



ACCESSIBILITY AND QUALITY OF CHILD CARE SERVICES IN QUEBEC

POINT OF VIEW FROM AN ONTARIO RESEARCHER

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ACCESSIBILITY

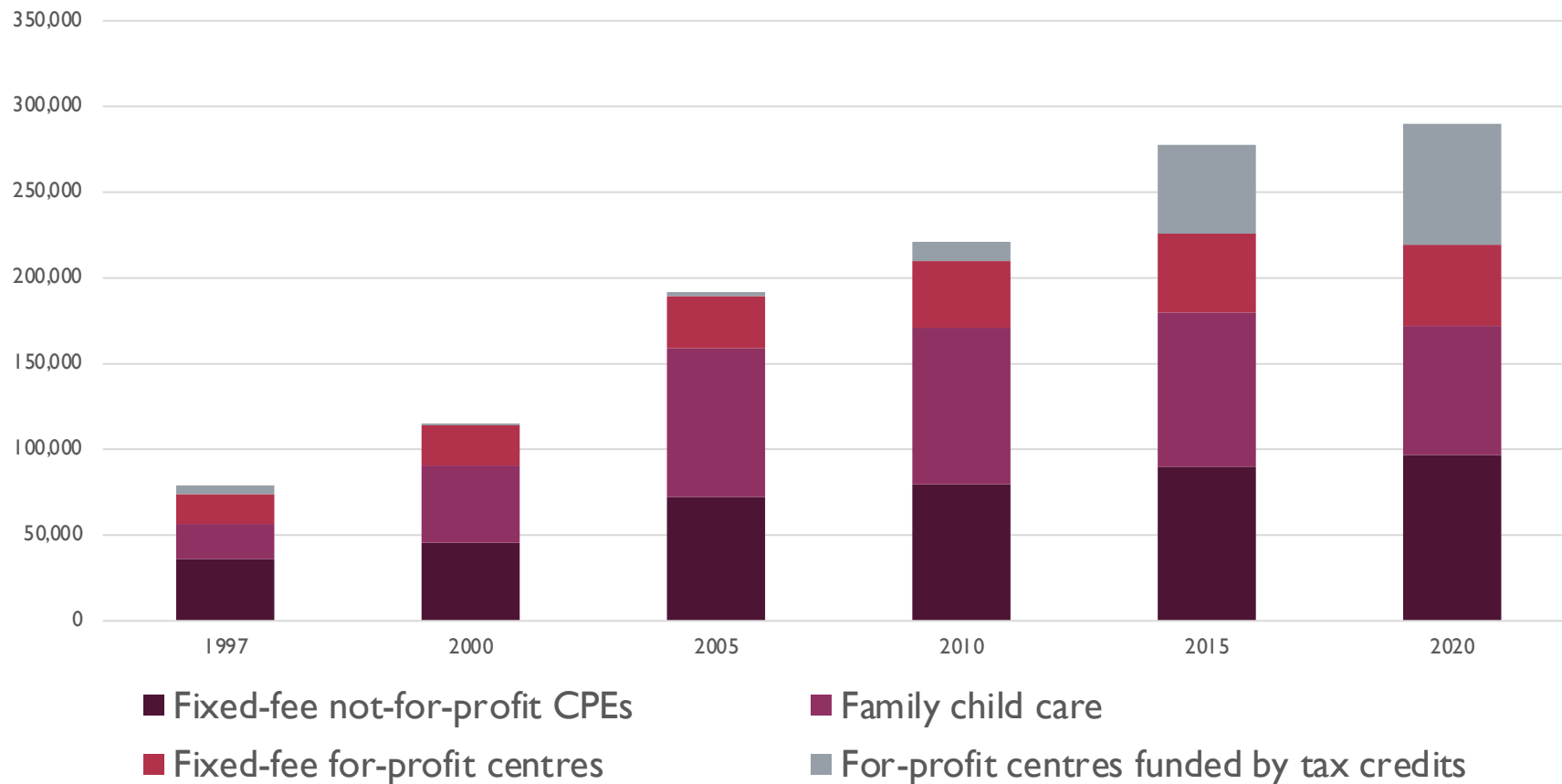


IMPROVING ACCESS TO CHILD CARE

- Back in 1997, there was not much licensed child care in Quebec – only about 80,000 spaces for close to 450,000 children 0-4 years of age.
- By 2000, licensed child care was available for \$5 a day, if you could find it.
- Access to child care spaces has certainly improved a lot since then. Now there are about 300,000 spaces for children 0-4 years of age.
- There were spaces for fewer than 20% of children back in 1997; now that number is approaching 70%.

CHILD CARE SUPPLY GROWTH SINCE 1997

Number of spaces by year and type of child care

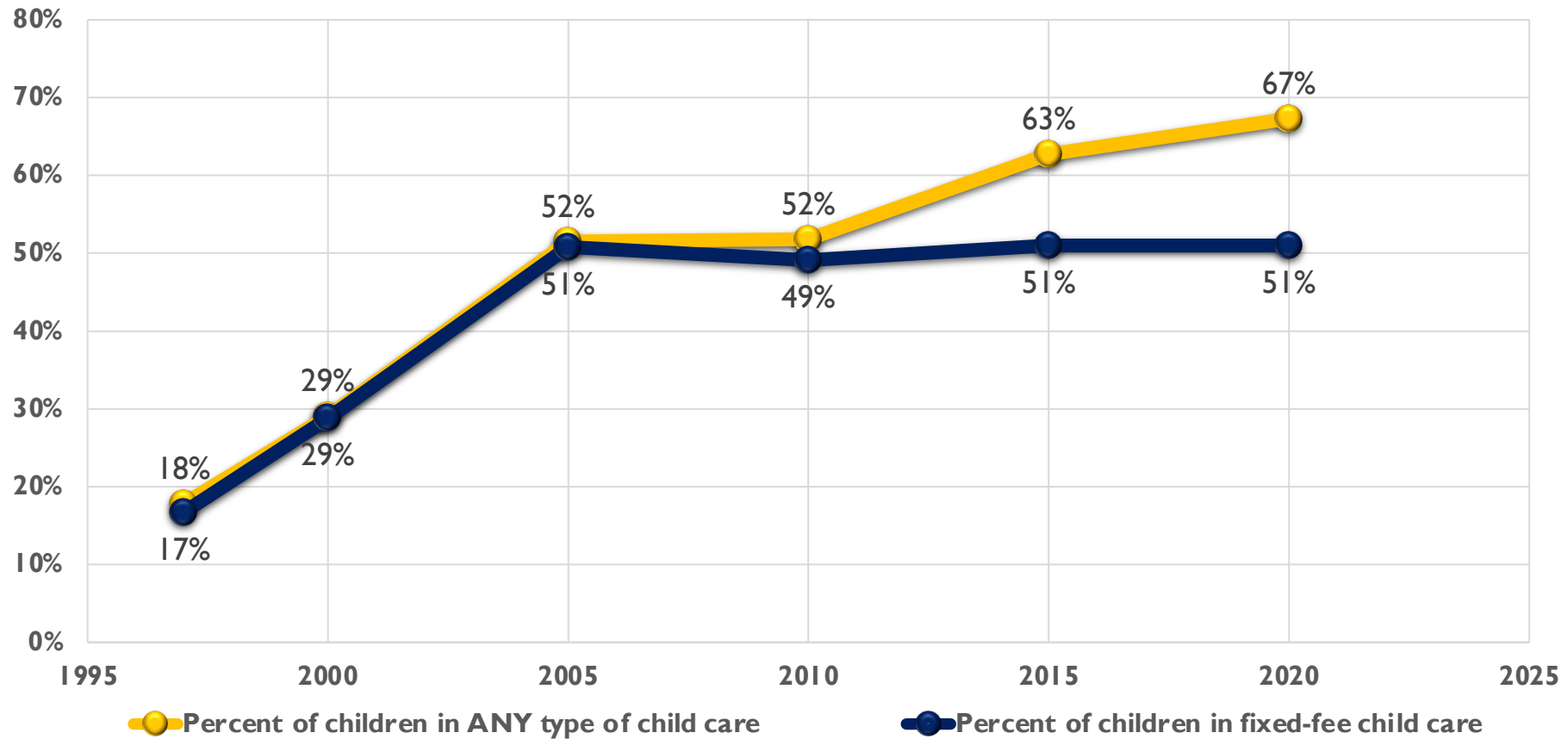


EXPANSION AFTER 2005 WAS IN FOR-PROFIT SERVICES FUNDED BY TAX CREDITS

- After 2005, most new child care spaces were not fixed-fee spaces as the chart on the next page shows.
- The dark blue line shows the proportion of Quebec's children that had access to fixed-fee services. The yellow line shows the proportion of Quebec's children that had access to any kind of child care, with government operational funding to provide fixed fees, or not.
- What you can see is that by 2005 coverage in fixed-fee services had risen from below 20% of children to just about 50% of children.
- But after that, for the next 15 years, there is no overall increase in fixed-fee services. All of the increase in coverage after 2005 comes from the market-based child care without fixed fees - where parents received tax credits to help them buy child care. These new child care centres were virtually all for-profit operations. I would argue that this was the seminal mistake in the development of Quebec's child care system – Jean Charest's mistake – the decision to favour the expansion of lots of poorer quality market-oriented child care.

AFTER 2005, ALL THE GROWTH WAS IN TAX-CREDIT-FUNDED MARKET-BASED CHILD CARE

Growth of fixed-fee child care vs. any type of child care

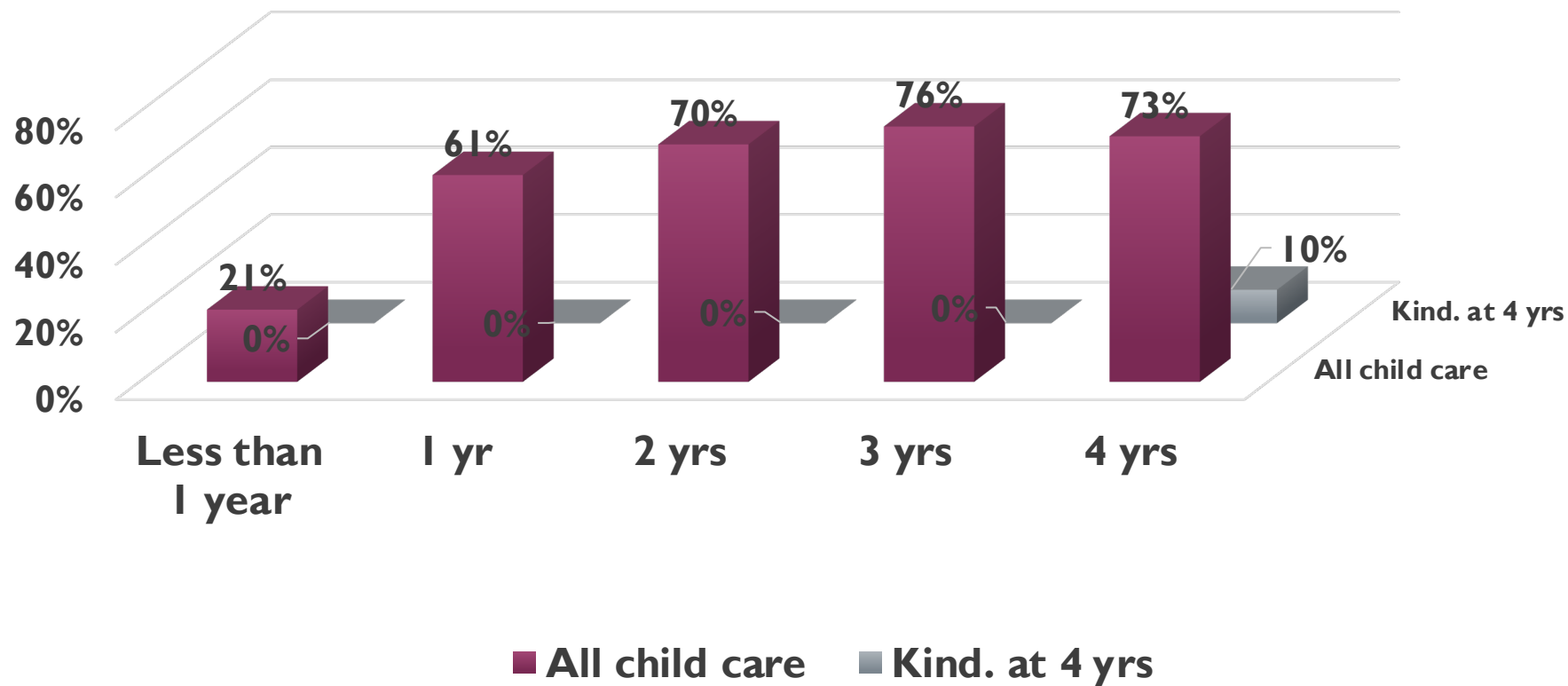


FIXED-FEE SERVICES ARE PREFERRED BY PARENTS

- The Quebec Statistical Institute (ISQ) has done three studies of parent preferences for child care. The conclusions?
- “With the exception of children less than one year of age, where care at home is generally preferred, it is instead all the fixed-fee (\$7 a day) services - CPEs, other child care centres or family child – that are favoured by parents if they are easily accessible and available.” Study on the Use of, Need for and Preferences of Families for Child Care Services, 2011 [my translation]

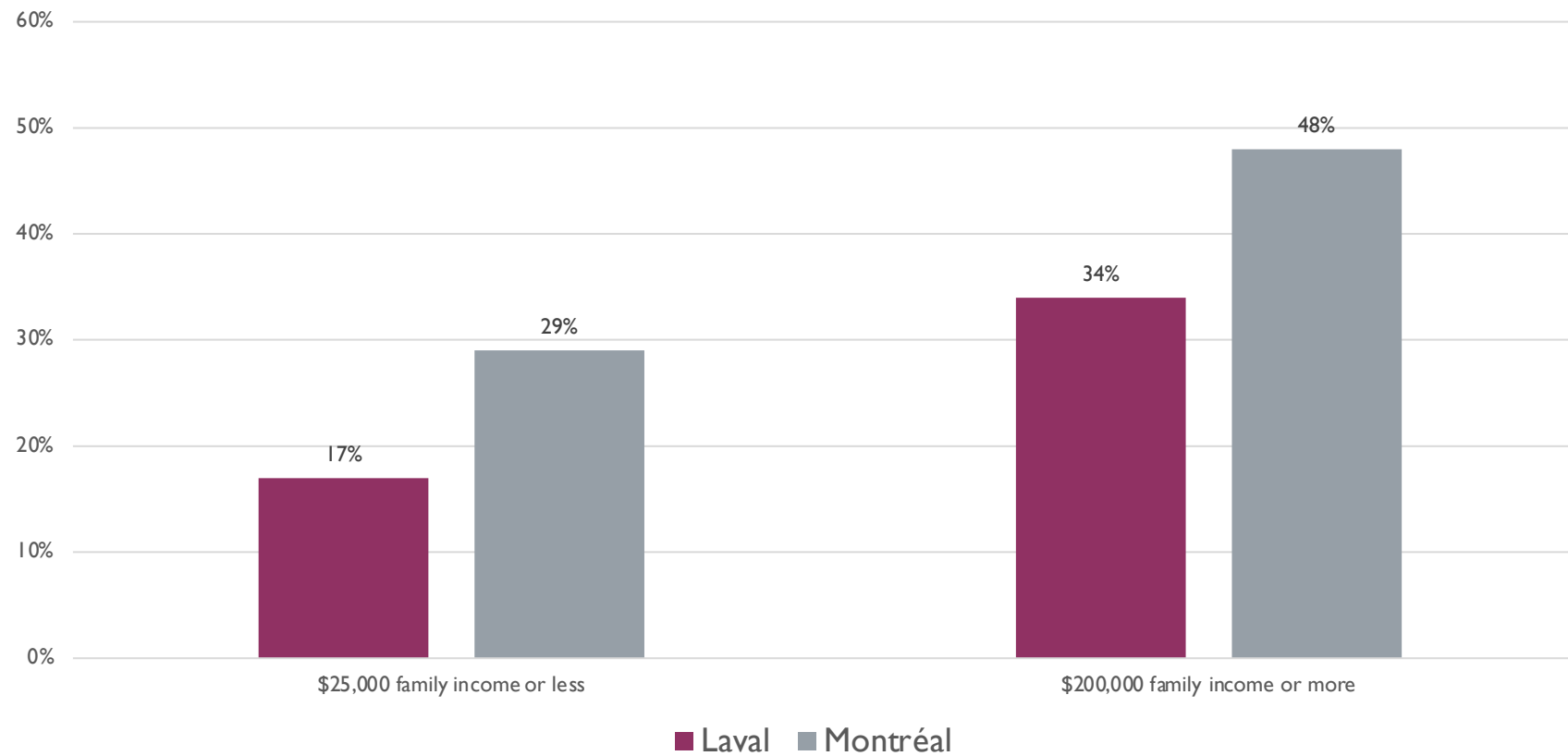
ACCESS BY AGE

Enrollment by age of child, Quebec, December 2019



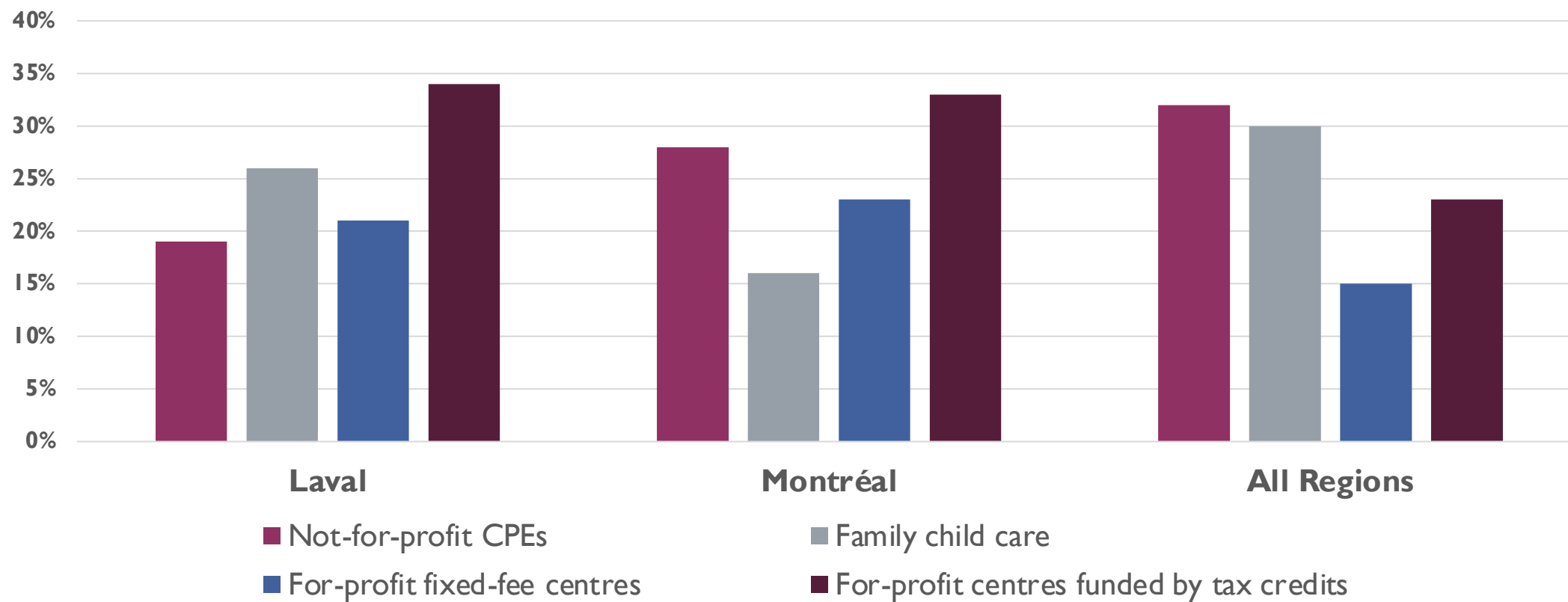
ACCESS BY INCOME

Enrollment of children in CPEs by income level, Laval and Montréal



ACCESS BY REGION

Distribution of child care by type in Laval, Montreal and All Regions



SUPPLY AND DEMAND FOR CHILD CARE SERVICES IN QUEBEC

- The supply and demand situation for child care in Quebec is odd.
- There is no longer excess demand or inadequate supply; in fact, there are many empty child care spaces.
- But there are over 50,000 children on waiting lists for a space, particularly a space in not-for-profit fixed-fee services, but there are empty spaces in market-based tax-credit-funded services.
- Fixed-fee services are full and market-based services are not. Enrollment as of December 2019 was about 96% in CPEs and other fixed fee centres and less than 80% in the market-based services.



QUALITY

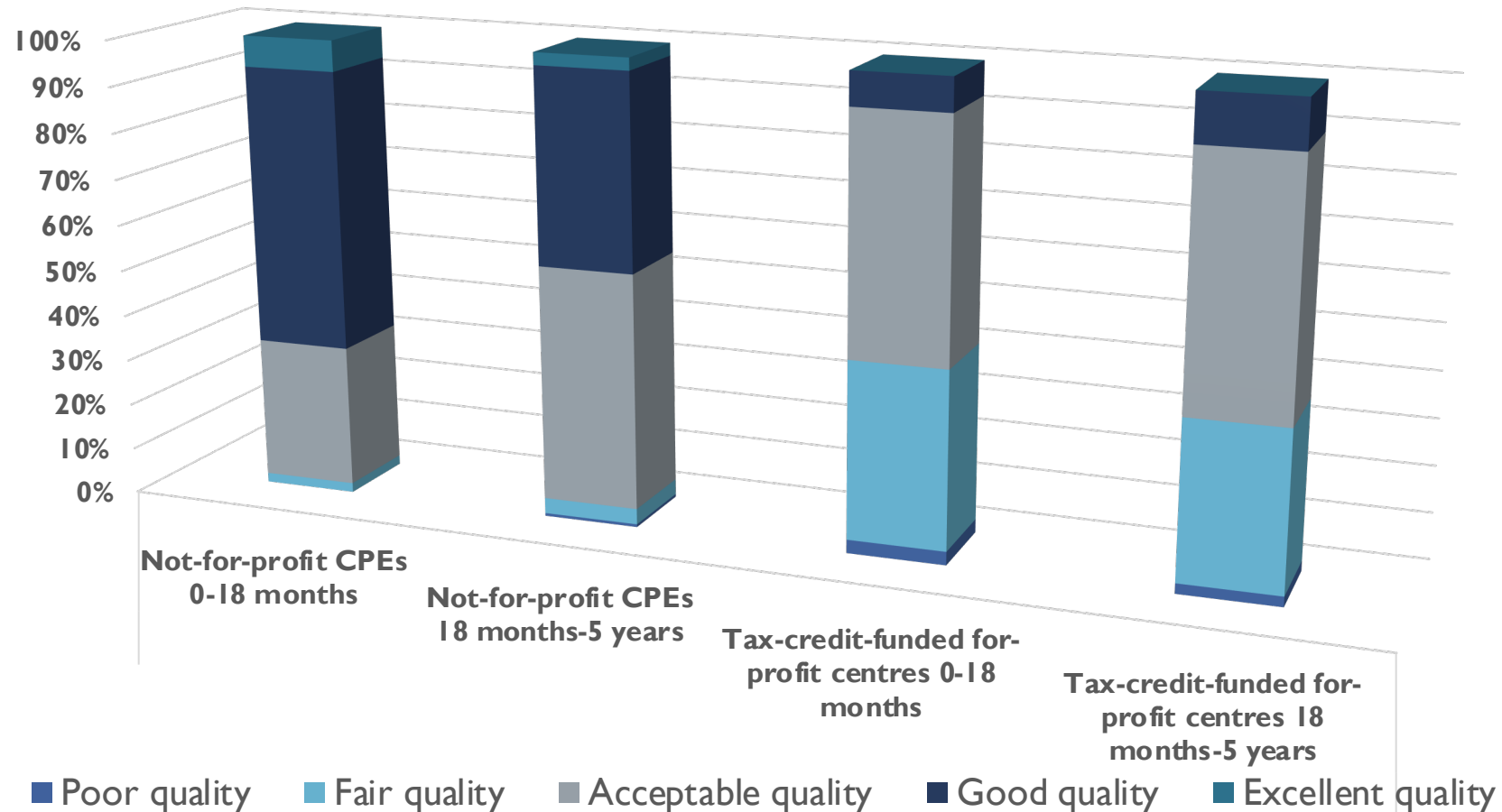


MANY STUDIES OF QUALITY IN QUEBEC CHILD CARE

- The ELDEQ study showed quality was better in CPEs back in the early 2000s (Japel, Tremblay, Côté, 2005)
- The 2003 Grandir en Qualité study showed that quality in not-for-profit CPE centres was systematically and substantially better than in for-profit fixed-fee centres (i.e., *garderies subventionnées*) (Cleveland and Bigras, 2013)
- The 2014 Grandir en Qualité study showed large differences in quality between CPEs and for-profit variable-fee centres (i.e., *garderies non-subventionnées*) (see next slide).
- Now, there is a regular government-sponsored program of on-site detailed quality evaluations in Quebec child care centres for classrooms of children 3-5 years.

QUALITY IN NOT-FOR-PROFIT CENTRES IS MUCH BETTER THAN IN FOR-PROFIT CENTRES

Detailed quality measurement results in not-for-profit and for-profit centres in Quebec



STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

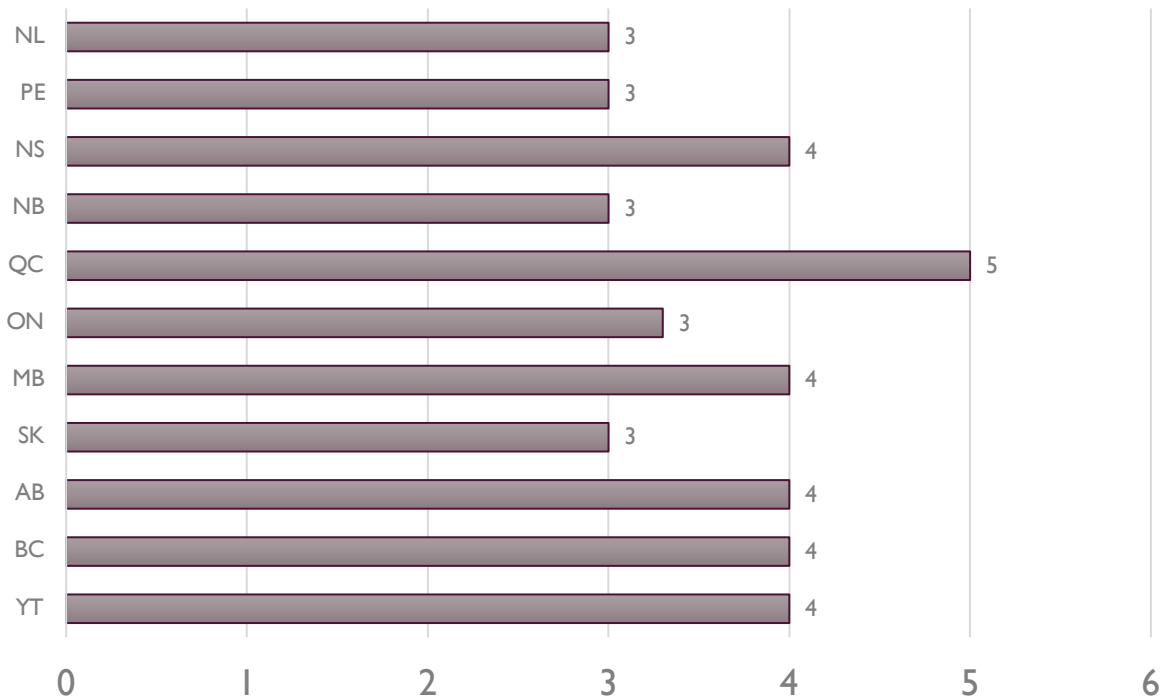
- In 2019, 87% of CPEs met the requirement to have 2/3rds of staff with educational qualifications. Only 27% of the for-profit market-based child care services met this requirement.
- Even amongst qualified staff, there are variations in education. A 3-year DEC is a stronger qualification than a 1-year AEC. In 2019, 45% of qualified educators in CPEs had a DEC, compared to 27% in the for-profit market-based services.
- In sum, the CPEs have services of better quality, better working conditions for staff, and better trained educators.

THE STAFFING SITUATION IS GETTING WORSE

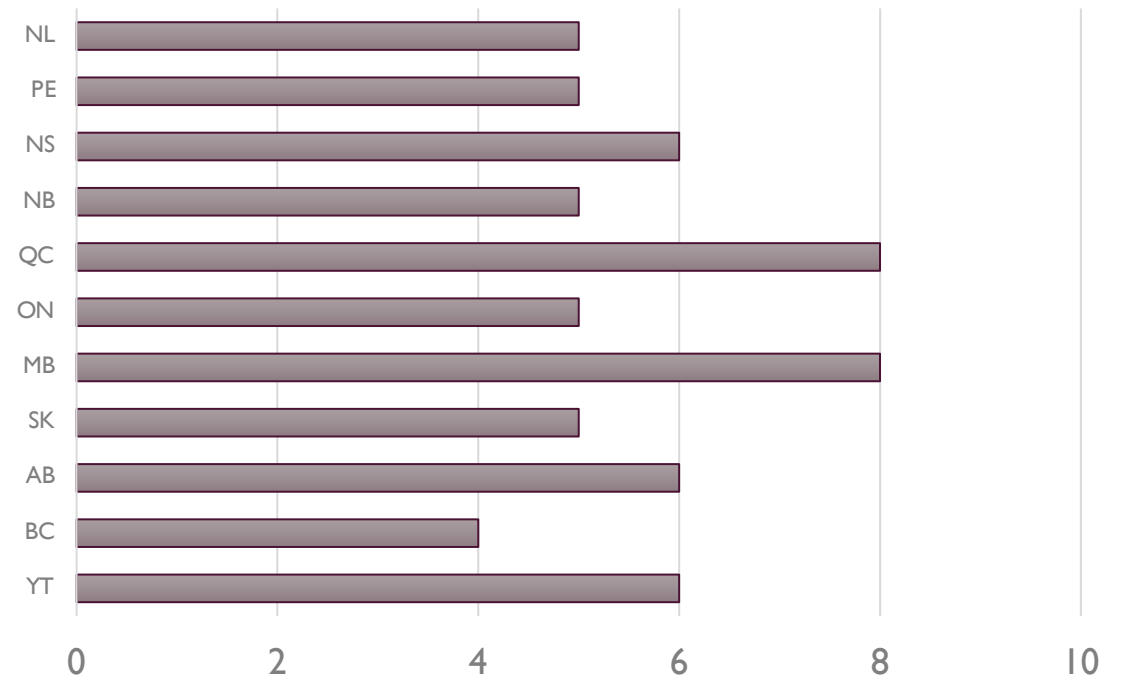
- From 2019 to 2020, over 2,000 educators left the system for reasons other than retirement. Why? Career concerns, low salaries, little chance of advancement. This was particularly true for more experienced staff.
- Raising salaries and benefits is key to making work in this sector into a desirable profession.
- Quebec's Treasury Board President Sonia LeBel said in October 2021: "We have to admit, the current salary isn't attracting new educators into the system, and it's not contributing to retaining them either."

QUEBEC REGULATIONS ON STAFF-CHILD RATIOS ARE INADEQUATE FOR CHILDREN ONE AND TWO YEARS OF AGE

Number of 1-year-old children per staff member, 2019



Number of 2-year-old children per staff member, 2019



MANY OF THE MARKET-BASED CHILD CARE SERVICES ARE FAILING

- The Quebec government has a plan to convert market-based services to fixed-fee services over the next five years.
- But representatives of these child care centres are worried. These businesses, rejected by many parents, are failing at a rapid rate.
- Khalid Daher, President of the organization representing these tax-credit funded services says “Our child care centres are going to disappear before they can be converted. Our educators are leaving us, our parents are leaving us for child care at \$8.70 a day (fixed-fee). Only the walls will be left.”

BALANCE SHEET ON MARKET-BASED CHILD CARE SERVICES IN QUEBEC

- The Quebec government has now promised to convert nearly all of the tax-credit-funded spaces in child care centres – 56,000 spaces over 5 years – into fixed-fee spaces. This marks the effective end of the market-based experiment in Quebec child care. We can draw a balance sheet.
- Parents want child care where fees are dependable, predictable and low. Parents want child care which follows regulations on quality and qualifications and pays their staff well, so that staffing is stable. Parents do not want fly-by-night child care. Quebec’s experiment with a lightly-regulated for-profit sector that sets its own fees and determines its own costs did not work.
- Parents are happy to have more fixed-fee services. The idea of conversion is popular. But it is not just “conversion” that is needed; it is “transformation”. Market-based for-profit services need to be transformed from, as data shows, poor quality, poorly regulated services with few qualified educators into good quality, well regulated services with well compensated and well qualified staff. In my opinion, that requires a dramatic transformation that is not consistent with continued private profit-seeking ownership.