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***The Evolution of Québec's Social Assistance
Over the Last 20 Years: Two Steps Forward, One
Step Back?***

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Introduction

- Larger social policy perspective
- My argument:
 - 1) Québec's has a distinct social policy regime
 - 2) This regime is aligned with “activation” ideas
 - 3) Québec's approach has been successful, but there have been some setbacks

Federal Retrenchment and Restructuring in the 1990s (1/2)

- Federal involvement in social assistance has been “tepid” (Banting, 2007) but significant
- Canada Assistance Plan (CAP, 1966-1996):
 - 50/50 funding formula
 - Conditional funding
- Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST, 1996-2004):
 - Less generous and less predictable block funding

Federal Retrenchment and Restructuring in the 1990s (2/2)

- Further retrenchment → Employment Insurance (EI) and social assistance for off-reserve Status Indians
- Restructuring → National Child Benefit (1998)
- Influential social policy ideas:
 - Activation (Daigneault, 2014)
 - Social investment (Jenson, 2004)
- Forces leading to and away from provincial convergence (Boychuk, 1998, 2015)

Québec's distinct social policy regime

- A liberal regime with a social democratic and conservative bent (Bernard & St-Arnaud, 2004)
- Québec's "reinvented" social policy model (Noël, 2013):
 - 1) Ambitious and encompassing family policy
 - 2) Active labour market programs
 - 3) Law against poverty and social exclusion
- Fiscal austerity, coalition politics and nationalism

1) Ambitious and encompassing family policy

- Generous child assistance (*Soutien aux enfants*)
- Universally-accessible regulated childcare (1997):
 - Initially 5\$ a day
 - 220,000 subsidized places in 2013-2014
 - *Centres de la petite enfance* (CPE) and private daycare centres
 - Demonstrated impact on the labour force participation of women
- Québec Parental Insurance Plan (2007)

2) Active measures (1/2)

- Public Prescription Drug Insurance Plan (1997)
- Employment services and active programs integrated under Emploi-Québec (1997)
- *Solidarité jeunesse* pilot project (2000-2002) and *Alternative jeunesse* (2007-2014)
- *Action Emploi* pilot project (2002-2005)
- Work Premium, Adapted Work Premium and Supplement to the Work Premium (2004 and 2008)
- *Supplément de retour au travail* (1997-2014)

2) Active measures (2/2)

► Work Premium

	Eligibility – Minimum Work Income	Eligibility – Maximum Family Income	Maximum Work Premium
Singles, no children	\$2,400	\$15,949.00	\$557.90
Couples, no children	\$3,600	\$24,775.00	\$871.92
Lone-parent families	\$2,400	\$34,280.00	\$2,391.00
Couples with children	\$3,600	\$47,196.00	\$3,194.00

- Supplement to the Work Premium = 200\$/month per person for a maximum of 12 months

3) Fight against poverty and social exclusion

- Intense civil society mobilization (1995-2002)
- Québec was the first province to adopt a law against poverty and social exclusion (2002)
- First poverty action plan (2004)
- Comité consultatif de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale (CCLP, 2005)
- Centre d'étude sur la pauvreté et l'exclusion (CEPE, 2005)
- Second poverty action plan (2010)

Social assistance beneficiaries and cases, Québec, February 2015, (1/2)

	Households	All beneficiaries	Adult beneficiaries	Children beneficiaries
Social Assistance	196,038	304,278	215,391	88,887
Social Solidarity	127,182	143,605	135,080	8,525
Total	323,220	447,883	350,471	97,412

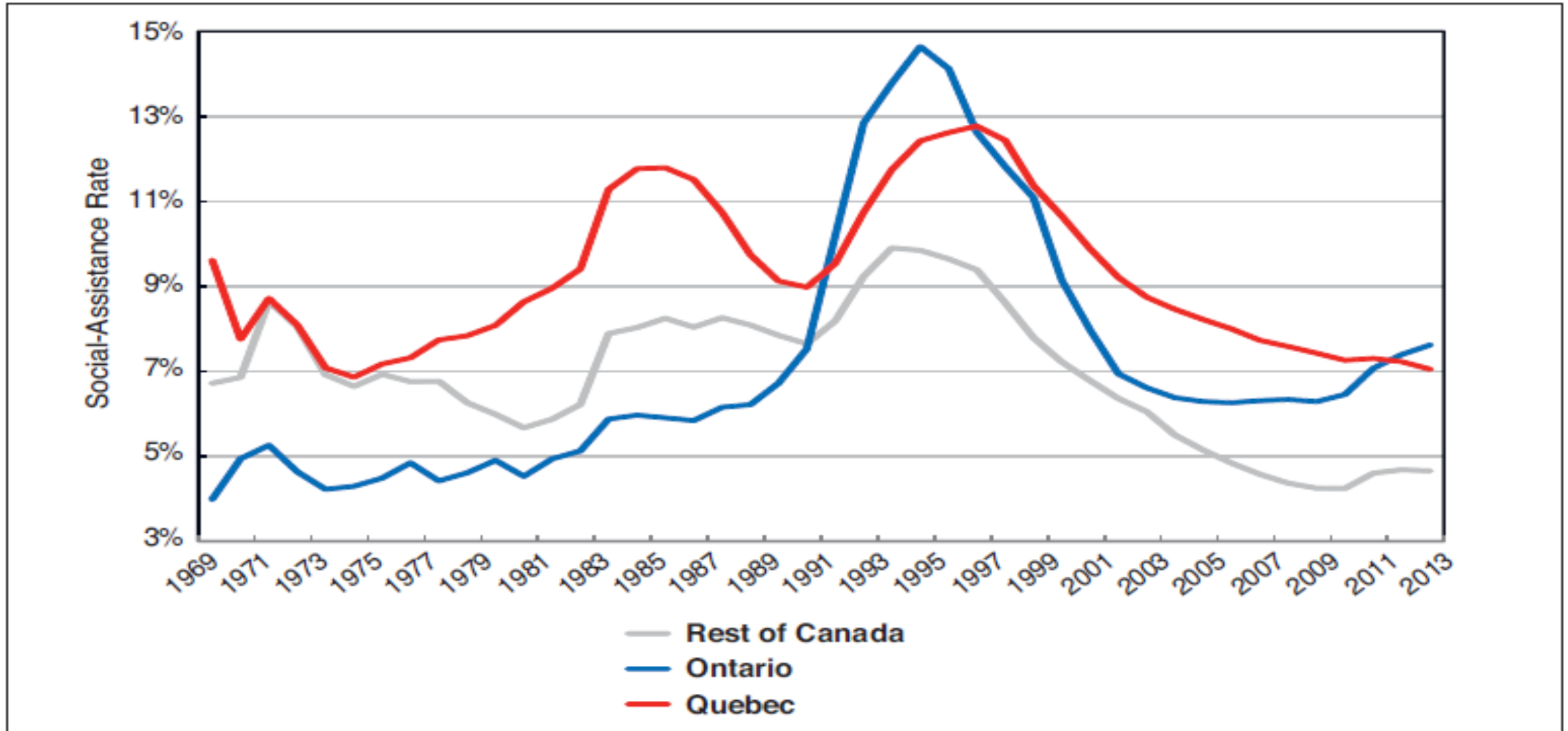
Source: Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale du Québec (2015)

Social assistance beneficiaries and cases, Québec, February 2015, (2/2)

	Number of Beneficiaries	Proportion of Beneficiaries
Single persons	256,079	57,2%
Childless couples	23,534	5,3%
Lone-parent families	102,066	22,8%
Couples with children	65,205	14,6%
Students' spouses or partners	999	0,2%

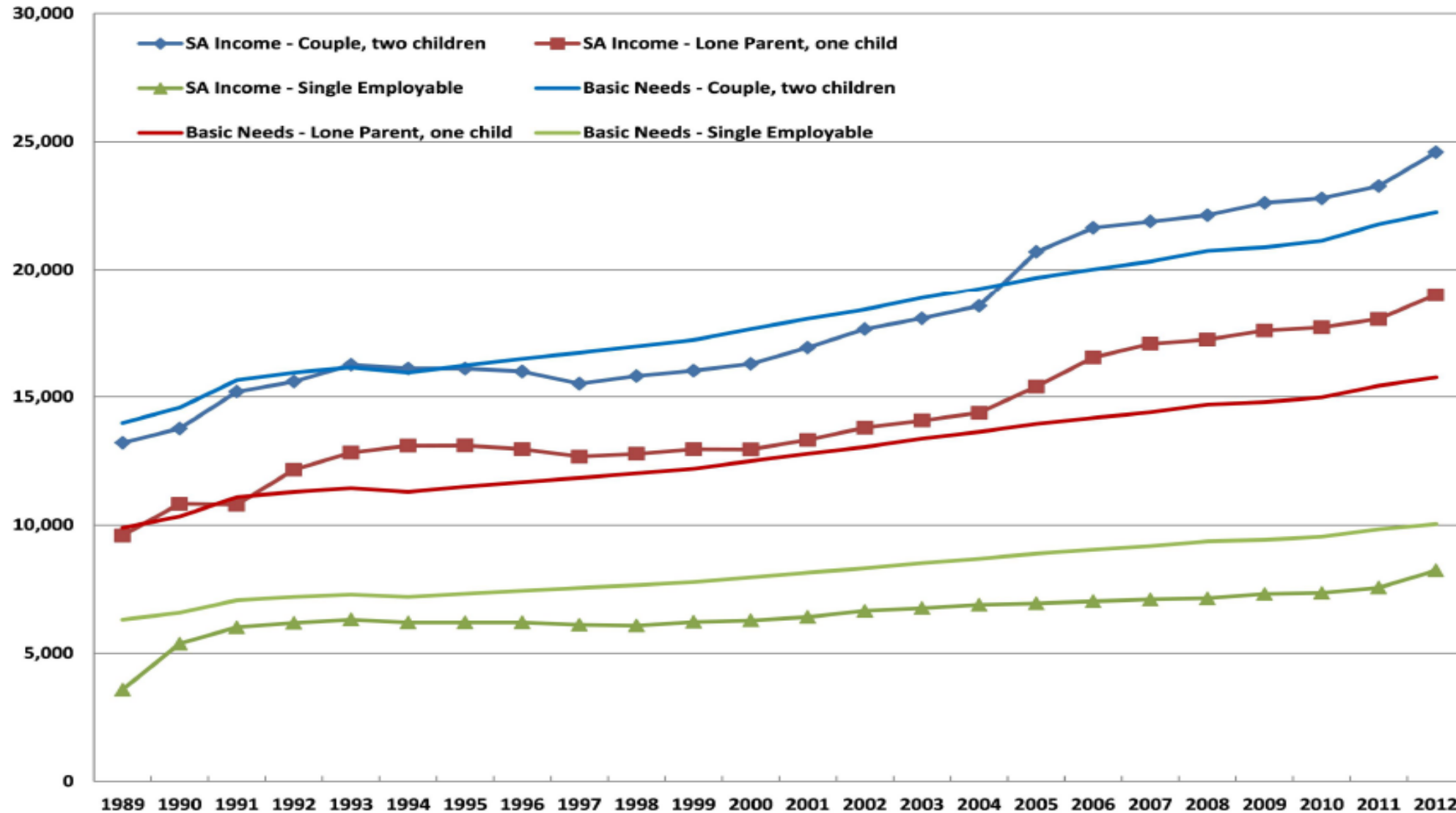
Source: Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale du Québec (2015)

The evolution of the welfare rate



Source: Kneebone, R. D., & White, K. (2014), p. 7.

Benefits generosity Of (Sarlo's)



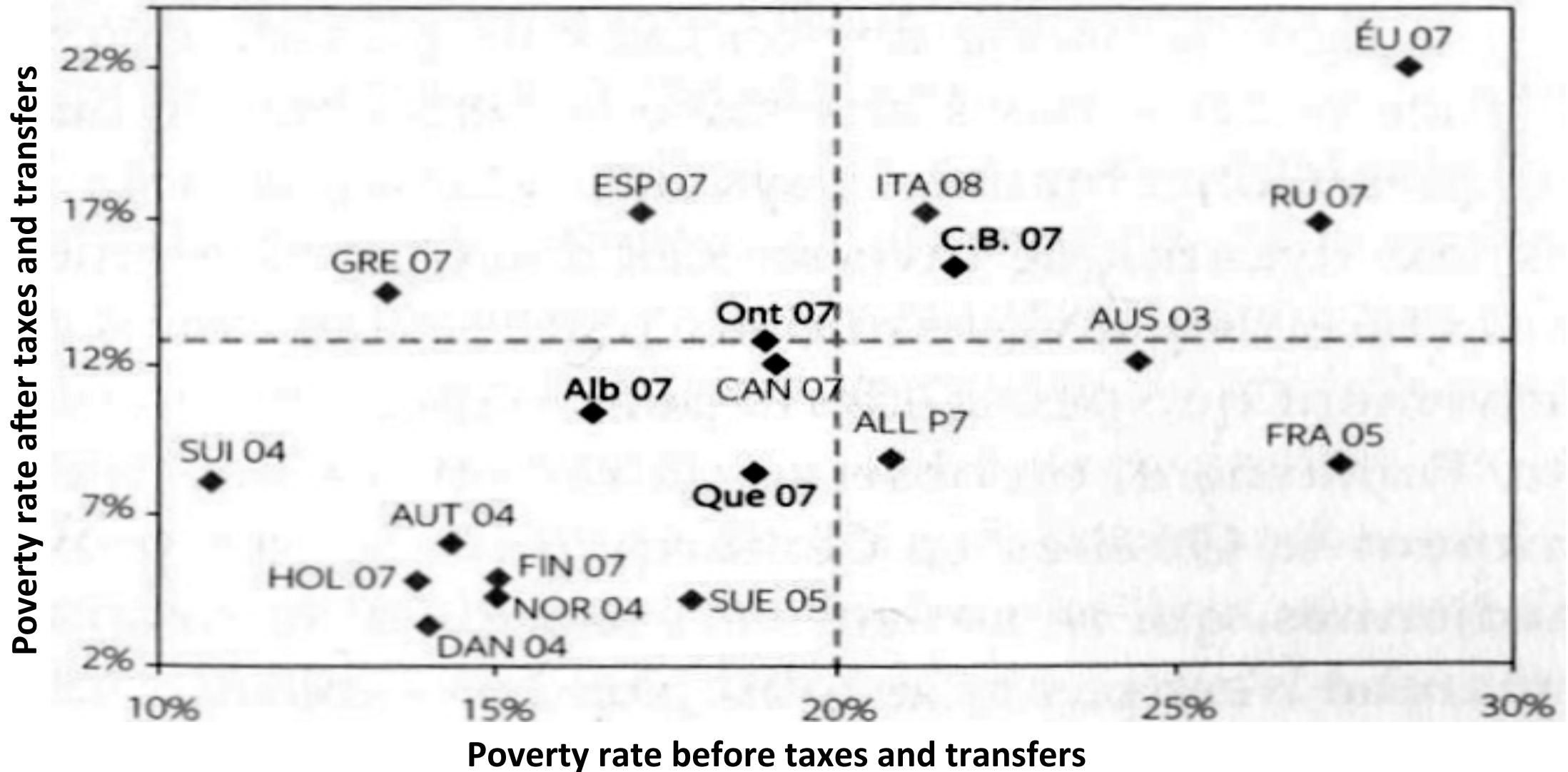
Source: Kneebone, R. D., & White, K. (Forthcoming, 2015), p. 65

Benefits generosity, Qc (LICO/MBM)

QC				
single employable	\$8,441	\$19,774	-\$11,333	42.7%
person with disability	\$12,250	\$19,774	-\$7,524	61.9%
single parent, one child	\$19,413	\$24,066	-\$4,653	80.7%
couple, two children	\$25,166	\$37,387	-\$12,221	67.3%

QC Montreal				
single employable	\$8,441	\$17,051	-\$8,610	49.5%
person with disability	\$12,250	\$17,051	-\$4,801	71.8%
single parent, one child	\$19,413	\$24,113	-\$4,700	80.5%
couple, two children	\$25,166	\$34,101	-\$8,935	73.8%

Poverty rate, all family types



Source: Luxembourg Income Study data, as cited in Van den Berg & Raiq (2014), p. 85

The evolution of inequality

Gini coefficient, after-tax income, adj. family units

	Canada	Québec
1990	0,286	0,269
2011	0,313	0,291

Interquintile ratio 5/1, average income, adj. family units

Before taxes and transfers 1990	After taxes and transfers 1990	Before taxes and transfers 2011	After taxes and transfers 2011
11,6	4,2	13,7	4,6

Two steps forward...

Household income (constant dollars, 2008)

	2000	2008	2000-2008 (%)
Couple, 2 children, \$0 market income	19 325\$	24779\$	+28%

Government transfers (2008)

	2000	2008	2000-2008 (%)
Couple, 2 children, \$25,000 market income	\$7,009	\$14,710	+109%
Couple, 2 children, \$50,000 market income	\$5,368	7,934\$	+48%

Source: Godbout & St-Cerny, 2008, as cited in Noël (2013), p. 268

...one step back (1/2)

- ▶ A less ambitious family policy:
 - ▶ The creation of places has slowed down and the private sector has been favoured
 - ▶ Significant increase in user fees (2004 = \$7; 2014 = \$7.30; 2015 = \$7.30-\$20.00)
- ▶ Some active programs and measures have been eliminated (*Supplément de retour au travail* and *Alternative jeunesse*)
- ▶ Welfare rates were not indexed from 1994 to 2004 and, for employables, only partially indexed from 2004-2008

...one step back (2/2)

- ▶ The situation of single employables and childless couples has worsened since the early 1990s (minor increases are scheduled for 2015-2017)
- ▶ Various measures:
 - ▶ 2013: supplements to welfare benefits are not automatic for 55-57 years old clients and couples with children below 5 years old
 - ▶ 2015: restricted out-of-province time, and rental income, crackdown on undeclared work income, etc.

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