

# Staff Report

Presented By: Amanda Monaghan, Community Development Officer  
Meeting Date: September 22, 2025  
Subject: Saugeen Sparks Training Centre Request for Administrative Workspace  
Attachment(s): None

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## **Recommendation**

That Council authorize the Director, Community Services to execute a one-year lease agreement with Saugeen Sparks Training Centre for administrative use of the Town-owned Business Centre at 559 Goderich Street.

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## **Report Summary**

Saugeen Sparks Training Centre (SSTC) is requesting three administrative workspaces within the Town-owned Business Centre for a one-year term. If approved, the lease would begin on April 1, 2026, and would be considered for renewal before March 31, 2027.

## **Background/Analysis**

Established in 2023, the Saugeen Sparks Training Centre is a transformative force in skilled trades education, committed to advancing accessibility, inclusion, and workforce development across Bruce, Grey, and Huron Counties. Sparks provides hands-on training and mentorship for both youth and adults, creating pathways to employment and further education, while simultaneously addressing regional labour shortages.

SSTC is particularly focused on increasing representation in the trades by supporting women, Indigenous peoples, and newcomers to Canada—groups that are often underrepresented yet play an essential role in shaping local communities.

Current Staffing:

- 1.5 full-time staff
- 2 part-time staff (contract)

## **Economic Impact**

### Promoting Diversity in Skilled Trades:

- 32% of participants are women, contributing to greater gender equity in the trades.
- Strong Indigenous participation, enabled through partnerships with local First Nations and the Huronia Area Aboriginal Management Board.
- Meaningful engagement with newcomers to Canada, supporting their integration into the regional workforce.

### Workforce Development and Employment Outcomes:

- Over 40 graduates have secured employment with municipal and regional employers as well as provincial labour unions.
- Programs align with Bruce County's workforce retention strategy, helping reduce dependence on out-of-region labour.
- Training is provided at no cost, which addresses one of the more significant barriers to participation in rural communities.

### Supporting Regional Growth:

- SSTC plays a crucial role in training local talent for major infrastructure projects and the energy sector.
- Helps meet workforce needs in local municipalities.
- Contributes to addressing the skilled trades shortage by producing certified professionals.

### Long-Term Economic and Social Contributions:

- Supports local workforce retention and economic resilience by reducing the need to hire externally.
- Strengthens apprenticeship pathways, contributing to sustained regional economic growth.
- Builds community well-being by enhancing access to stable employment, supporting mental health and financial security.

## **Long-Term Sustainability**

SSTC is actively engaging with several prospective partners to secure long-term support for its operations and strategic growth initiatives. These partnerships are intended to strengthen the organization's capacity to deliver ongoing programming while enabling future expansion.

Key partners under consideration include the Government of Ontario, as well as private sector organizations within Bruce County and across the province. In addition, SSTC is pursuing funding through various provincial programs focused on skills development.

## **Municipal Support**

SSTC is grateful for the Town's continued support, including covering an initial one-year lease of \$50,000 at 663 Green Street, in Port Elgin. Additionally, a one-time contribution of \$30,000 to cover the one-year lease for Sparks and Pumpkinfest at the Powerlink building, ensuring operations through March 31, 2026.

## **Request Summary**

SSTC is a not-for-profit organization that depends on grant funding, donations, and sponsorships to support their operational budgets and programming. By providing administrative workspace to the organization, the Town can help alleviate the financial burden associated with leasing commercial office space and reduce the need for funding requests related to these costs.

The current lease at the Powerlink building expires on March 31, 2026. Beginning April 1, 2026, SSTC is requesting access to three (3) administrative workspaces within the Town's Business Centre located at 559 Goderich Street, Port Elgin. The request is for a one-year term, with a review at the end of that period.

The Planning and Development team will be moving to the new workspaces available at the AWC in early 2026. This will leave most of the workspace at the Business Centre available.

SSTC training programs would continue to be offered at partner locations such as Saugeen Shores District Secondary School, and Nuclear Innovation Institute. SSTC materials and supplies would be stored at the special events centre operated by Pumpkinfest.

SSTC will work with Town staff to develop a formal lease agreement between the Town and SSTC. An option for renewal will be built into the lease agreement. If SSTC secures independent office space, or the building is deemed for another use by Council, the Agreement would be terminated.

## **Summary of Workspace Needs**

- Secure building access to the Business Centre during business hours and after-hours.
- Meeting room access for board meetings or larger collaborative in-person meetings.
  - Meeting frequency of monthly board meetings and ad hoc meetings; meeting attendance varies anywhere from two to upwards of 20 people.
- Workspace for computer/desk/administrative work.
- Space locked file cabinets.
- Two desks in a common work area.
- One desk in a private office.

## **Staff Analysis**

This section discusses implementation of the above recommendation in terms on Strategic Plan and Business Plan overall alignment, and financial and operational implications.

### Strategic Plan

The recommendation aligns with the Strategic Plan, specifically Strategic Pillar 4: *Fostering a Vibrant Place to Live and Visit*. This pillar includes a directive to collaborate with community organizations to promote Saugeen Shores as a desirable place to live, work, raise a family, and volunteer. By supporting SSTC in their mission to deliver training and skills development to local and underrepresented groups across Saugeen Shores and Bruce and Grey Counties, we are contributing to workforce development and enhancing future employment opportunities in the region.

### Business Plan

The recommendation is an outcome of the Planning and Development Division Highlights for 2025, with a goal to facilitate a business plan discussions with SSTC.

### Financial Implication

Town Council will not have to entertain future funding requests for leases from SSTC while noting that the intent of the request is to provide the Town space at no cost.

### **Linkages**

- Strategic Plan Alignment: Pillar 4: Fostering a Vibrant Place to Live and Visit
- Business Plan Alignment: Development Services Division Highlight

### **Financial Impacts/Source of Funding**

No costs or revenue is associated with this report.

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Reviewed By: Mark Paoli, Director, Development Services

Approved By: Kara Van Myall, Chief Administrative Officer