



To: SCOR EDC Board of Directors
From: Kimberly Earls, Executive Director, SCOR EDC
Date: September 25, 2025
Subject: Operations Report # 2025-09

The staff report is submitted to SCOR EDC Board of Directors to report on initiatives and issues supporting our regional strategic priorities which are:

1. Infrastructure supporting economic development
2. Human capital supporting economic development
3. Sector development (agriculture, food, manufacturing)

It is Recommended that the Board of Directors, Receive this report for information.

1. Infrastructure

1.1 Rural Transit

- SCOR EDC's rural transit strategy and the SCT model, is moving forward. The province may require further information or supporting documents for the application.

The SCOR EDC model aligns with provincial priorities, supports rural transit model for SCT as a scalable and regionally responsive solution. It is a data-driven approach based on Dillon Consulting Needs Analysis Report and increasing and on-going ridership reports from each system that underpins its phased, node-based expansion strategy. This overview is intended to inform the Board's discussion and provide an evidence information for decision for next steps for municipal partners.

- Executive Director invited to speak on Province wide transit panel at Toronto Metropolitan University Ted Rogers School of Management on Transit funding. The event attracted about 125 in person attendees with various Ministry representatives in attendance. There were also approximately 50 on-line attendees.
- WOWC Executive Director mentioned at recent WOWC Economic Development Committee that she is working towards supporting transit likely to be completed in the first quarter of 2026.

1.2 Short line Rail Expansion – NTCF Application Update

- SCOR EDC is waiting for confirmation from federal staff on the status of the updated information sent supporting the initial NTCF application.

2. Human capital

2.1 Workforce Planning and Development Board of Grand Erie and The Business Resource Toolkit

- The Business Resource Toolkit is a digital tool that you can access at <https://workforceplanningboard.org/business-resource-toolkit/>.

The toolkit helps build resilience and sustainability into the local economy by connecting businesses with other local resources for businesses. Supporting Canadian-owned businesses not only keeps money circulating locally but also strengthens community ties and reduces reliance on international services that may be costlier or vulnerable to external pressures. The project is funded in part by OMAFRA's (formerly known as the) Rural Economic Development (RED) program and the Government of Ontario.

This project is in partnership with the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie (WPBGE), Elgin, Middlesex, Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board (EMO WPDB) and South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation (SCOR EDC).

The design and implementation were supported by students from Wilfrid Laurier University Brantford's User Experience Design and Business Technology Management programs, Conestoga College's Human Resource Management program, and the Marketing Management program at the University of Guelph.

2.2 Post-Secondary Institutions and Regional Workforce Impact

- Within the SCOR EDC region, four counties are served by Fanshawe College campuses, while Brant County is home to Conestoga College and Wilfrid Laurier University. Western University in London and Six Nations Polytechnic also contribute significantly to the educational and workforce development landscape.
- In our meeting with Minister Quinn at AMO he indicated that the ministry was undertaking a review of funding of colleges and universities. SCOR EDC Chair has reached out to Peter Devlin, President of Fanshawe College and he and the Executive Director will be meeting with the President and Dean of Simcoe Campus or Woodstock Campus at an upcoming meeting.

2.3 Community Immigrant Retention in Rural Ontario program (CIRRO)

- CIRRO is a program offered by the Ministry of Rural Affairs. Although the name indicates retention in rural areas for newcomers it is really more of an integration platform. The Executive Director has reached out to college campuses in the region and other community stakeholders to see if there is interest in partnering on how to better integrate and plan for newcomers to our region. We are in early stages of this planning but the response from colleges, and other stakeholders has been positive.

3. Sector development

- The Executive Director attended the Canadas Outdoor Farm Show in Woodstock on September 11, 2025. The show was very well attended. Notably there were many businesses represented serving the agricultural sector along with primary agriculture representation. Rural Oxford had a large booth at the show, as did Titan Trailers, Cadmans, Dubois Irrigation and others. The Rural Oxford booth was excellent!
- Agricultural Sector – Workforce, Capacity, and Engagement
SCOR EDC staff participated in several agricultural-focused tours this month, visiting a range of farm operations across the region. These site visits provided valuable insights into the current state of the sector and the challenges producers are facing.

A consistent theme across all visits was the ongoing shortage of agricultural labour. Producers continue to report difficulties in recruiting and retaining workers, which is impacting

productivity and long-term planning. This challenge is particularly acute for operations requiring specialized or seasonal labour and reflects broader workforce pressures across rural industries.

In addition to workforce concerns, there is a growing emphasis on building local agricultural capacity. Producers are exploring ways to strengthen regional supply chains, improve access to processing and logistics infrastructure, and enhance the sustainability and competitiveness of their operations.

SCOR EDC continues to participate in the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) and OMAFRA-led Communities of Practice, which provide a forum for sharing intelligence, identifying policy gaps, and advancing collaborative solutions. These engagements ensure that SCOR EDC remains aligned with sector-wide priorities and can advocate effectively for the needs of agricultural stakeholders in the region.

4. Internal Operations

- 4.1 SCOR EDC continues to strengthen internal systems and prepare for upcoming strategic engagements. Staff are currently updating the organization's records management system to improve efficiency, ensure compliance, and support better access to historical and operational data.
- 4.2 In collaboration with the Treasurer and external auditor, work has also begun on the development of the 2026 budget. This process includes a review of current financial performance, anticipated funding streams, and alignment with strategic priorities. The goal is to ensure a fiscally responsible and forward-looking budget that supports SCOR EDC's operational and advocacy goals.
- 4.3 SCOR EDC Chair and Vice Chair with support of the Executive Director have completed delegations to all but one local municipality in Oxford County. All delegations seemed well-received. East Zorra Tavistock is the remaining delegation in Oxford.
- 4.4 Additionally, SCOR EDC is preparing materials and background support for partner delegations at the County level. These efforts are intended to ensure consistency in regional advocacy and to support partners in presenting a unified voice on shared priorities.

5. Other information

- Expansion of Natural Gas Program continues. ERO 025-0923 was submitted. This has been an issue that SCOR EDC has supported since 2014. In 2018 SCOR EDC was asked to present to Standing Committee on General Government. In 2024 SCOR EDC presented to the Standing Committee of the Interior. Additionally the corporation has provided several letters of support and submissions on this topic of energy infrastructure.
- Rural Oxford Strategic Planning Meeting – Leaping Deer
- Salute to Brant Business – Business Awards
Will be held on September 25, 2025 in Cainsville at the TF Warren Group Cainsville Community Centre. This is a long standing event in County of Brant in which SCOR EDC always participates and attends
- Elgin - St. Thomas Workforce Development Committee Meeting
Regional Workforce Representatives focusing on workforce and training issues

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