

What should Quebec do with \$900 million in parental leave surpluses?^[1]

Canada's best parental leave program could follow Sweden's lead by giving fathers longer leave and allowing grandparents and friends to participate.

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpts

What should a government do with parental leave surpluses? The recent drop in births in Quebec to their lowest level in 20 years has swelled the excess money in the province's parental insurance fund (Fonds d'assurance parentale). Over the next four years, the pot should exceed \$900 million.

Some are suggesting that benefits be extended, targeting families unable to find a childcare space. However, such a measure applied without any further guidance would risk reinforcing women's traditional role as primary caregivers.

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Quebec could thus extend the duration of benefits for the second parent – usually the father – while introducing incentives to limit simultaneous leave-taking. By encouraging greater involvement on the part of fathers, such an approach would be more egalitarian and help reduce the “motherhood penalty.”

Parental leave for grandparents... and friends?

Since July 2024, Sweden has been allowing 300 days of paid parental leave to be transferred, in whole or in part, to a person other than the parents, such as a grandparent, parent-in-law, or even an unrelated person close to the family. The rationale behind this decision is that approximately one Swedish couple out of two does not use all the 480 days of parental leave available to them, an observation that applies to a lesser extent in Quebec.

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Related link: Swedes take a new step in parental leave. Grandparents can now get paid to take care of grandkids ^[3]

The impact of parental benefits on disadvantaged households ^[4]

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