

Community Engagement on the Future of Childcare in Port Colborne

Council Meeting
April 8, 2025



PORT COLBORNE

Background

- **August 27, 2024:** Initial report to Council regarding expanding licensed childcare spaces
- **January 28, 2025:** Council directed public engagement on the future of childcare, specifically at former Visitors Centre
- **February 3, 2025:** Online and paper-based surveys launched
- **February 14, 2025:** Deadline for community input on future of childcare
- **April 8, 2025:** Update on community feedback received

Recommendations & Next Steps

- That Council direct staff to move forward with a **request for proposal** for a childcare facility at 76 Main Street using a two-stage design-build project model
 - Stage one to include the **design** of the facility
 - Stage two to include the **construction** of the facility (subject to funding)
- That Council approve \$250,000 from the **Opportunity Reserve Fund** for stage one of the project
- That Council direct staff to come back with a **recommended funding model** for stage two, that also reimburses the Opportunity Reserve Fund for stage one costs, upon updating the development charge background study.

Summary of Engagement Results to Date

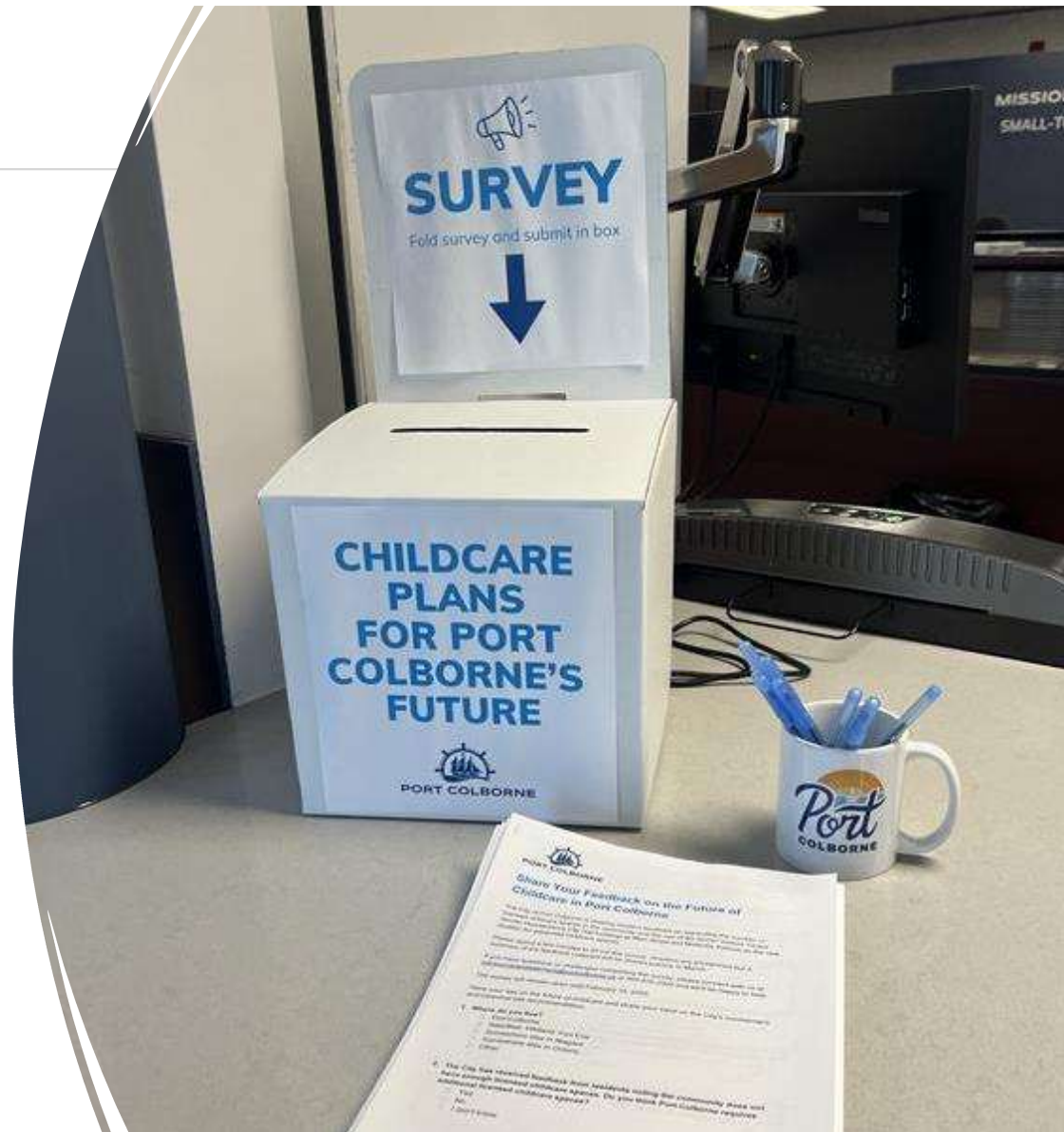
February 3 – February 14, 2025



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Survey Quick Stats

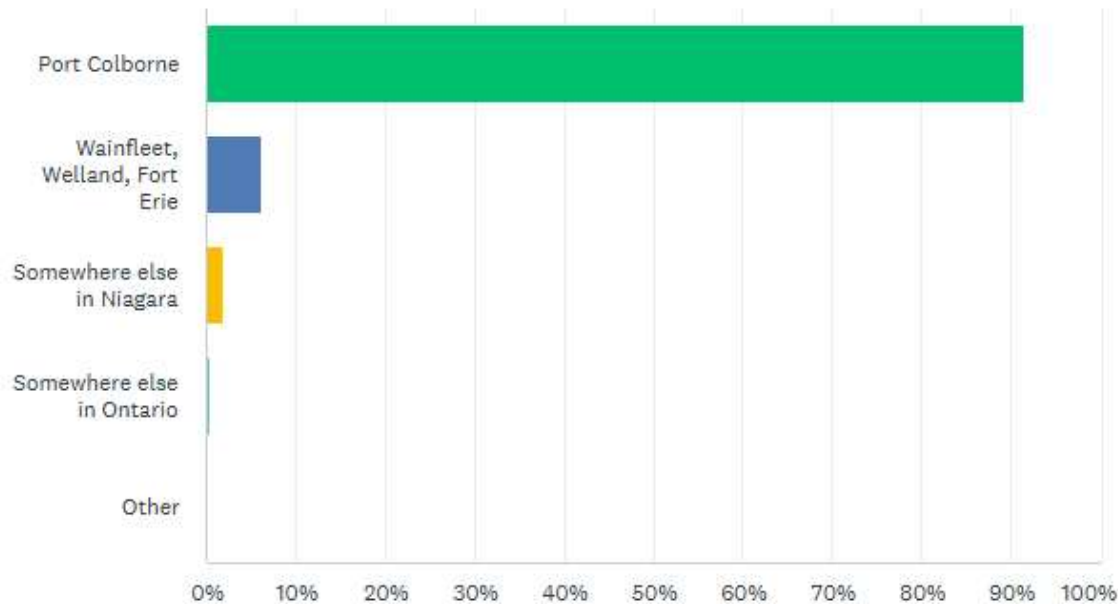
- Between February 3 – February 14
- **305** people completed the survey
 - **295** online surveys completed
 - **10** on paper surveys received
- **315** open-field comments
- Average time to complete:
3 minutes (online survey)
- Estimated completion rate:
91% (online survey)



Who We Heard From

Where do you live?

Answered: 304 Skipped: 1



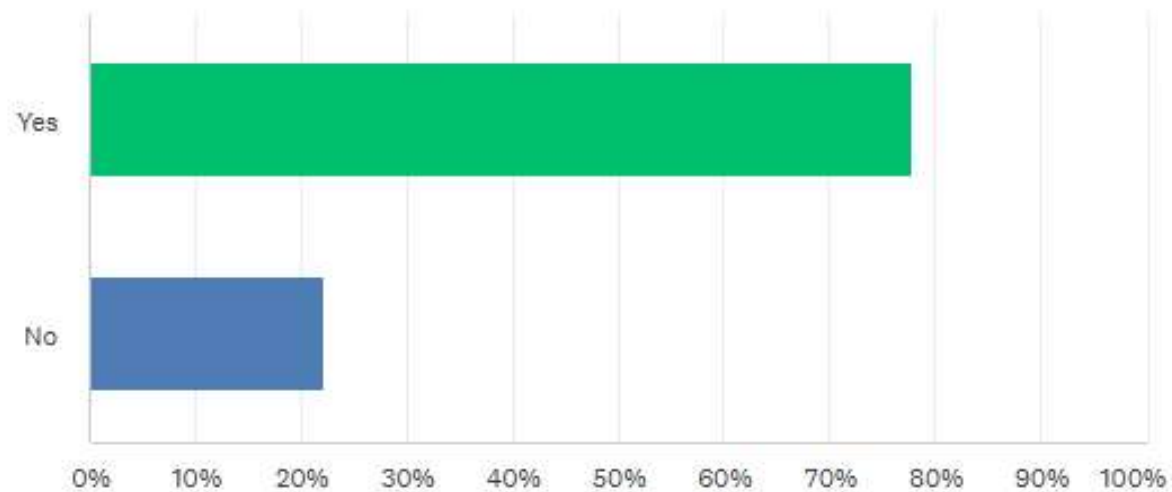
91% of respondents were from Port Colborne.

98% of respondents were from Port Colborne, Wainfleet, Welland or Fort Erie.

Who We Heard From

Do you have any children?

Answered: 302 Skipped: 3



78% of survey respondents reported they have children.



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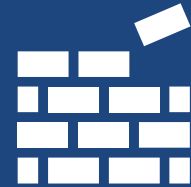
What We Heard: Themes & Notable Comments



**Growing licensed
childcare spaces in
Port Colborne**



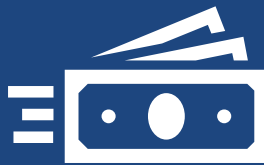
**Demand for
childcare within the
community**



**Proposed location of
76 Main Street (former
Visitors Centre)**



**Heritage aspects of 76
Main Street (former
Visitors Centre)**



**Comments about
funding for
childcare**



**Other notable
comments**

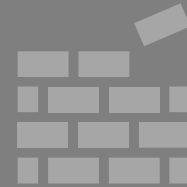
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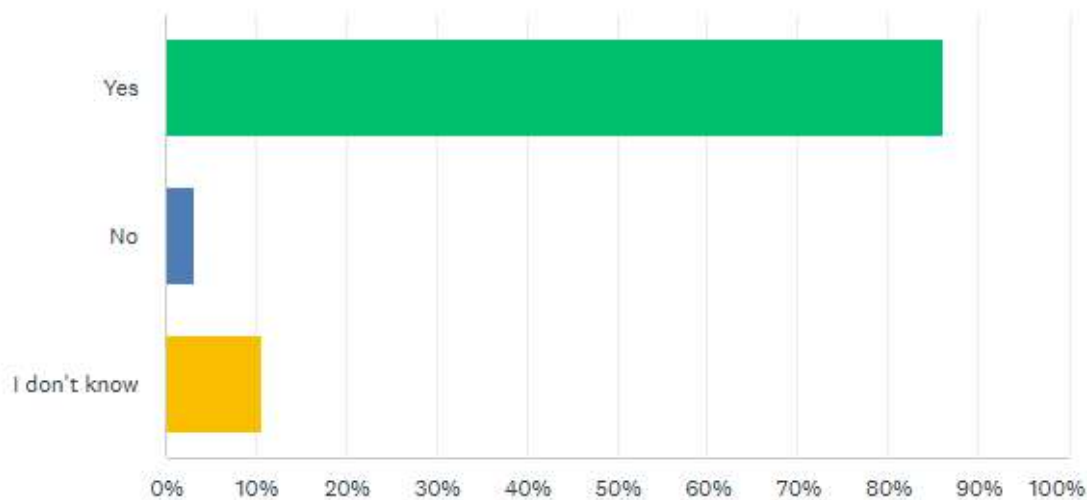


**Other notable
comments**

Growing licensed childcare spaces in Port Colborne

The City has received feedback from residents noting the community does not have enough licensed childcare spaces. Do you think Port Colborne requires additional licensed childcare spaces?

Answered: 303 Skipped: 2

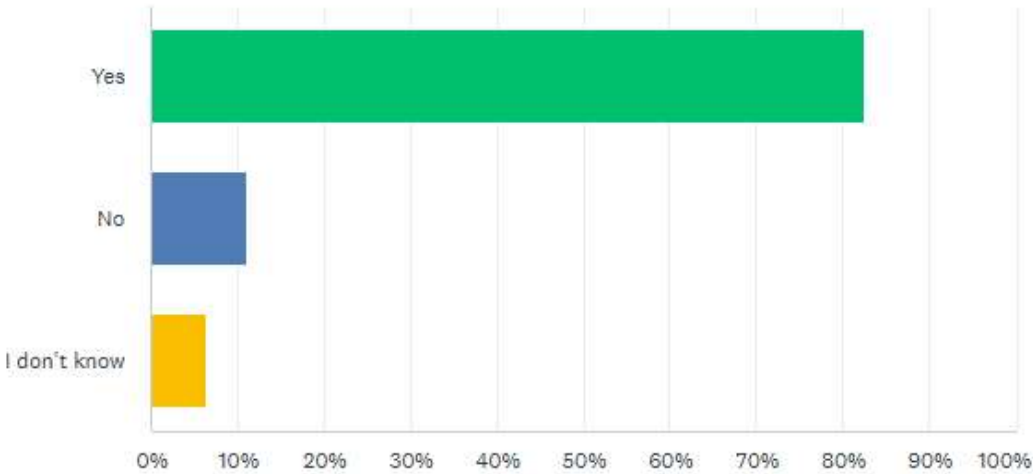


86% of respondents believe Port Colborne requires additional licensed childcare spaces.

Growing licensed childcare spaces in Port Colborne

Do you think the City of Port Colborne should be involved in creating facilities or providing space that could be leased to licensed childcare providers?

Answered: 279 Skipped: 26



82% of respondents agree that the City should be involved in the creation of licensed childcare facilities.

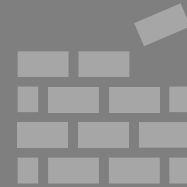
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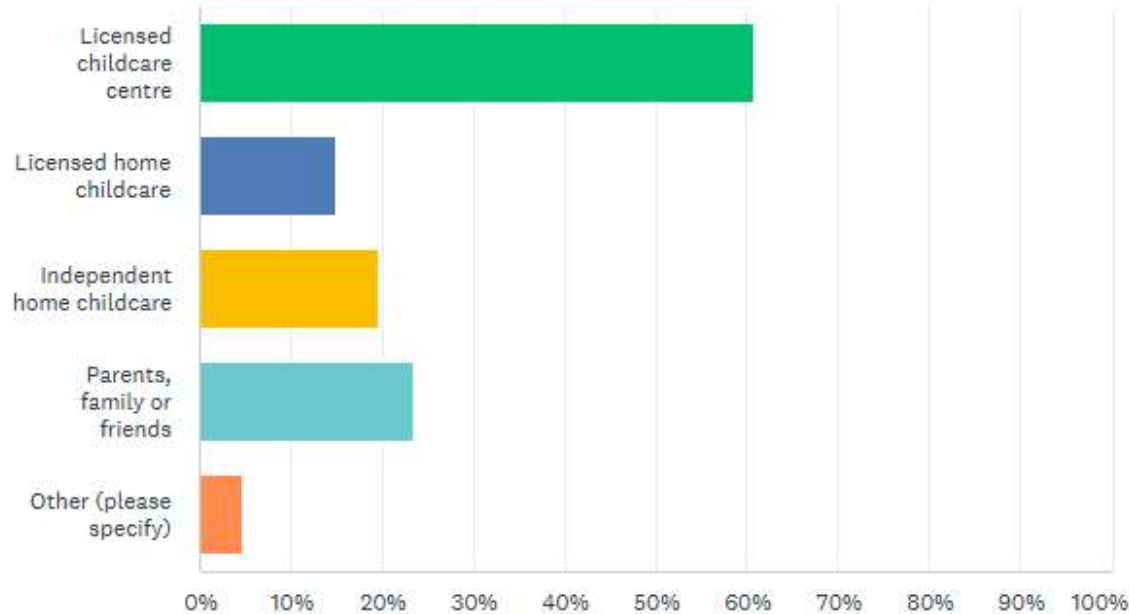


Other notable
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Demand for childcare within the community

What type of childcare is it (currently/most recently)?

Answered: 107 Skipped: 198

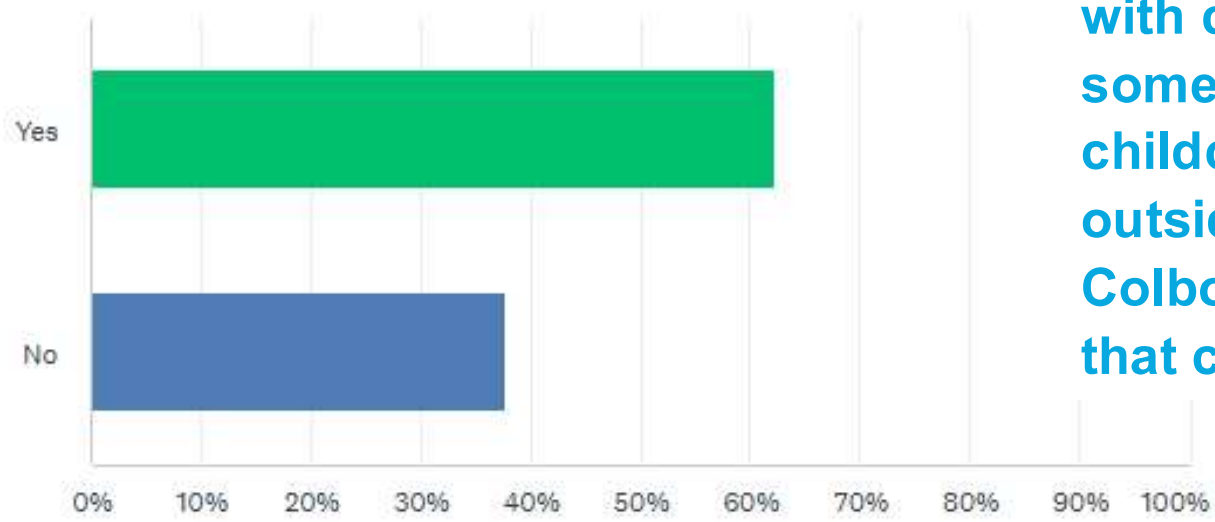


Of those respondents who have children who go to childcare, 61% are using a licensed childcare centre.

Demand for childcare within the community

Is the childcare in Port Colborne?

Answered: 106 Skipped: 199



62% of respondents with children in some sort of childcare go outside of Port Colborne for that care.

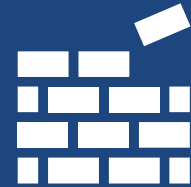
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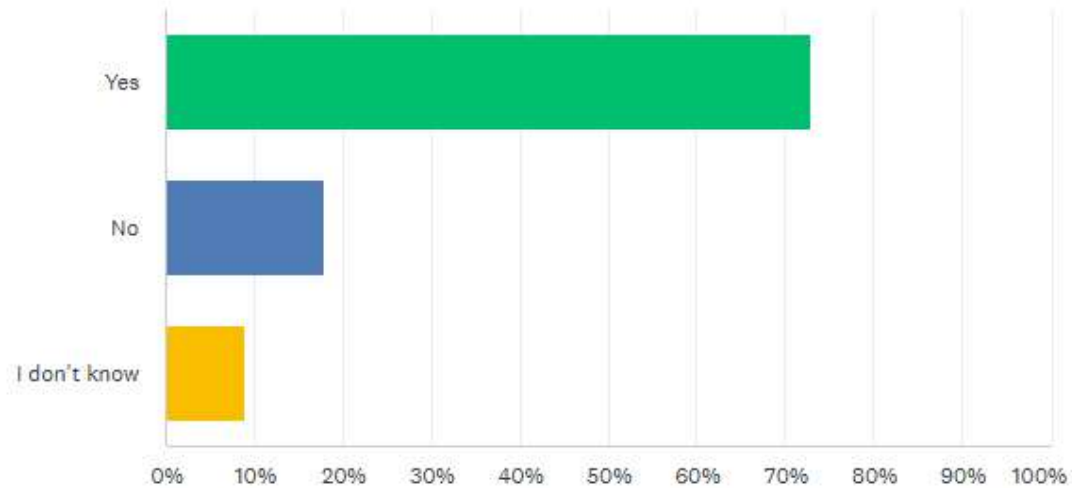


Other notable
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Proposed location of 76 Main Street (former Visitors Centre)

The City is currently investigating the option of repurposing the empty former Visitors Centre (Main St and Mellanby Ave) to house a licensed childcare facility. Do you think this is a good idea?

Answered: 278 Skipped: 27



73% of respondents think it is a good idea to use the former Visitors Centre as a location for a licensed childcare centre.

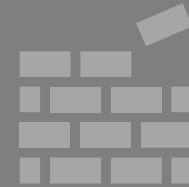
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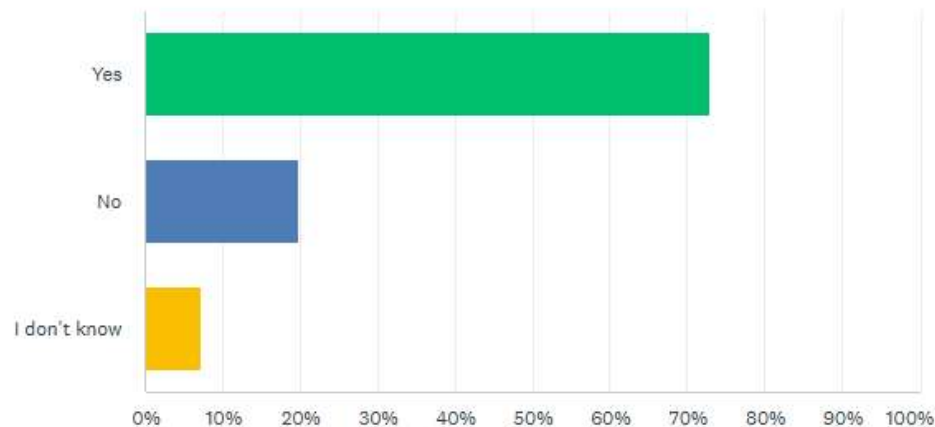


Other notable
comments

Heritage aspects of 76 Main Street (former Visitors Centre)

The former Visitors Centre is a designated heritage building. If the project is approved, the City would keep the existing historic elements of the building, but add an extension to the back of the facility. The extension would be designed to tie into and compliment the historical elements of the existing building. A designated heritage planner would be part of the project. Would you support using the Visitors Centre for expanded childcare in Port Colborne?

Answered: 278 Skipped: 27



73% of respondents support renovating the former Visitors Centre to allow for licensed childcare spaces.

Proposed location of 76 Main Street (former Visitors Centre)

OPEN ENDED QUESTION: Do you have any concerns about the historical nature of the Visitor Centre and the required renovations?

- **Preservation Concerns:** Many commenters emphasized the importance of preserving the building's historical character.
- **Alternative Uses Suggested:** Some prefer the site be used for historically aligned purposes (e.g., reopening the Visitors Centre or creating a museum).
- **Support for Childcare Use:** Many support converting the building into a childcare centre, noting the need for more local spaces.
- **Conditional Support:** Some only support the childcare option if historical features are preserved.
- **Cost & Tax Concerns:** Commenters voiced worries about renovation costs and the potential burden on taxpayers.

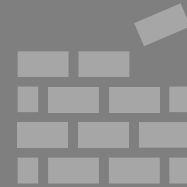
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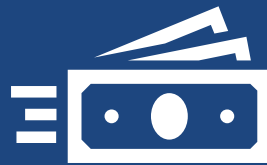
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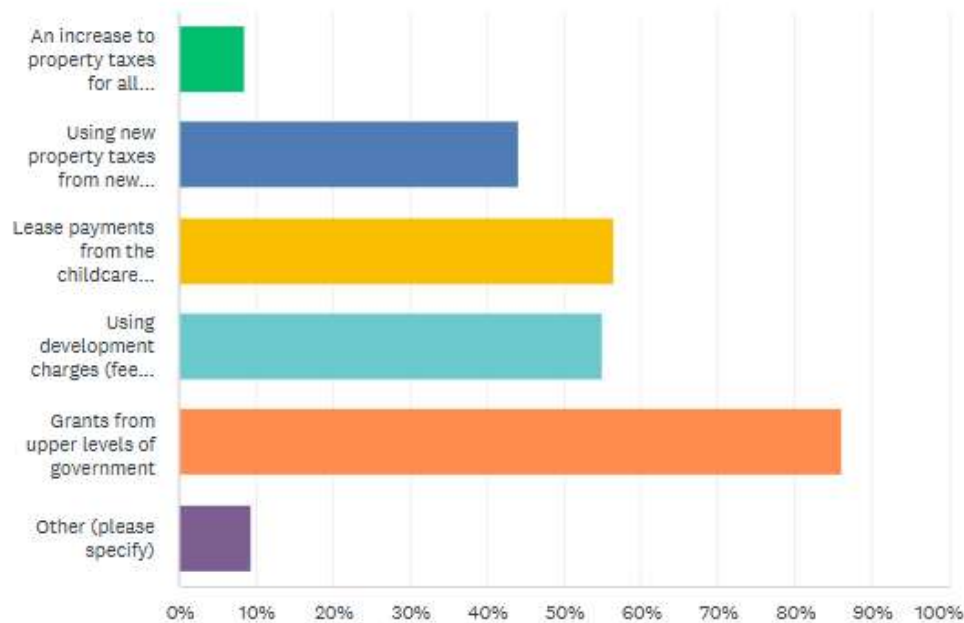


Other notable
comments

Comments about funding for childcare

A capital funding model for the facility is in development. Would you support any of the following funding sources? (choose all that apply):

Answered: 269 Skipped: 36

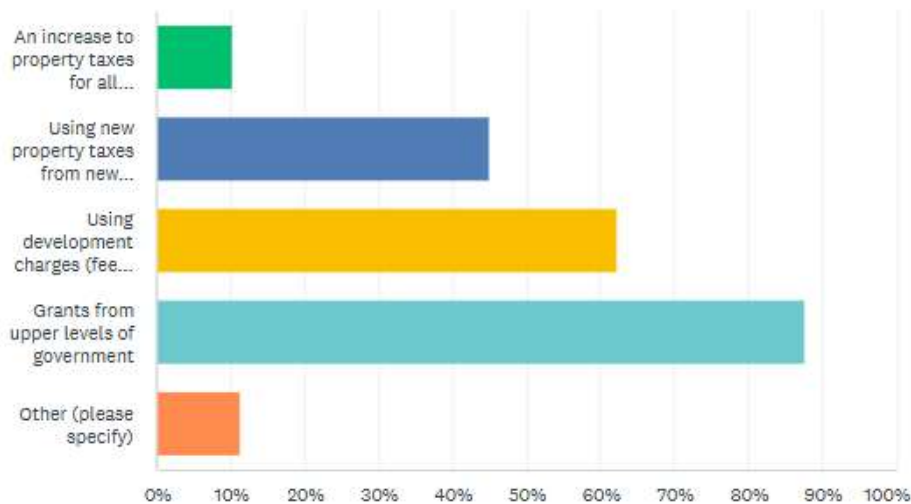


86% of respondents would like to see grants from upper levels of government used to fund the licensed childcare facility.

Comments about funding for childcare

A licensed childcare operator would pay a lease payment to occupy and operate out of the facility. If the lease payment does not cover all the capital costs needed to renovate and expand the facility, would you support the City contributing to the project through any of the following funding sources (choose all that apply):

Answered: 265 Skipped: 40



88% of respondents would like additional required funds for the development of the facility to come from grants from upper levels of government.

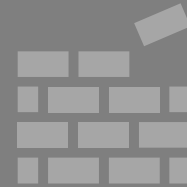
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Other notable comments

Urgent need for space:

- Long wait lists
- Difficulty finding spots

Location and facilities:

- Locations should consider traffic congestion and safety
- Several other suggested locations were put forward (schools, VHWC, other vacant spaces)

Funding

- Many respondents noted costs for childcare should not be passed onto residents

Flexibility and extended hours

- Common theme was need for childcare services that accommodate non-traditional hours (shifts, etc.)

Home Childcare Options

- Some respondents suggest home childcare could help fill the gap

Community Impact

- Families could choose to leave or not move to Port Colborne if we don't have adequate childcare

Recap: Key Findings & Takeaways

High Demand:

- 86% of survey respondents say **Port Colborne needs more licensed childcare spaces**

Commuting for Care:

- 62% of parents with children in care **travel outside the city** for services

Municipal Role:

- 82% believe the **City should be involved** in creating licensed childcare facilities

Proposed Location – Former Visitors Centre (Main & Mellanby):

- 73% support using this site for licensed childcare
- 73% also support renovating the space for this purpose

Funding Preferences:

- Only 8.5% support raising property taxes
- 86% prefer funding through provincial/federal grants

Recommendations & Next Steps

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Questions?



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