

A curious case of negative policy diffusion? The legacy of Quebec's '\$5-a-day' childcare ^[1]

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Excerpted from abstract

Since its inception in the fall of 1997, Quebec's "\$5-a-day" childcare program has emerged as Canada's most visible and widely debated stand-alone provincial social program. However, while commendably stimulating a national conversation about universal childcare, the program presents a more problematic legacy for childcare advocates in other provinces and at the federal level. Firstly, documented shortcomings of the Quebec model have provided fodder for ideologically-tinged attacks that use the example of Quebec as an indictment of the general concept of universal childcare. Secondly, the branding of the program has motivated campaigners to emphasize attention-grabbing, and often unrealistic, flat price targets (e.g., British Columbia's "\$10aDay" campaign) over the quality of care and the centrality of childcare to facilitate equal employment opportunities between women and men. This dynamic was especially prevalent in the coverage of the Baker et al. working paper "Non-Cognitive Deficits and Young Adult Outcomes: The Long-Run Impacts of a Universal Child Care Program" during the 2015 federal election campaign. I argue that the case of Quebec's childcare program challenges extant theoretical perspectives on Canadian federalism and interjurisdictional policy transfer by presenting an anomalous example of 'negative diffusion'.

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