

Ontario Launches Regional Program to Help Create Jobs *First Step Announced in Government's Transformation of Business Supports*

NEWS

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Woodstock — The Ontario government is launching the first part of its commitment to transform business supports to deliver value for money for taxpayers and create sustainable opportunities for businesses and communities in eastern and southwestern Ontario.

Today, Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, introduced the Regional Development Program, which will invest more than \$100 million over four years while taking a new approach to supporting business growth in eastern and southwestern Ontario communities.

Under the program, businesses can get financial support through the Eastern Ontario Development Fund (EODF) and the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund (SWODF) and access to a range of complementary services and supports. As well, there is a clear 60-business day service commitment for when an applicant is notified of a funding decision, and on eligibility to receive additional complementary supports and services, so that applicants can plan their investments and know when to expect a decision.

“Our government made a clear commitment to review business supports with a view towards balancing economic growth and jobs with delivering value for money for taxpayers,” said Minister Fedeli. “The government listened to stakeholders and regional leaders about what is important to them to support regional priorities and challenges. As a result, we are introducing the Regional Development Program for eastern and southwestern Ontario to help companies and regions invest, grow and attract talent. This is a balanced, sustainable and reasonable approach to supporting businesses and job creators.”

“This investment is another example of our government’s continued commitment to supporting regional and rural communities in Ontario,” said Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. “I know businesses here in Woodstock and in other parts of southwestern and eastern Ontario are going to benefit from this important program which will see growth, job creation and economic opportunity for years to come.”

The [Regional Development Program](#) is part of the government’s [business supports transformation initiative](#), one of five key recently announced priority [Smart Initiatives](#). These are large-scale, multi-phased projects to build smarter government and transform how the public sector delivers services and achieve better outcomes for businesses and citizens.

The new program retains many of the successful elements of the existing EODF and SWODF and includes some critical changes to support job creators. They include:

- Introducing a coordinated government-wide approach offering complementary services to support business growth.
- Making it easier for small- and medium-sized businesses to qualify by reducing the job creation threshold from 10 to five.

- Shifting to performance-based loans as a smarter way to support businesses and ensure fiscal sustainability, while continuing grants for small businesses in rural communities to help them grow and expand.
- Expanding financial support to eligible municipalities, industry groups and not-for-profits for projects that could lead to long-term regional sustainability and advance local priorities.
- Introducing a new project assessment process that takes into account regional impact and directs funding to communities that will benefit the most.
- Simplifying applications through system improvements which will save time and resources.

The complementary services and supports will provide businesses with coordinated access to a range of government programs and tools that can best meet their needs to succeed. These include advisory services, assistance with compliance and approvals, accessing skills and training supports, and information on tax credits.

The Regional Development Program is part of Ontario's plan to build smarter government and protect our core programs and services. Our goal is to ensure sustainability, now and for future generations.

QUICK FACTS

- In the 2019 Budget, the government introduced the [Open for Jobs Blueprint](#) to help transform Ontario's business support programs.
- Business supports transformation put into action recommendations of the [EY Canada Line-by-Line Review](#) and the [Planning for Prosperity consultations](#).
- There are over 470,000 small businesses (with 1-99 employees) in Ontario, accounting for almost 98 per cent of all businesses in the province.
- According to Stokes Economics, eastern and southwestern Ontario accounted for over \$184 billion or more than 23 per cent of Ontario's economy in 2018.
- Since June 2018, employment in Ontario has risen by 272,400.

LEARN MORE

- [Ontario.ca/regionaldevelopment](https://ontario.ca/regionaldevelopment)
- [Ontario.ca/Smart](https://ontario.ca/Smart)
- [Open for Business](#)

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