



Subsidy Access Pilot and Crisis Spaces Pilot

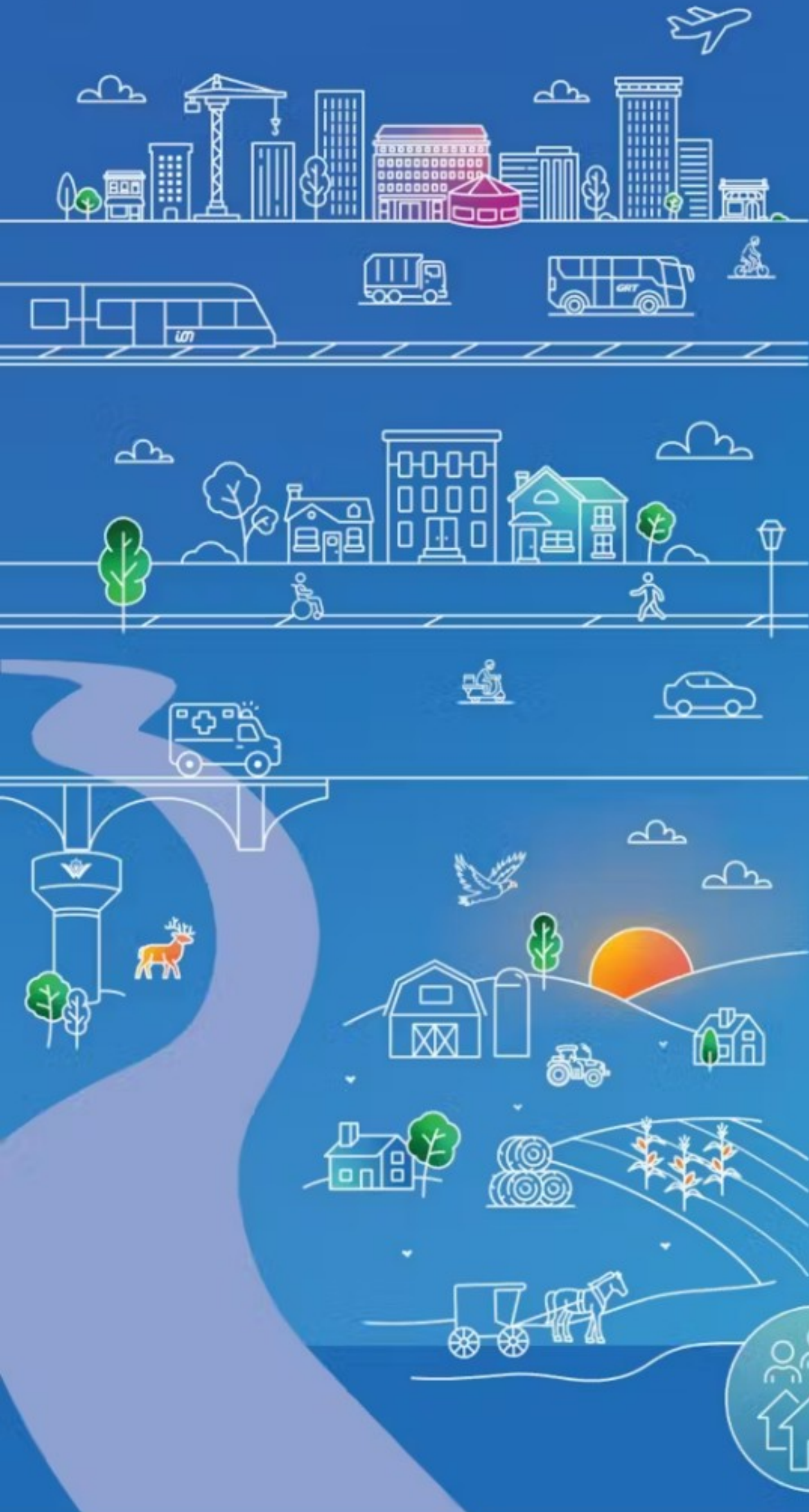
OMSSA Policy Conference

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Region of Waterloo



Agenda

- Overview of Subsidy Access Pilot
- Overview of Crisis Spaces Pilot
- Operator's Lens
- Q&A



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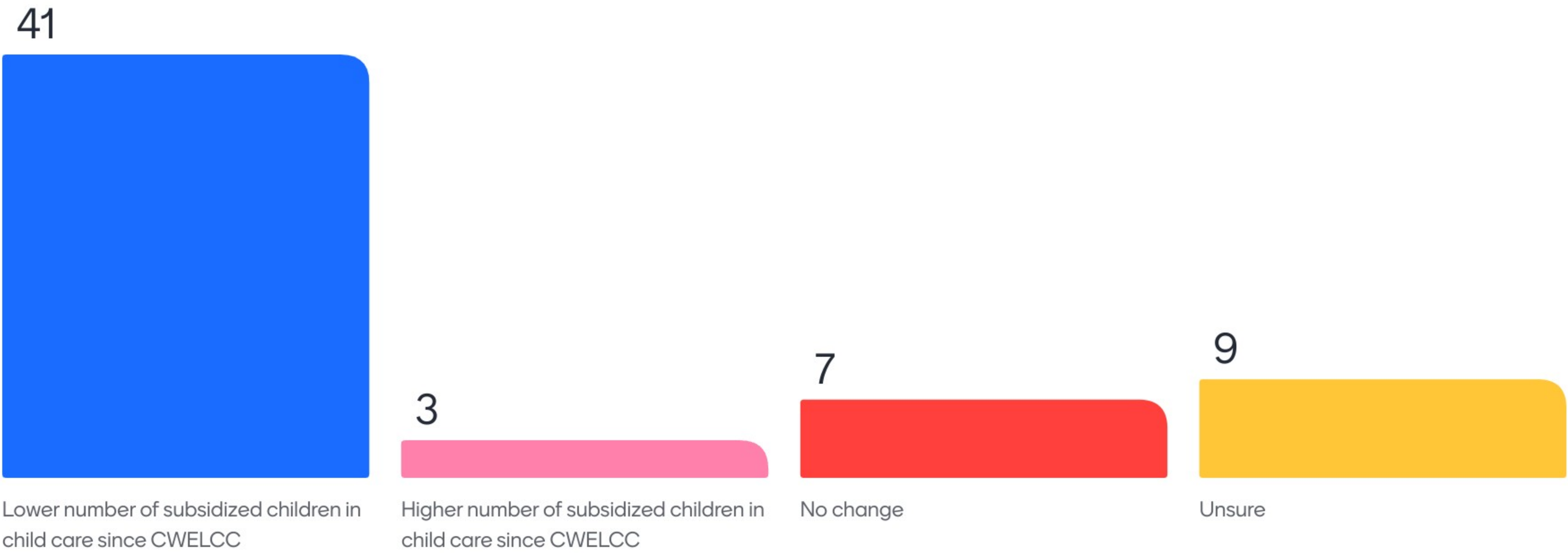
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Check-in

Which of these scenarios have you observed in your region or district?



Background Information and Trends

- The Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan (CWELCC) has greatly increased demand for child care spaces.
- Trends pointed to a decrease in the number of subsidized children enrolled in child care (unrelated to CWELCC reductions).
- Families in receipt of child care subsidy and families facing acute crisis are experiencing barriers to accessing limited spaces, including limited understanding of the larger system, reduced ability to apply to waitlists, inter-generational trauma, vulnerability factors, and reliance on public transportation.



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Overview of the Subsidy Access Pilot

- Began as a pilot in September 2023
- 13 existing non-profit child care sites (age 0-4)
- 1 new non-profit child care site (age 0-4)
- Existing operators worked to reserve 20% of their spaces for subsidized children.
- New CWELCC spaces (expansions or new sites) are required to reserve 30% of their new spaces for subsidized children
- Now 39 sites participating in the pilot due to new CWELCC spaces in 2024 and the YMCA voluntarily bringing all 17 of its sites into the pilot



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Operational Details

- Children's Services staff meet with operators to explain the pilot in advance of spaces being filled
- Requirement to participate in Subsidy Access Pilot now part of Purchase of Service Agreement
- Operators call families that have identified on centralized waitlist (OneHSN) that they "require subsidy".
- Spaces are not offered until confirmation that a family is in fact eligible for child care subsidy.
- **NEW:** Subsidy Caseworkers can now update the centralized waitlist and indicate if eligible/ineligible



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Case Studies – Existing Child Care Sites

Child Care Site 1

Existing site in Waterloo

- High quality non-profit childcare site with long waitlists.
- Operating capacity of 123 spaces.
- In September 2023, 9 out of 123 children were subsidized (7%)
- As of Nov 20, 2024, 29 of 123 children are subsidized (24%)

Child Care Site 2

Existing site in Cambridge

- High quality non-profit childcare site with long waitlists.
- Operating capacity of 70 spaces.
- In September 2023, 7 out of 70 children were subsidized (10%)
- As of Nov 20, 2024, 16 of 70 children are subsidized (23%)



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Impact in Numbers – From Sept 2023 to Nov 2024

Sites Participating Voluntarily (20% target)

- 17% of spots currently filed with subsidized children
- 62.5% increase in subsidized children
- Some spaces remain vacant as operators struggle to fill them

New Sites – Participation Required (30% target)

- 32% of all "new" spaces are comprised of subsidized children
- A few spots remain vacant



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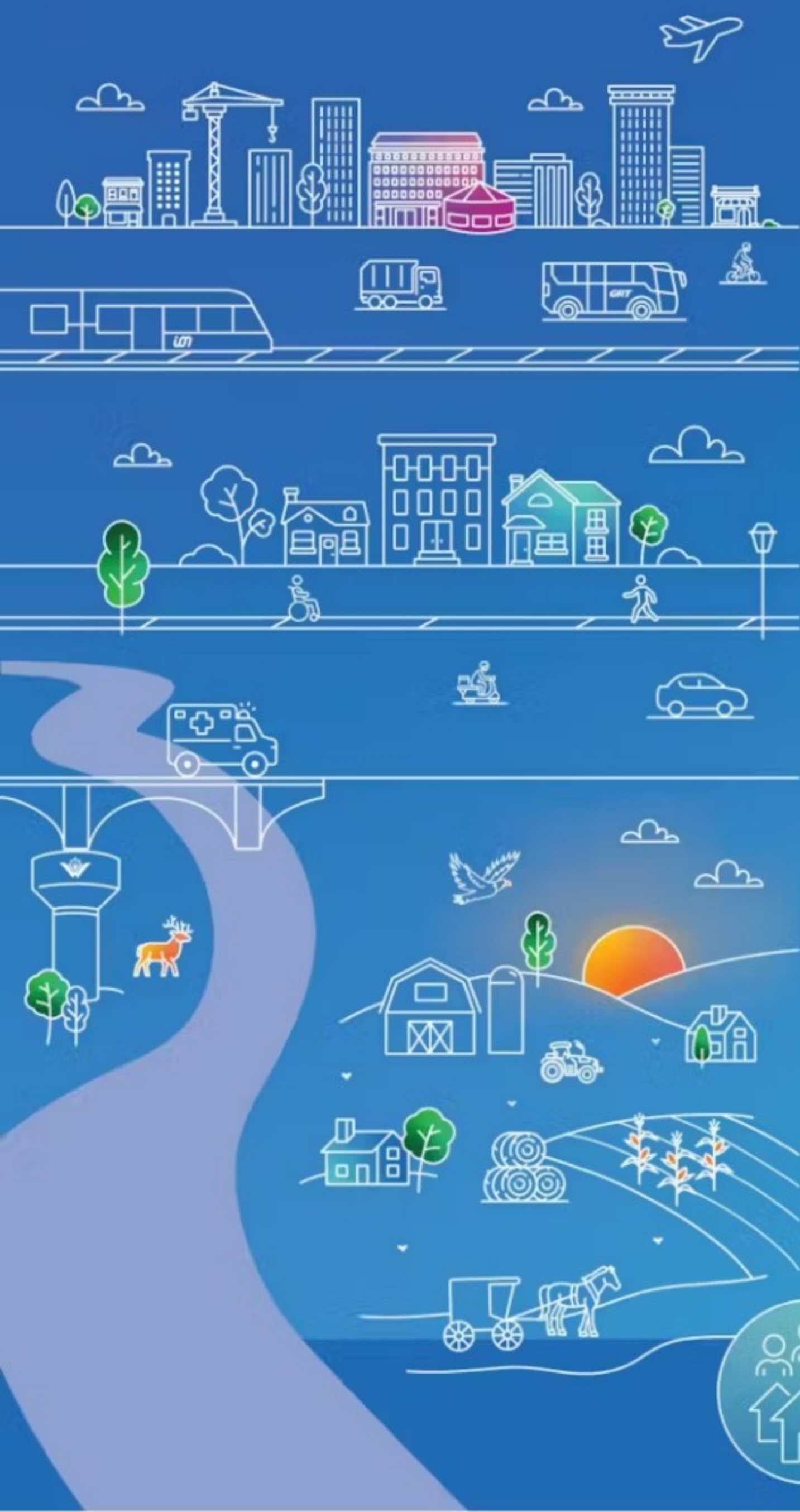
Impact to the Subsidy Team and Operations

- Application and eligibility determination remains the same
- Some triaging and prioritizing of applications, if operator is holding a space
- Support to family to complete application and submit documents through ELCC Navigator
- Supervisor involvement to problem solve with families and operators
- Parent frustration if not eligible for subsidy



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Nickey Wiles

Manager of Child Care, YMCA of Three Rivers



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Operator Reflections on Successes— YMCA of Three Rivers

- **Location-Based Successes:** Enhanced diversity and broadened access to resources for vulnerable families.
- **Expanded Access to Support:** Collaborating with organizations like KW Habilitation provides early intervention benefits for children requiring developmental or behavioral support, ensuring that children receive necessary assistance at crucial stages of their growth and development
- **Shifting Perspectives on Childcare:** Encouraged providers to rethink childcare spaces, fostering greater equity for children.



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Staff Testimonials – YMCA of Three Rivers

"This is not a 'check a box, fill a space' type thing, this was rolling out our values. Taking the time to meet families, having deeper conversations and listening, truly has been making a difference for families".

- Centre Supervisor

"Some impacts go beyond metrics—these families would not have accessed care without this program. It has transformed the lives of countless families and children. The gratitude we feel and the meaningful difference we are making cannot be quantified".

– Centre Supervisor



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Impact from a Parent's Lens (YMCA)

"I feel a sense of peace that I didn't think I would feel so soon. My son will have many adults and children to play with in our brand new country. We are not alone".

– Single mother new to Canada

"I just wanted to say thank you again so much, he is absolutely thriving and it has been just really wonderful to see him doing so well. I just feel so blessed that I met you"

- Parent to an ELCC Navigator

"I feel relieved that my son will be welcomed and will have more opportunity to be himself and to develop at his own pace".

– Parent



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Operator Reflections on Challenges – YMCA of Three Rivers

- **Increasing Waitlists:** Significant growth in demand has led to much longer waitlists.
- **Pressure to Maintain Capacity:** Providers face challenges in filling spaces quickly and consistently keeping them full.
- **Changing Mindsets on Filling Spaces:** Providers are rethinking traditional approaches to filling spaces to better meet family needs and program goals.
- **Location-Specific Barriers:** Issues such as transportation, identifying qualifying families, and varying demographics create additional obstacles.
- **Higher Needs Among Vulnerable Families:** Supporting vulnerable families often



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Impact from a Parent's Lens (*Region-wide evaluations*)

"It has given me the opportunity to finally look for a job. We moved to Canada in 2023 from the Czech Republic, and we don't have any family or support in Kitchener, so we are so happy to be allowed to put her in daycare."

– Parent

"Being able to have daycare has helped me and my daughter so much, for myself I can do what I need to while she gets to play and learn at daycare, her speech has come a long way and she is even more confident"

- Parent

"We were finding it difficult to manage our work and family life with the current wages we get. We were unable to afford the school fee. The subsidy pilot came as a boon."

- Parent



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Improving fair access to child care



Additional Successes and Challenges

Successes:

- Positive Feedback from Families
- Prioritizing families in need
- Staff Support and commitment
- Overall commitment to Equity
- Funding to hold spot

Challenges:

- Low demand for subsidized spaces in affluent neighborhoods
- Transportation and accessibility
- Administrative and process challenges
- Communication gaps
- Staffing pressures



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Feedback and Evaluation

- Operators participating in the pilot are asked to provide feedback.
- The evaluations will shape the final strategy for the system-wide implementation.
- More information about the Subsidy Access Pilot is available for families on the ROW website: [Planning, Access and Inclusion - Region of Waterloo](#)



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What additional challenges do you anticipate you would see in your area?

No centralized wait list

Municipal staff not wanting to change their processes

No centralized wait list

Workforce.

Funding spaces when there is a delay in filling the spot
Getting for profit operators on board

Staff shortages

Operators' buy in

Operator buy-in

What additional challenges do you anticipate you would see in your area?

We don't have a centralized wait list

Resistance to change

Workforce

Lack of centralized waitlist

That operators would not be incentivized to take more than the minimum percentage of children with fee subsidy.

Funds to hold space

Resistance of operators who are committed to first come first serve

Don't have a centralized wait list

What additional challenges do you anticipate you would see in your area?

Resistance to change

Delaying placement time

Operators attempting to hold spaces to mitigate staffing challenges.

Capacity of operators

The buy in from the programs

Push back from Operators Anger from families who don't get a spot

Capacity among SSM staff No centralized wait list

Change management with staff

What additional challenges do you anticipate you would see in your area?

Potential pushback

Gaps in revenue

No centralized waitlist

How to fund holding the spot

Empty spaces, difficulty filling the fee subsidy spaces

no centralized waitlist getting operators on board funding

Activity requirement

Pressure from families who don't need a fee subsidy wanting a held space. Current process till restricts access.

What additional challenges do you anticipate you would see in your area?

Would have to change our subsidy application system. Currently only allow applications once the families had a site

Finding ways to pay for spaces that are vacant with. New cbff

Family demand

Capacity of child care teams

Vulnerablized families such as Black, Indigenous, disabled families left out and more surveilled

Workforce challenges

Pressure from from families who dont need subsidies Its a good first step Still restricts access 30% not enough

Managing a centralized waitlist.

What additional challenges do you anticipate you would see in your area?

Vacant spaces when full fee families are waiting.

Staff shortages

Workforce

Special needs/behavioural needs

Some centres could use more subsidy spaces and others would never use their allotment. No centralized waitlist Funding the space if sitting empty, will this be a problem for CWELCC reporting?

Operator- Managing OneHSN list

Commitment to first come first serve as "fair"

Making sure spaces being held get filled considering various income levels and accessibility across the City. Unsure if 1 target for spaces held for vulnerable families would work for everyone

What additional challenges do you anticipate you would see in your area?

Added pressure to operators

Resistance to change and perspective that subsidy families are being offered a space ahead of a non-fee subsidy client

Ensuring vulnerable, low income families know about the program and can access it

Judgement of who "deserves" the few spaces that are available

Community well being

Empowering families

Snese of belonging

Reduced barriers



Crisis Space Pilot



Region of Waterloo



Overview of the Crisis Spaces Pilot

- Collaboration between local Children's Aid, Special Needs Resourcing Organization, Child Care Operators and Children's Services
- Pilot beginning in September 2024 with 11 sites holding a total of 22 Spaces.
- Spaces are being held for families in crisis as determined and referred by local Children's Aid organization.
- A small transportation pilot will be running concurrently to support families that will not be able to access child care due to significant transportation barriers



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Operational Details of the Crisis Spaces Pilot

- Select operators were approached to participate and hold 1-3 spaces per site for children experiencing acute crisis.
- Referrals are made from local Children's Aid to an organization that coordinates the local special needs access point (SNAP Coordinators). These staff already support families in finding suitable placements.
- The SNAP Coordinators find a suitable placement for the child(ren) based on location and availability of spaces. They will also support the transition stages and work with Children's Aid to identify any other barriers or supports.
- Child Care subsidy prioritizes applications and strives to have appointments within 24 hours with a family



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Program Costs and Enrollment to Date

- \$3,000 grant provided to each operator participating in the pilot
 - Items allowed in general operating funding
- Children's Services paying to hold vacant spaces until children are placed
- As of November, 22 spaces have now been filled (plus 2 additional!)
 - 9 infants
 - 9 toddlers
 - 6 preschoolers
- On average, SNAP Coordinators spending 2.5 hours per family supporting enrollment, paperwork, etc



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Operator Reflections – YMCA of Three Rivers

- **Building Community Connections:** Facilitated connections between families and relevant resources, strengthening partnerships with local organizations such as Family and Children Services and Women’s Crisis Centers.



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Impact From a Parent's Lens

"I am so happy that this program was available to me. With my child in daycare, I could now take the time to heal from my trauma. I once had difficulties getting out of bed and starting my day. In the most recent weeks, I am feeling like my old self again, I found housing!! I can move out of the shelter and provide a home for my family. I have a job lined up once I am settled into my new home. I will be forever grateful for this opportunity was given to me."

"This program changed my and my child's life in such a positive way. I was feeling completely stuck and defeated until my at the time FACS worker educated me on SNAP. I didn't believe really that it would all come together so quickly because I knew the wait list for subsidized daycare was outrageous. But a week later, my daughter was put into an amazing preschool where she met lots of friends and the teachers were so caring and not only just to her. They've helped me in so many ways. We couldn't be more grateful. I was in a really difficult place in my life and with my child going into daycare allowed me to work on not only my mothering and parenting, but myself, was able to get out there. Look for a job maybe go back to school all the things that I didn't think were possible for me at the time."



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Community Impacts

- Parents regaining custody of their children
- Kinship placements have been sustained, with Caregivers being able to return to work
- Parents have been able to access mental health/addictions supports, regain employment, attend school and focus on wellbeing.
- Parents able to move out of shelters
- Child care centres and staff are incredibly supportive and positive



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Impacts on Children

- All 24 children attending regularly
- All placements/routines became settled within a few weeks
- Of 24 children, 2 children require enhanced staffing supports
- Children obtaining additional supports they need (OT, speech) but in many cases improving on their own with attendance in a child care setting
- No placement breakdowns to date
- Parents bringing children regularly. Using public transportation or vehicle, carpooling with community
- 3 children accessing transportation supports (taxi – pilot).



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Region of Waterloo Children's Services Access & Inclusion Plan



Region of Waterloo Children's Services Access and Inclusion Plan

Phase 1 overview:

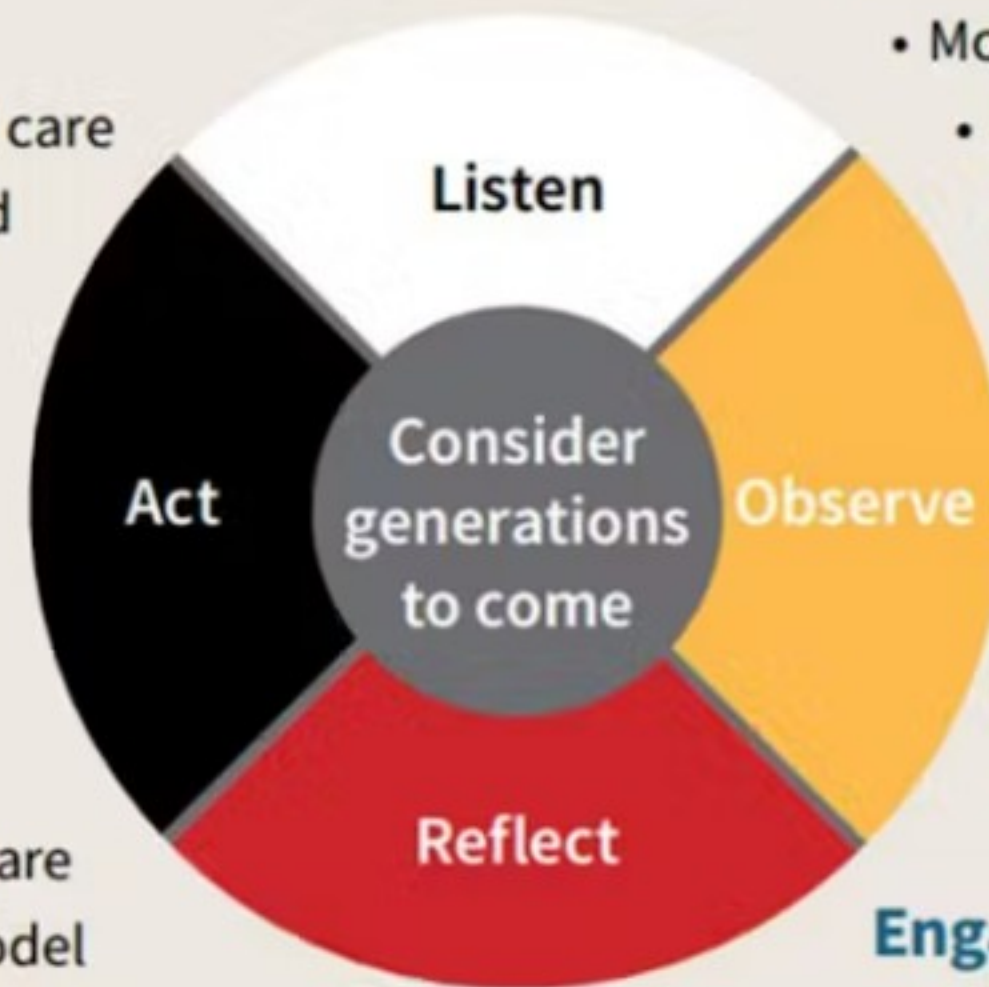
Children's Services is proud of the work that has already begun as first steps towards creating a more accessible and inclusive child care system. The following summarizes both actions already underway, as well as actions planned for 2024.

Create more child care spaces

- New growth strategy
- Language and Mentorship Program
- Indigenous child care and home child care
- More overnight, evening and weekend child care

Create more welcoming and inclusive environments for children

- Professional development for the whole sector
- Equity and Inclusion Policies for child care
- Evaluate the special needs service model
- More supports for children with special needs in home child care



Remove barriers to accessing services

- Subsidy Access Pilot
- More inclusive policies in child care subsidy
- Simplify payment processes
 - Region of Waterloo Home Child Care
- New system navigators positions
 - Translate the parent guide

Collect more useful data

- Collect race-based data for direct services
- Improve OneList

Engage more with under-served communities

- New engagement strategies



Learn more and provide input at regionofwaterloo.ca/childrens-access-inclusion-plan



What strengths do you see with these approaches?

So many benefits for children and families

Huge impacts

Collaboration

Actually allows resonsive access for those who need it most

Removing barriers

Inclusivity

Stability for families.

Direct attention and action

What strengths do you see with these approaches?

Access for those most impacted

Better serving vulnerable children

Improved equity

Collaboration

I think this is amazing. This is a game changer for improving outcomes for families and community.

Families that need care most are getting supports (access to care)

Inclusion for all

Improves equity to spaces

What strengths do you see with these approaches?

Intentional approach - doesn't leave access for vulnerable families to chance

The collaboration happening with agencies, providers, families, and municipality is inspiring

So many benefits!

Access We have to serve vulnerable a families

Inclusive

Improving vulnerable children and families lives.

Inclusion done well

Prioritizing equity

What strengths do you see with these approaches?

rapid, timely response

Courage to take the risks

Supports the most vulnerable population

Improved inclusion

Identifying needs

Access to supports for children who may not otherwise see them

Supporting vulnerable families and changing the way accessing child care is perceived

Increase equity and access

What strengths do you see with these approaches?

Programs meet caregivers where they're at rather than making vulnerable caregivers fit into a system that does not accommodate their needs

Great programs to increase access—amazing and inspiring work!!!! Will u still have the same buy in when you cannot fund the vacancies of subsidy as you were and do not have GOG for crisis??

Provides access and navigation supports to those who really need it. Levels the playing field a whole lot more.

Navigators to help support vulnerable families unfamiliar with the system

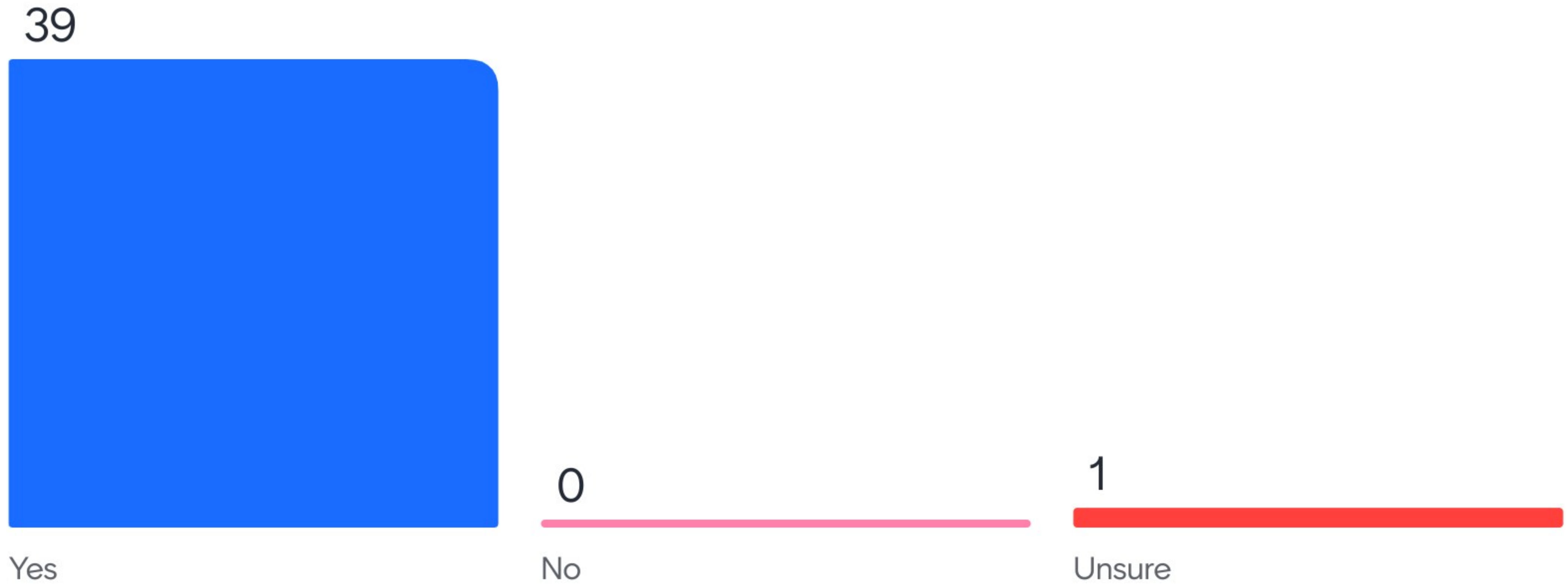
Changes the way community approaches childcare.

Compounding impacts for vulnerable children to equitable start in life

Equity focus and success

These approaches would finally change social services from reactive to preventative.

Would pilots like this have benefit in your area?





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