

Reconceptualizing parental leave benefits in COVID-19 Canada: From employment policy to care and social protection policy ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Excerpted from abstract

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has spurred critical and much needed attention to re-thinking policy approaches to childcare and long-term eldercare, little focus has been given to its implications for parental leave policies and parental benefits for the care of infants and young children. This article is about reconceptualizing and reconfiguring employment-based parental leave policies in Canada both during and after COVID-19. Informed by theoretical insights from the fields of care economies, feminist political economy, and care and social reproduction, and by national and international parental leave research, we argue that it is time to reconceptualize parental leave benefits not only as employment policy, but as a care and social protection policy. To make this shift, we explore three topic areas: a “mixed system” of parental benefits that combine employment-based and citizenship-based entitlements; connections between policy design and gender equality; and the need for robust intersectional data to track which Canadian families are receiving parental benefits.

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