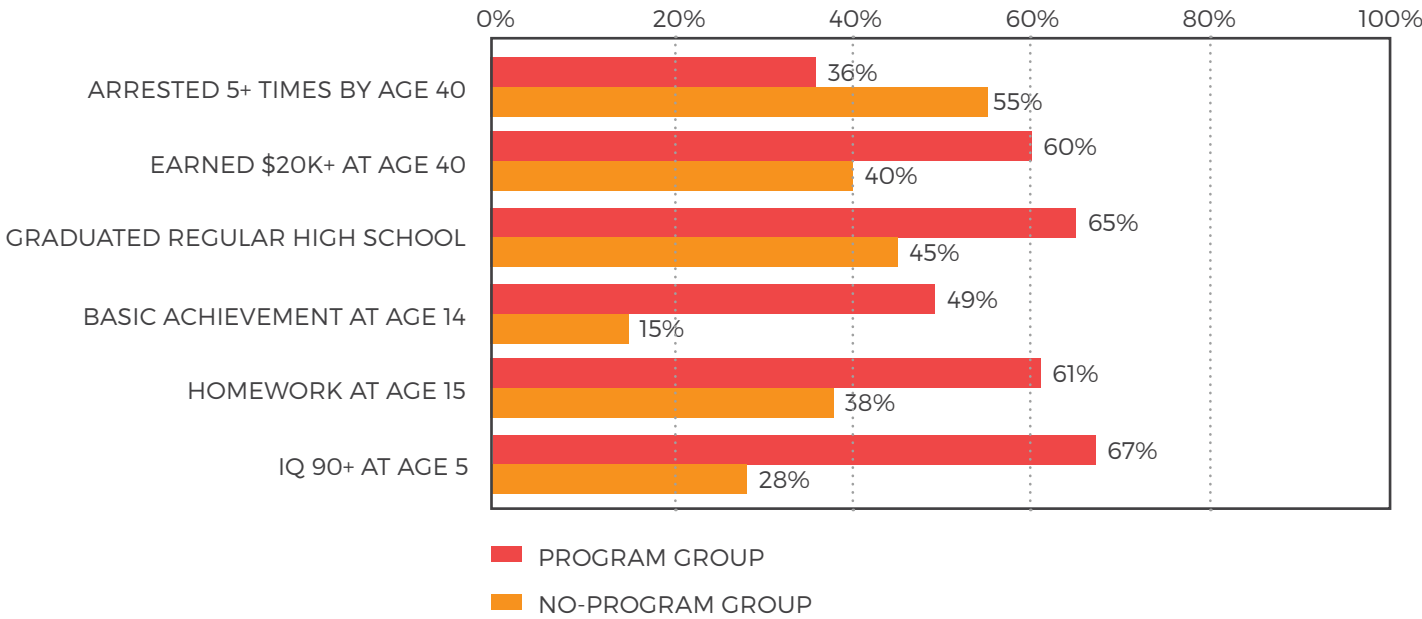
EXAMPLES OF ECEC SUCCESS

Through the literature review two examples of the positive impacts of early childhood education and care were identified. The first example, High Scope/Perry Preschool Project, demonstrates the short and long term effects of high quality early childhood education on child participants. The short term effects included higher IQ at the age of 5 and the long term effects include higher high school graduation rates and increased rates of adult employment. While the study itself was not intended to advocate for a child care program, it is a powerful example of how the investment in high quality and universally accessible early childhood education and care can yield life long benefits for children.

The second example, Quebec's low-fee child care program, demonstrates the positive impact on women and families. When the policy was introduced in 1996 Quebec had the lowest rate of workforce participation by women in Canada. Contrast that to today, Quebec is now second to the top. Additionally, the low-fee child care program has drastically cut then number of lone-parents families who are reliant of social assistance.

Both examples demonstrate that investing in ECEC is not only self-financing but can yield a positive return on investment for governments and individuals.

TABLE 6. MAJOR FINDINGS: HIGH/SCOPE PERRY PRESCHOOL STUDY AT AGE 40



HIGH SCOPE / PERRY PRESCHOOL PROJECT

Between 1962 and 1967 colleagues in the Ypsilanti, Michigan public school district conducted a scientific experiment now referred to as the High/Scope Perry Preschool study, to examine the short and long-term effects of a high quality preschool education program for young children living in poverty. (Schweinhart, L. J., 2004).

Researchers identified a sample of 123 African-American children, ages 3 and 4 years living in the neighbourhood of Perry Elementary School. All of the children selected were assessed to be at high risk of school failure due to low socioeconomic status and low IQ, between 70 and 85, the range for borderline intellectual impairment though none of the children were diagnosed as having biologically based impairment. Of the 123 children, 58 of them were randomly assigned to a program group that attended a high-quality preschool, while the remaining 65 children, the control group, did

not participate in any preschool program. The groups were equally matched in age, socioeconomic status, gender, and IQ. (Wilson, J. J., 2000). Assignment to either the program group or to the control group was random, so to date, the children’s preschool experience remains the best explanation for subsequent group differences in their performance over the years. (Schweinhart, L. J., 2004).

What is remarkable about this study is that researchers collected data annually on both groups from ages 3 through 11 and then again at ages 14, 15, 19, 27, and finally at 40. After each period of data collection, researchers analyzed the information and wrote a comprehensive official report. (Schweinhart, L. J., 2004). The findings of the program’s effects from the age of 3 to 40 span the domains of educational success, economic performance, interactions with the criminal justice system, family relationships, and health. (Schweinhart, L. J., 2004).

Image Source: Schweinhart, L. J. (2004)

TABLE 7. HIGH/SCOPE PERRY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM PUBLIC COSTS AND BENEFITS

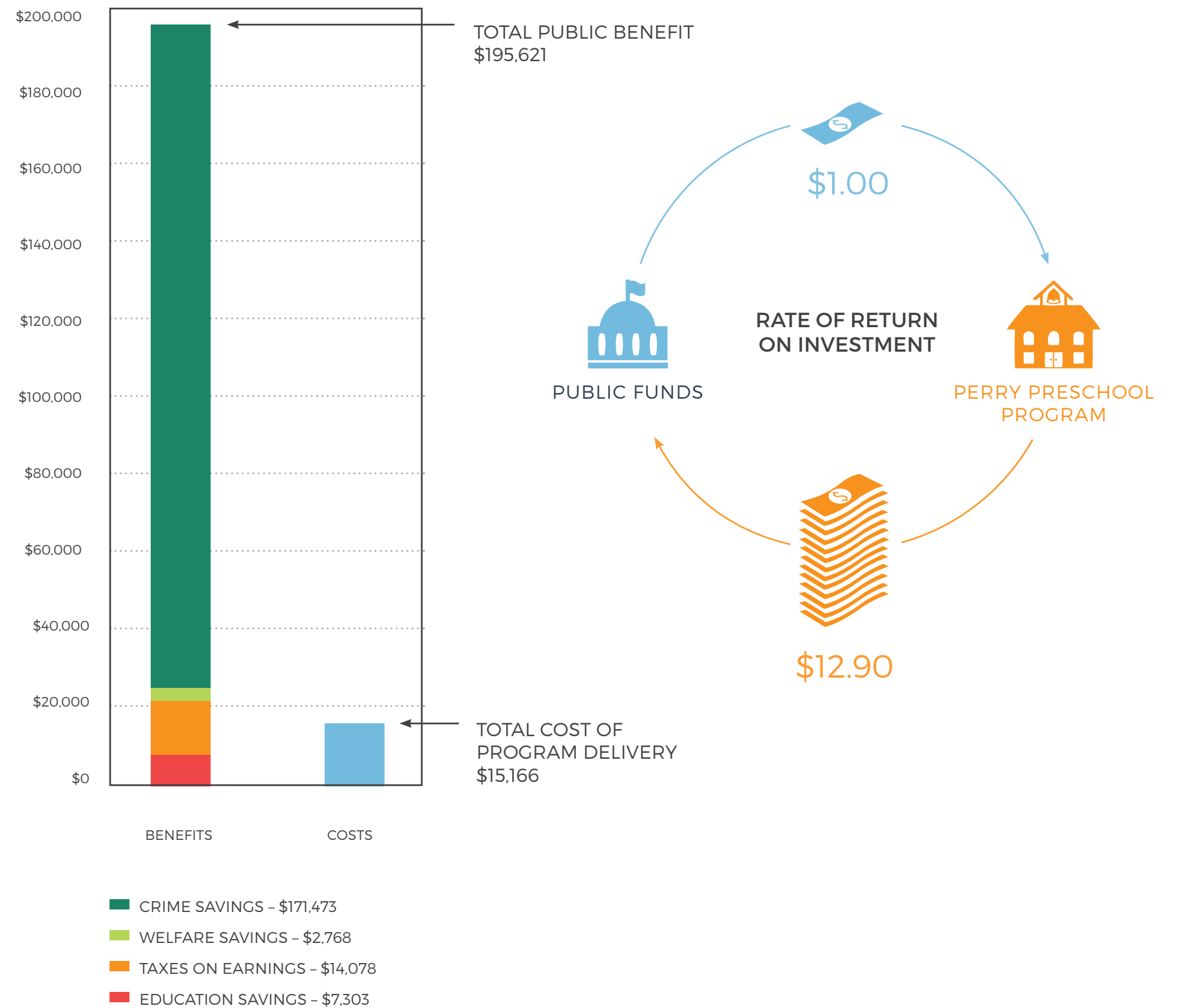


Image Source: Schweinhart, L. J. (2004)

One of the key measurements over the life of the study was the program's impact on individual's educational success. 65% of the program group received their high school diploma, while just 45% of the non-program group managed to do the same. However, a closer examination reveals that when it comes to high school completion, female participants from the program cohort graduated high school at a rate of 84%, while their non-program peers had only a 32% graduation rate. The difference in completion rate is directly connected to earlier assessment of intellectual impairment (8% for program students, vs. 36% for no-program) and grade repetition (21% for program, 41% for no-program). (Schweinhart, L. J., 2004)

The program cohort outperformed the no-program group on various intellectual and language tests during their preschool years up to age 7; on school achievement tests at ages 9, 10, and 14; and on literacy tests at ages 19 and 27. The program group had significantly better attitudes toward school than the no-program group at ages 15 and 19. Additionally, parents of the program

group had better attitudes toward their 15-year-old children's schooling than did no-program group parents. (Schweinhart, L. J., 2004)

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

At age 27, 69% of the program group was employed, while the no-program group had employment rates of just 56%. The trend continued, by age 40; 76% of the program cohort employed, with the no-program group at 62%. More program group males than no-program group males were employed at age 40 (70% vs. 50%), and more program group females than no-program group females were employed at age 27 (80% vs. 55%). (Schweinhart, L. J., 2004)

In contrast to paying rent, receiving a subsidy, living with others, or being incarcerated, significantly more program group than no-program participants owned their own homes at age 27 (27% vs. 5%) and at age 40 (37% vs. 28%). Notably more of the program group than the no-program group owned a

car at age 40 (82% vs. 60%), especially males; both at age 40 (80% vs. 50%), and at age 27 (73% vs. 59%). At age 40, significantly more of the program group had savings accounts (76% vs. 50%), especially males (73% vs. 36%). (Schweinhart, L. J., 2004)

Over the duration of the study the program-group consistently used fewer social services than the no-program group, however the difference in usage between the two groups is not consistent. At age 27, significantly fewer of the program group than the no-program group reported receiving social services at some time in the previous 10 years (59% vs. 80%). By age 40, 71% of the program group reported receiving social services at some time in their lives, compared to 86% for the no-program group. Examining the individual categories of social services reveals the only significant differences between the program group and the no-program group involved family counseling at ages 34 to 40 (13% vs. 24%) and General Assistance from ages 23 to 27 (10% vs. 23%). (Schweinhart, L. J., 2004)

QUEBEC'S LOW-FEE CHILD CARE

Beginning in the 1960s, fertility rates began to fall across all of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations (OECD., 2015). Decreasing birth rates raise concerns for governments because the funding of many social programs, such as public pensions and health care, depends on transfers across generations. Elderly citizens receive public benefits funded by younger workers, who, in turn, expect to be supported in their senior years by the following generation of taxpayers. As successive generations shrink in size, government revenues dwindle and these fiscal arrangements come under pressure. Additionally, some fear that declining populations have the potential to threaten the vitality of particular cultures whose survival depends on a critical mass of participants (Milligan, K., 2002).

Quebec had the lowest birth rate in Canada when the pro-natalist Allowance for Newborn Children was introduced in 1988 (Milligan, K., 2002). The program was ushered in to incentivize Quebec families to

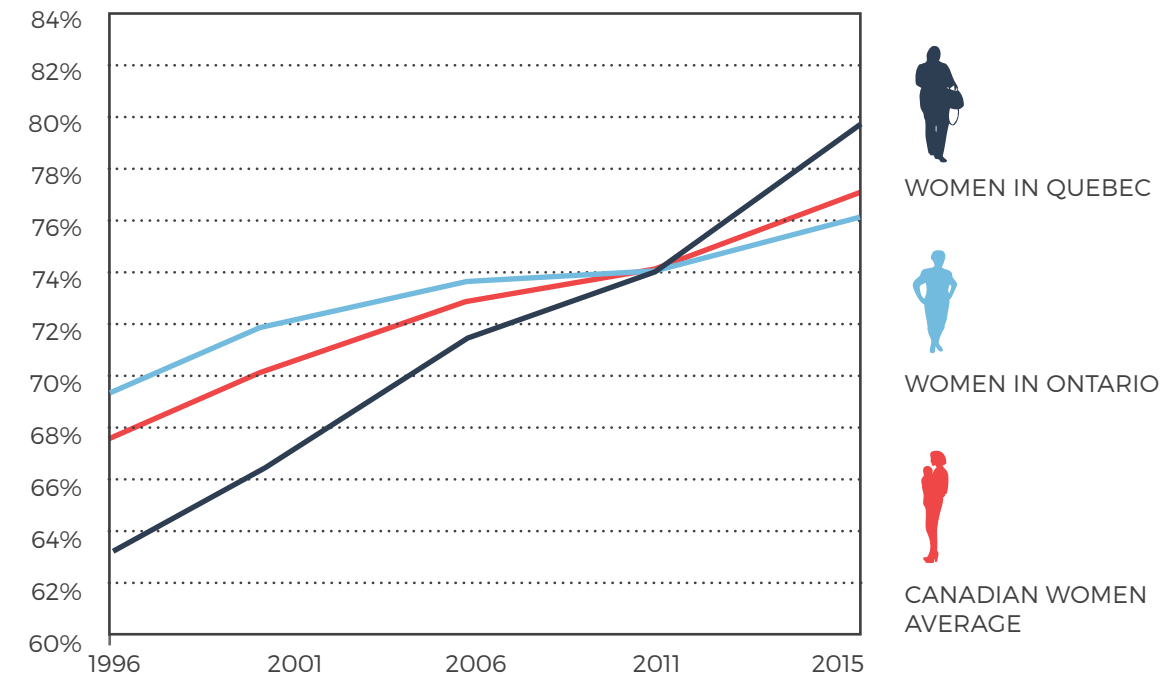
have more babies, supported by both the governing Liberal Party and the opposition Parti Quebecois. The Liberal Finance Minister at the time, Gérard-D. Lévesque, remarked, "The fall in birth rates is a sign of a people in decline." (Milligan, K., 2002). The Allowance for Newborn Children delivered non-taxable bonuses to Quebec families upon the birth of a child; \$500 on the birth of their first child, \$500 for a second child, and the first of eight quarterly payments of \$375 (totaling \$3,000) when a third or subsequent child joined the household. By 1992, the benefit grew to \$500 for a first child, \$1,000 for a second, and 20 quarterly payments of \$400 (totaling \$8,000) for a third or subsequent child. These amounts were not taxable under either federal or the Quebec income tax. In 1997 the program was scrapped because it was deemed too expensive; when statistics showed that each child whose birth resulted from the ANC cost the government an average of \$15,000 (Milligan, K., 2002).

In January 1997, upon cancellation of the Allowance for Newborn Children, the government of Québec announced three

key family policy measures that would, in the words of then Premier Lucien Bouchard, "support some of the Government's major objectives, including the fight against poverty, equal opportunity, the development of the social market economy, transition from welfare to the workforce and increased supports to working parents. In addition to being at the centre of the Government's strategy, these new measures reinforce the most important values of our society: sense of family and love of children." (Reference)

The main innovation of the three policies was a universal low-fee child care program for pre-school aged children. Initially it was a \$5/day program targeted at four year olds, while at the same time full-day kindergarten was extended to all five year olds, with before and after-school care made available in elementary schools. By the year 2000 – three years after its introduction – \$5/day child care was available to all pre-school aged children, including infants and toddlers. In the time since then the rate has increased several times, and at present, is geared to income at higher income levels.

TABLE 8. LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE OF WOMEN AGED 15 TO 64



RESULTS OF THE POLICY

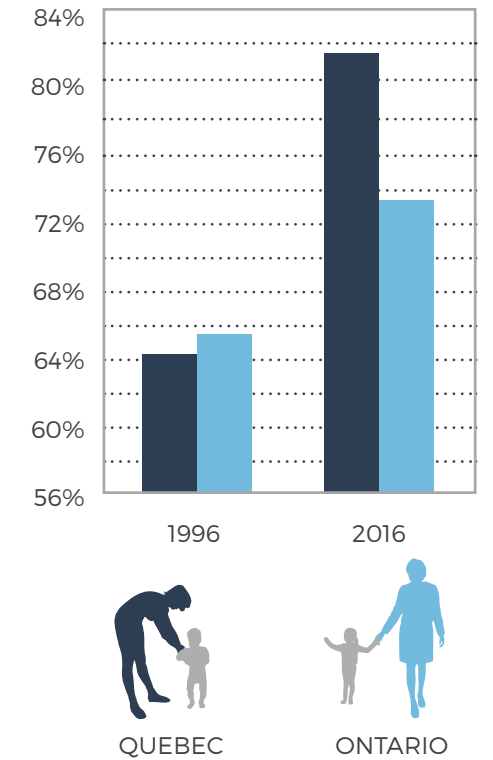
INCREASE IN WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

At the end of the 1990s Quebec had the lowest rate of female participation in the Canadian workforce. In 1996, the participation rate of women between the ages of 15-64, with a youngest child under the age of 6 was just 63%. (Fortin, P., Godbout, L., & St-Cerny, S., 2011). In 2007, just 10 years after the enactment

of the low-fee child care program, that labour force participation rate rose to 74%; an 11% increase in just a decade. (Fortin, P., Godbout, L., & St-Cerny, S., 2011). By contrast, labour force participation rates for women in Ontario of the same age demographic and also with children under the age of 6, was 67% in 1996 and rose to 71% in 2008; an increase of 4%. (Fortin, P., Godbout, L., & St-Cerny, S., 2011).

The overall participation rate of women aged 25 to 44 went from three percentage points lower than the national average

TABLE 9. LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE OF WOMEN AGED 15 TO 65 BY AGE OF THE YOUNGEST CHILD, LESS THAN 6.



(excluding Quebec) in 1996 to three points higher than the average in 2014. In just a decade, Quebec has gone from the bottom to the top on many critical social indicators. (McCain, M.N., Mustard, J.F., & McCuaig, K., 2011)

REDUCED RELIANCE ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Single mothers with children under the age of six demonstrated the most significant increase in labour force participation. In 1996 less than half of single mothers with children under the age of six were employed

in the paid labour force; just 46%. By 2008 those numbers jumped over 20%, to 68%. (Fortin, P., Godbout, L., & St-Cerny, S., 2012)

The ability to join the labour force has had profound economic and social benefits for single mothers and their children. According to the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, the number of single-parent families (headed by women in the vast majority of cases) receiving welfare in Quebec declined from 99,000 in 1998, to 39,000 in 2015 (Fortin, P., 2015). During this time the relative poverty rate of single-mother families went down from 36% to 22%, while their median real after-tax income rose by 81%. (Fortin, P., Godbout, L., & St-Cerny, S., 2012). Quebec's low-fee system has allowed mothers of young children to enter the paid workforce, but what researchers are discovering now nearly two decades after the policy was enacted is that women continue to reap the benefits even after their children have outgrown the need for child care. Over time, attachment to the workforce enables women to gain experience and seniority; enriching her career, increasing her income

and deepening her connection to her community (Fortin, P., 2015).

INCREASED ACCESS TO REGULATED CARE

The \$7 a day child care policy proved incredibly popular with parents. When the policy was introduced in 1997, about 16% of children between the ages of 0 to 4 were enrolled in regulated and subsidized child care. By 2006 the enrollment rate was 50%. (Fortin, P., Godbout, L., & St-Cerny, S (2011, June 22). By 2008, 60% of children in Quebec between the ages of 0 to 4 were in regulated, centre-based child care. By comparison with the rest of Canada, only 18% of children 0 to 4 are enrolled in a regulated, centre-based space. (Fortin, P., Godbout, L., & St-Cerny, S., 2011).

TABLE 10. NUMBER OF LONE-PARENT FAMILIES WHO ARE WELFARE RECIPIENTS IN QUEBEC FROM JANUARY 1990 TO JANUARY 2015

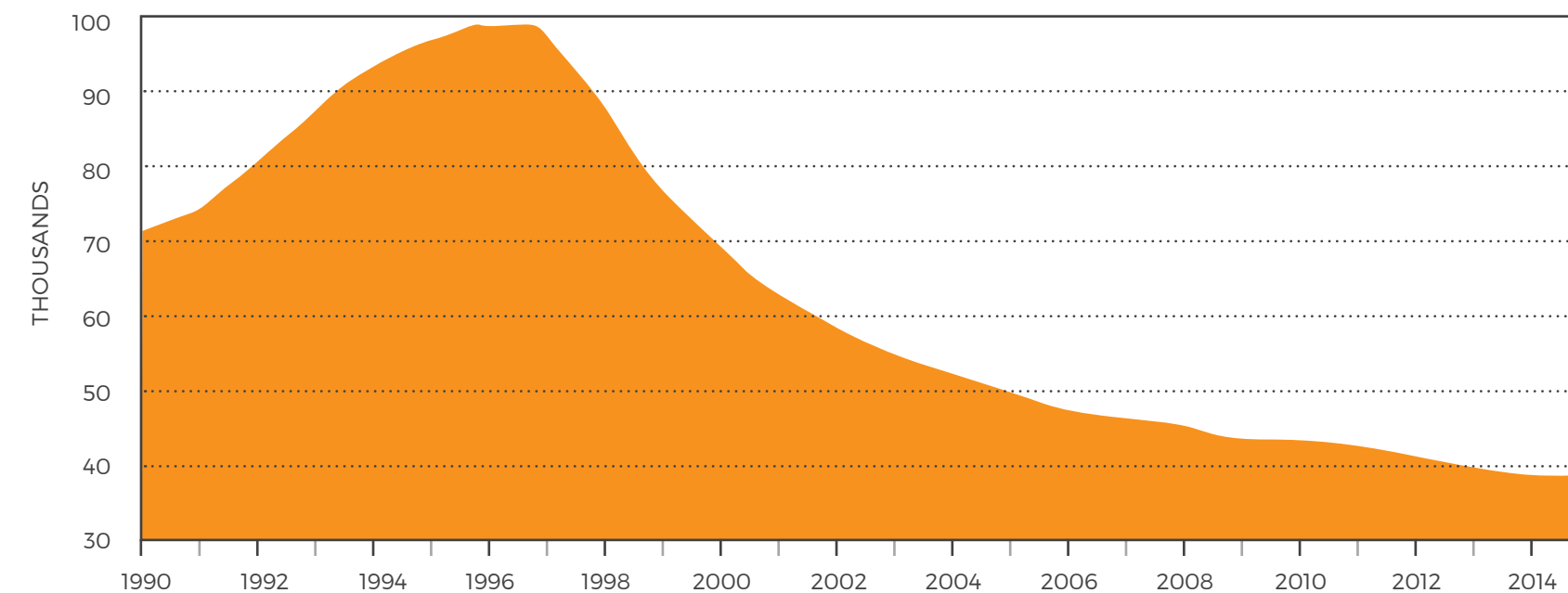


TABLE 11. LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE OF WOMEN AGED 15 TO 64 BY FAMILY TYPE AND AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD AT HOME, LESS THAN 6.

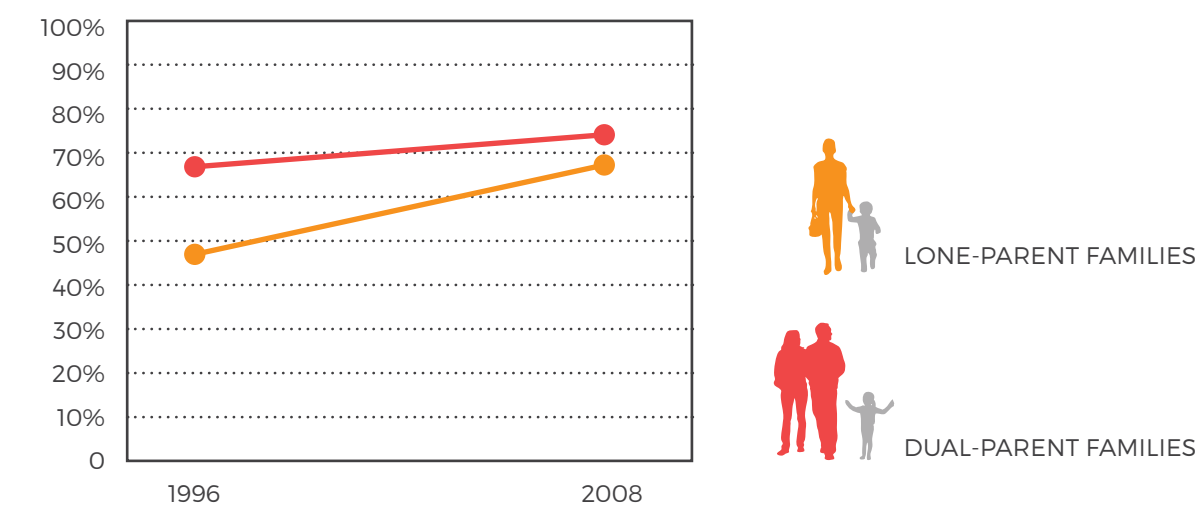
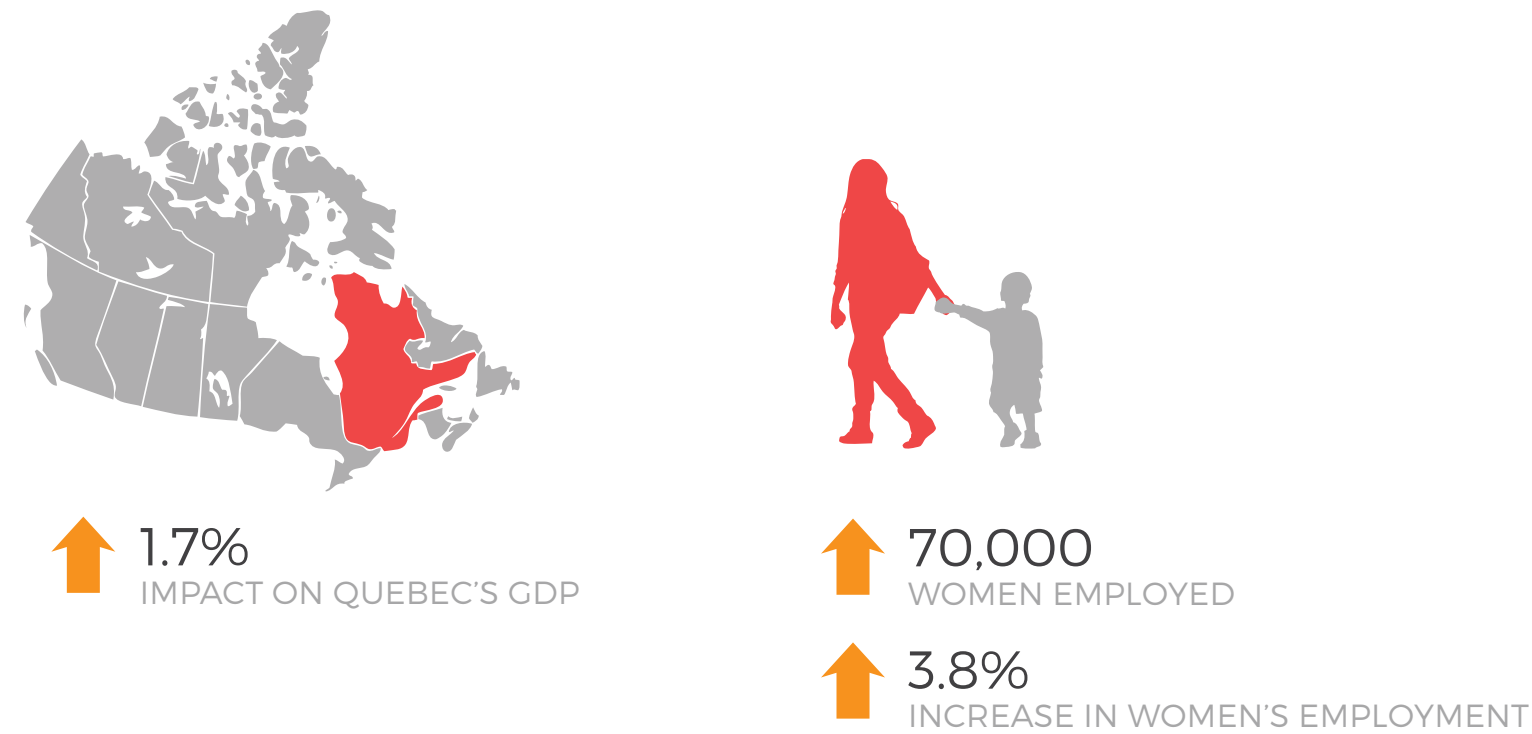


Image Source: Fortin, P., (2015)

FIG. 16 IMPACT OF QUEBEC'S LOW-FEE CHILD CARE PROGRAM ON PROVINCIAL GDP AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT



ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Quebec's universal ECEC is an expensive program to deliver, however, it is entirely self-financing due to the resulting increase in employment and the decrease in the reliance on social assistance.

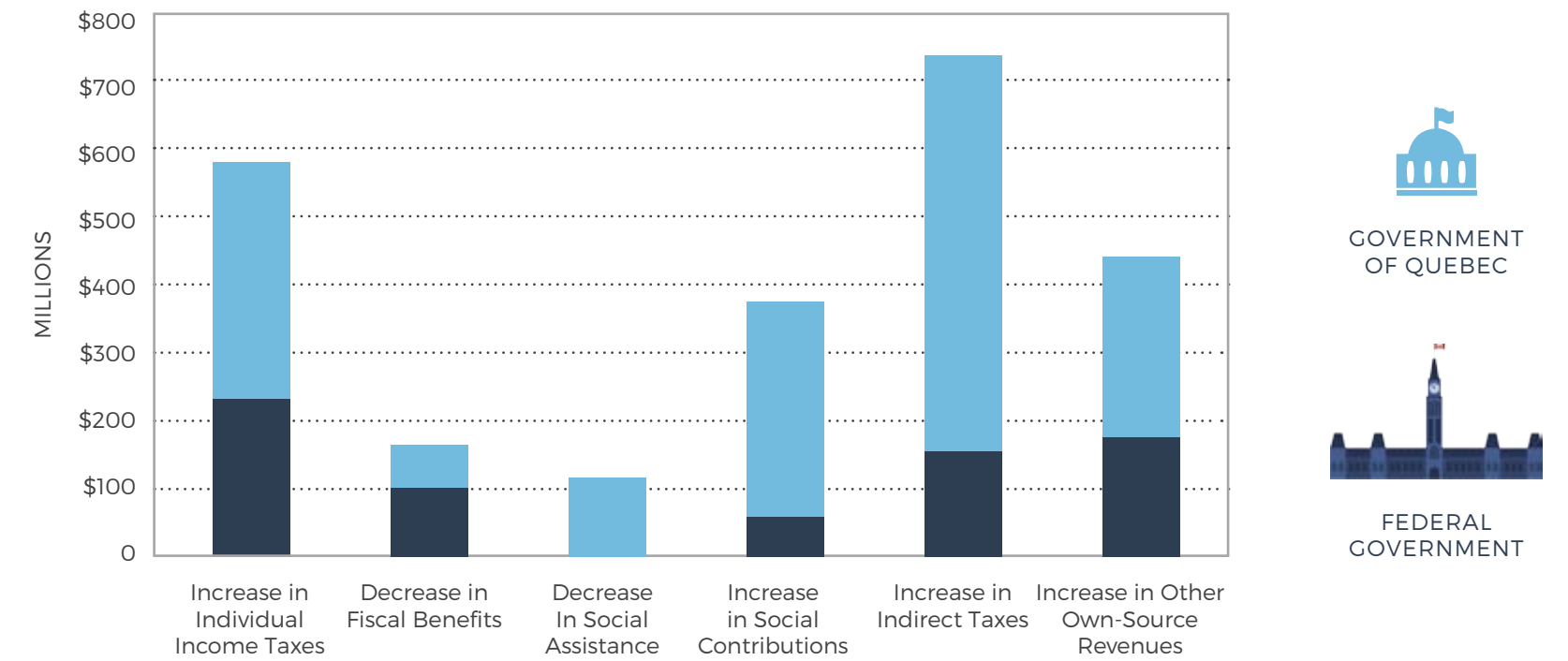
It is estimated that by 2008, Quebec's low-fee child care program was responsible for an additional 70,000 women in the paid labour force, an increase of 3.8% in employment numbers for women (Fortin,

P., 2015). In 2008 the increase in Quebec's GDP was approximately 1.7%, or \$5.2 billion (Fortin, P., Godbout, L., & St-Cerny, S., 2011).

The 2008 numbers for Quebec's low-fee child care program are as follows: The cost on the part of the province to deliver the program was \$1.25 billion, however, the gain in fiscal revenue was \$1.45 billion, producing a net benefit of \$250 million. It should be noted that while the federal government plays no role in Quebec's program and therefore contributes \$0 toward it, it nevertheless received \$650

million in 2008 by way of increased federal income tax revenue. Broken down, for every \$100 spent on Quebec's child care program the province collects a net benefit of \$20 while the federal government collects \$55. (Fortin, P., 2015).

TABLE 12. ESTIMATED IMPACT OF QUEBEC'S LOW-FEE CHILD CARE PROGRAM ON FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL FINANCES, 2008 (TOTAL EFFECT: STATIC AND DYNAMIC)



WHAT MIGHT A UNIVERSAL SYSTEM LOOK LIKE IN CANADA?

A public commitment to improving children's development can have transformative effects. The corollary of failing to act is deleterious for the individual and for society. The developmental gap that emerges so soon after birth for so many children not only robs individual potential, it also creates an unsustainable burden for our education, health and mental health systems. It deprives the economy of productive capacity and society of engaged, contributing participants. Reversing this trend requires smart decisions about program and system design. It requires public investment in a system for early childhood, comparable to the public investment made for the education of children 6 to 18 years. (McCain, M.N., Mustard, J.F., & McCuaig, K., 2011).

Canada does not have an early childhood education and care plan. The existing federal funds under the child care banner go directly to parents as discretionary household income. The Canada Child Benefit does not create more child care spaces, and while it might offset some of the costs, many families continue to struggle to pay for expensive child care.

A universal program would therefore need to address both the lack of affordable care and make ECEC space accessible for every child that needs and wants it.

At present, Canada spends \$25,911,000,000 a year propping up a patchwork system that is only able to serve less than a quarter of Canadian children. A system that provides every child with affordable and accessible regulated education and care could be realized by reallocating the existing public funds.

In developing the following model consideration was given to the fact that the current Canada Child Benefit supports families with children up until the age of 18. Knowing that children over the age of 5 still required care, this model includes all Canadian children 12 and under. The calculations for this model include 100% of children 12 and under, although in reality not all families would use a universal program, for a variety of reasons. However, it is important to demonstrate the extent to which the current funding, if reallocated, could support all Canadian children.

Even though the cost to care for a child of 12 months is far more expensive than caring for a 12 year old child, due to child:staff ratios and the number of hours a day both children would require care, for the purposes of this model each child care space would receive the same amount of funding.

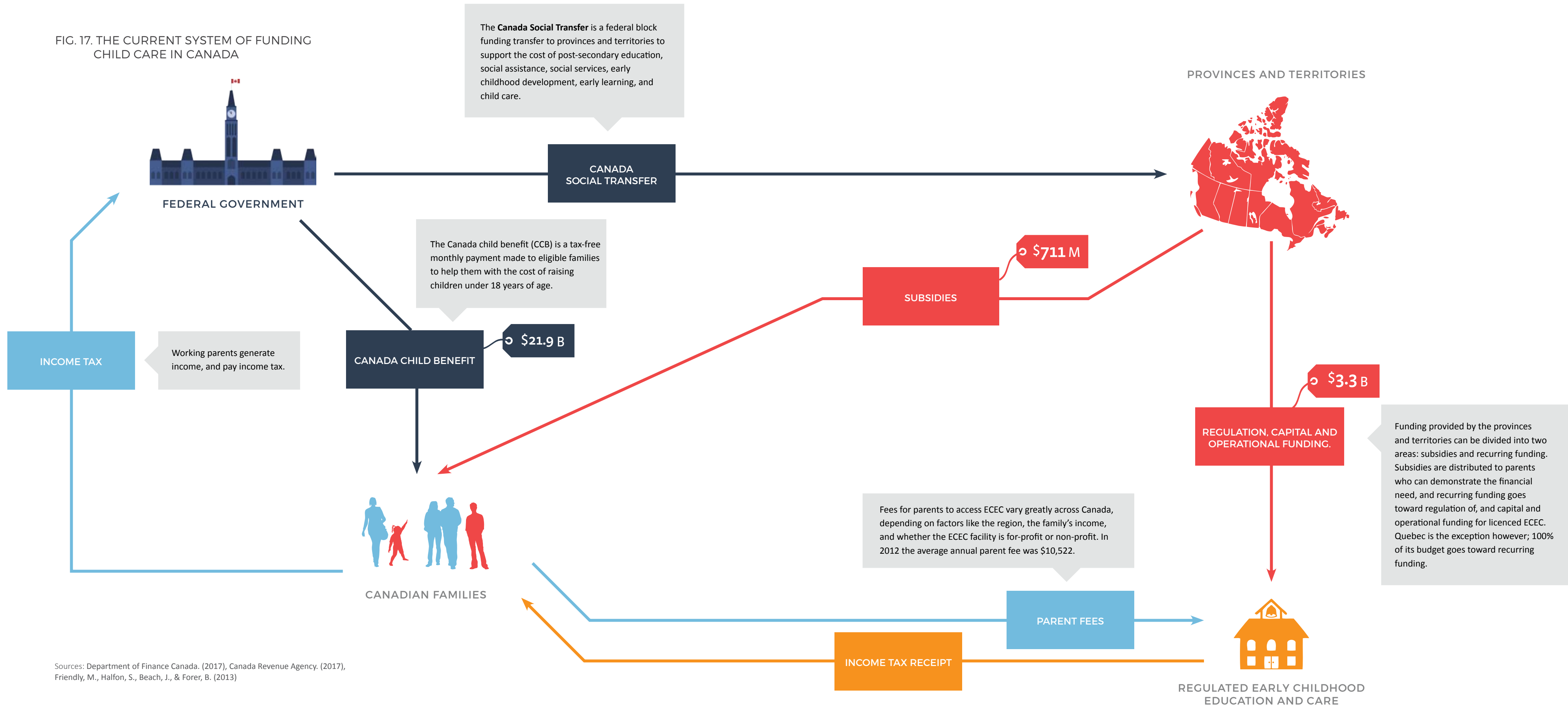
THE CURRENT SYSTEM

Figure 17 on the following page demonstrates the existing flow of funding from the federal, provincial and territorial governments both to parents (as income support and subsidies) and to the oversight and funding of regulated child care.

Outside of direct delivery of child care to military families, new Canadians and First Nations communities, the federal government does not mandate the funding of child care by lower levels of government, nor does it assume any responsibility for the funding of child care. Any funds that are directed toward child care by the provinces and territories are drawn from the Canada Social Transfer; block funding delivered to provincial and territorial governments to fund education and various other social programs. The federal government also provides income support through the Canada Child Benefit directly to Canadian families with children under the age of 18 and whose household income falls below the qualifying threshold.

Currently, the provincial and territorial governments deliver child care funding in two ways, cash subsidies to low-middle income parents to assist with child care fees, and funding earmarked for the regulation, capital and operational funding of child care.

FIG. 17. THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF FUNDING CHILD CARE IN CANADA



Sources: Department of Finance Canada. (2017), Canada Revenue Agency. (2017), Friendly, M., Halfon, S., Beach, J., & Forer, B. (2013)

FUNDING A NEW MODEL

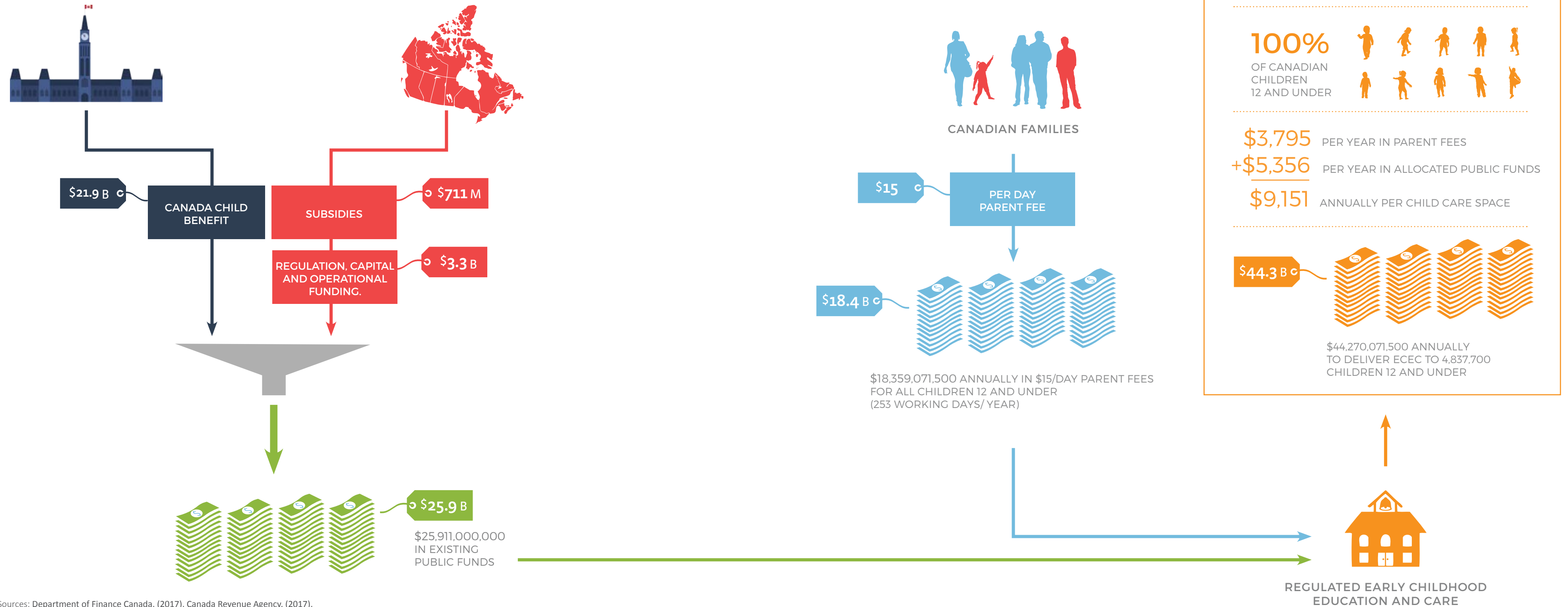
With the goal of creating a universally accessible and affordable early childhood education and care program, existing funds could be redirected away from cash supports and towards a system that supports more children.

Combining the value of the Canada Child Benefit (\$21.9 Billion) with the value of provincial and territorial subsidies (\$711 Million) and the funds to regulate, and provide capital and operational funding, (\$3.3 Billion) totals \$25.9 Billion.

As for parent fees, assuming each child care space is \$15 per day, the annual total for all Canadian children under the age of 12 is \$18.4 Billion, based on 253 working days per year. \$15 per day is a significant reduction from the current average but still represents a great expense for many low-income families. A sliding scale based on household income is more appropriate, with some families who are able paying more than \$15 per day and some families paying less. For the purposes of this model the figure of \$15 is used.

\$25.9 Billion in government funding, plus \$18.4 Billion would mean \$44.3 Billion annually to deliver a universal ECEC program. This would amount to coverage for 100% of Canadian children 12 and under, \$3,795 per year in parent fees and \$5,356 per year in allocated public funds.

FIG. 18. REALLOCATING EXISTING PUBLIC FUNDS AND INTRODUCING A \$15/DAY PARENT FEE FOR ALL CHILDREN IN CANADA 12 AND UNDER



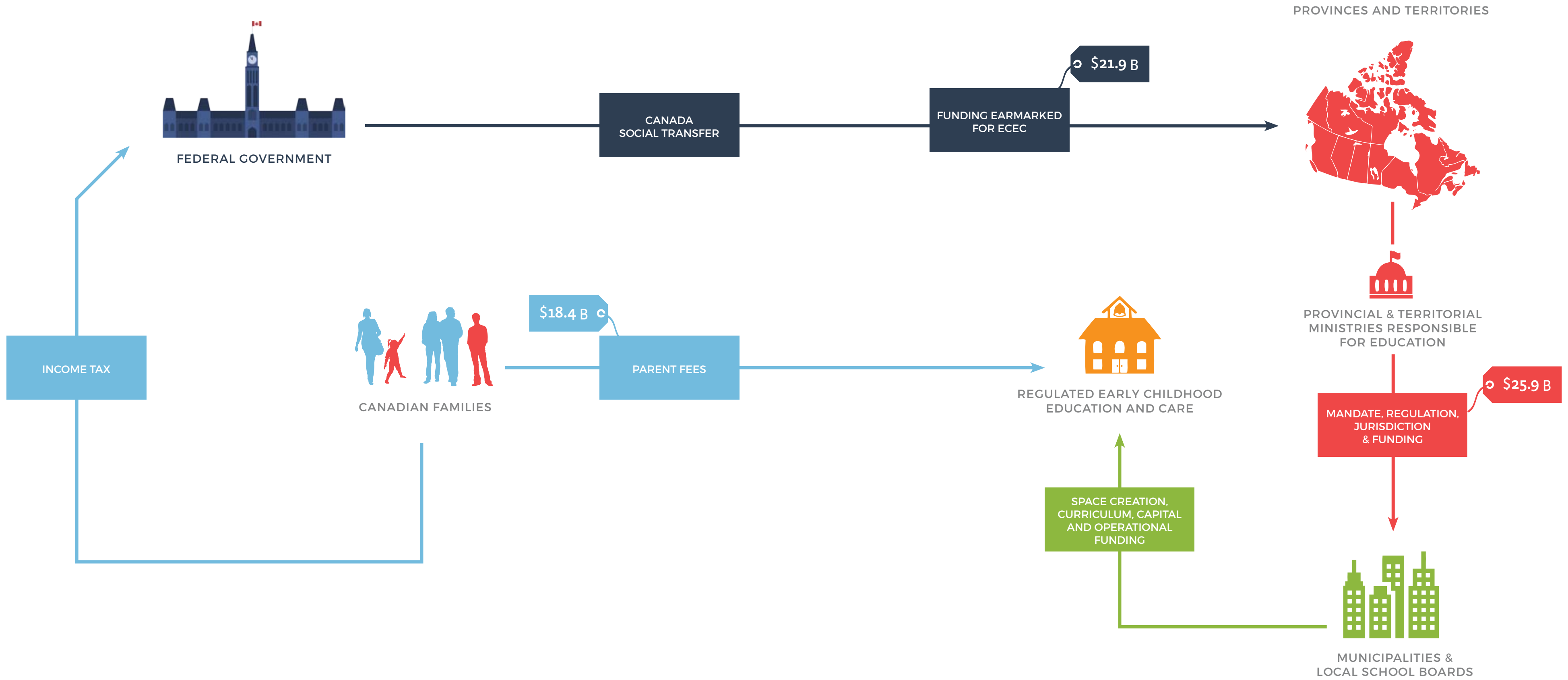
Sources: Department of Finance Canada. (2017), Canada Revenue Agency. (2017), Friendly, M., Halfon, S., Beach, J., & Forer, B. (2013)

A NEW MODEL FOR CANADA

The reallocation of funding means that within the Canada Social Transfer \$21.9 Billion would be earmarked for a universal, regulated early childhood education and care program, mandated by the federal government and under the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories. Ideally this program would be administered through education ministries, which would be responsible for the regulation, jurisdiction and funding. Local governments are in the best position to deliver a program of this nature as they have the closest relationship to communities and know the unique needs of the local population. Therefore the delivery of this program would be the responsibility of municipalities and local school boards.

See Figure 19 on the following page.

FIG. 19. PROPOSED SYSTEM OF FUNDING ECEC IN CANADA

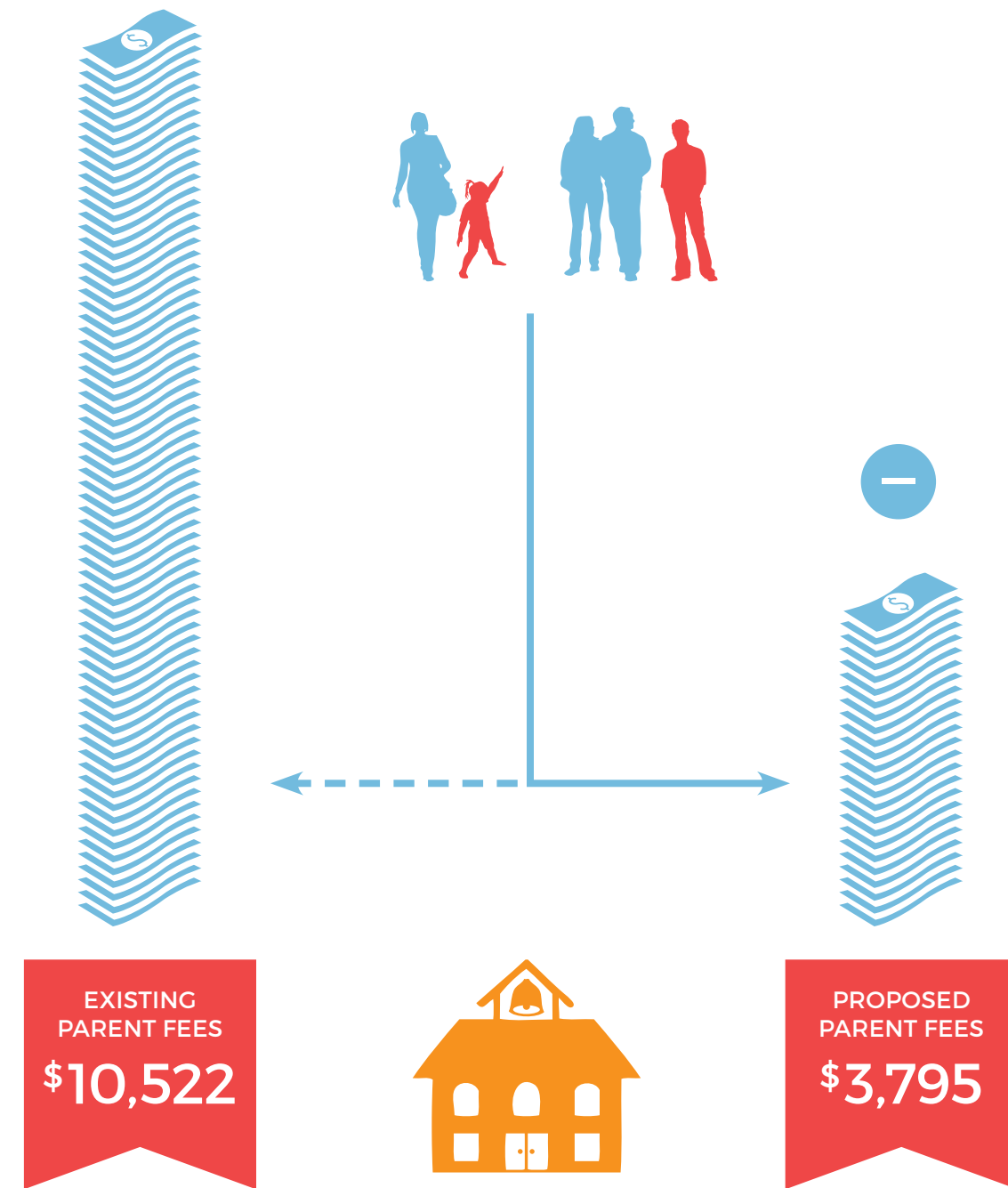


ACCESS TO REGULATED CHILD CARE
GOES FROM THE CURRENT **24.1%**,

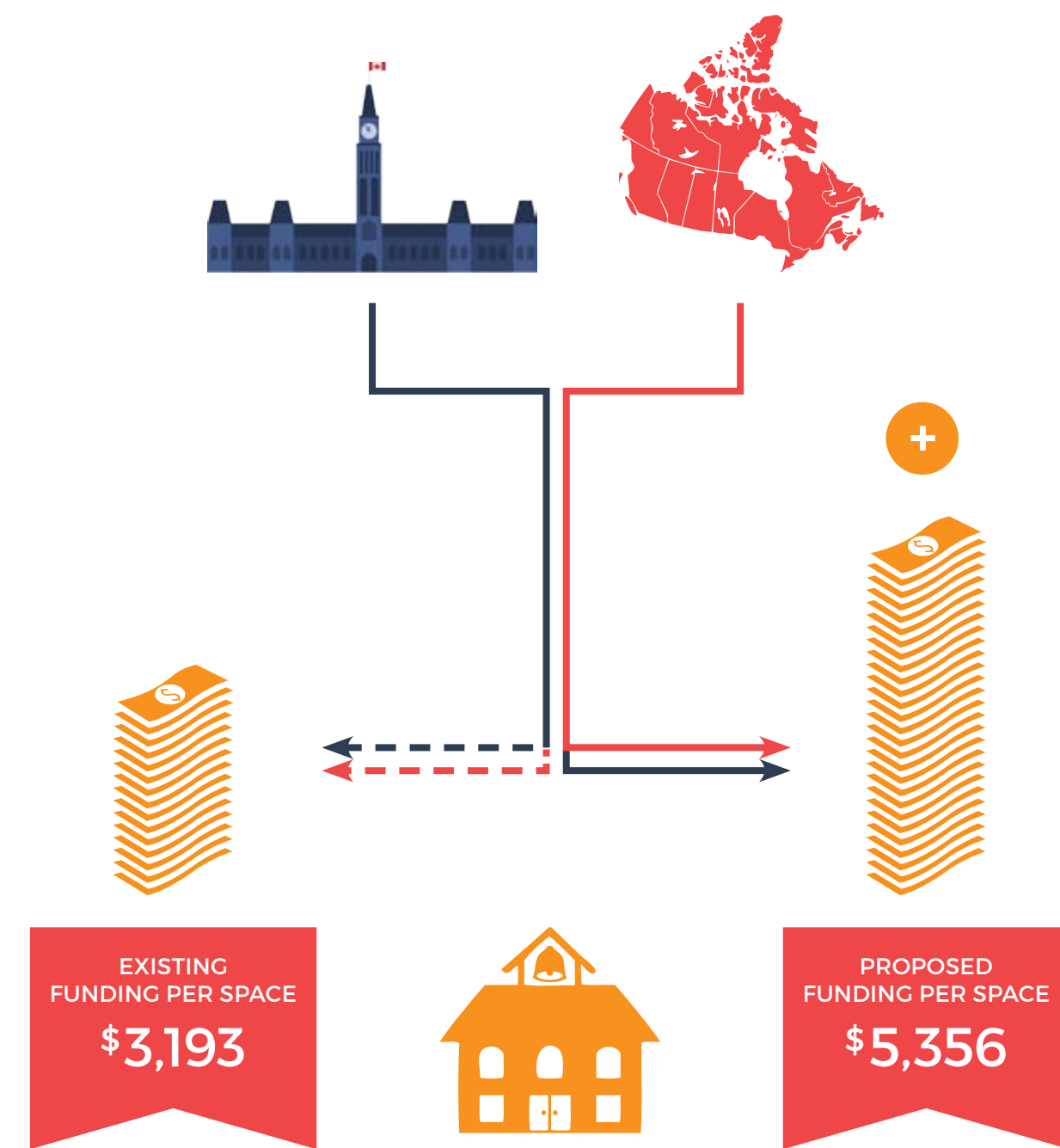
TO **100%**



PARENT FEES GO FROM AN ANNUAL NATIONAL AVERAGE OF \$10,522 TO **\$3,795**.



PUBLIC ALLOCATION PER ECEC SPACE GOES FROM \$3,193 TO **\$5,356**.



INCREASED ACCESS AND LOWER PARENT FEES
WITH NO ADDITIONAL PUBLIC FUNDS REQUIRED.

CONCLUSION

Like policy shifts of all kinds, a change in the way Canada regards and delivers early childhood education and care will take political pressure and political will. The need exists, the funds exist, what is missing is a shift in the way Canadians not only regard our fellow pre school aged citizens but also the value of women in the workforce.

The current tiered system that delivers educational and social development to less than a quarter of Canadian children is at odds with Canadian values of inclusivity and universal access to education. I encourage Canadians to stop viewing ECEC as a market commodity and child minding service, and instead as the critical first stage in an individual's social and academic development and an integral part of our public education system.

NEXT STEPS

The numbers I have put together are very high level and do not consider the extra supports and services necessary to accommodate children with special needs. It is essential that ALL children are included in a universal ECEC program, however, costing out these factors would require additional research.

I have not touched on the mechanics of delivering regionally and culturally appropriate program for all corners of Canada, being especially sensitive to the needs of Indigenous communities with regards to language and cultural practices. In my opinion, it is essential that the mandate for universal ECEC reside at the national level but the delivery reside at the local level.

Additionally, not all families require child care between the hours of 9 AM to 5PM. The needs of families who keep shift work hours would need to be considered in the creation of a universal ECEC system.

And lastly, a high quality ECEC program could not exist without appropriately trained and skilled early childhood educators. Workplace safeguards that ensure a living wage, job security and safe working conditions for these individuals is paramount.

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