

The Region of Portage la
Prairie, Manitoba



Regional Economic Development Strategy

2024 - 2034

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Executive Summary

What is the purpose of the Economic Development Strategy?

The ten-year strategy has been developed to increase opportunities, support existing businesses, attract new residents and investment and enhance the quality of life for residents of Portage la Prairie and Region. The project researched the community's current economic situation, reviewed existing plans and strategies, and engaged the community online and in person. Then – based on the community's strengths and challenges – four Focus Areas were identified for the community to focus on over the coming years.

What are the Strategy's Focus Areas?

There are four overarching Focus Areas are:

1. **Collaborative Prosperity:** A Regional Economic Development Framework
2. **Elevating Portage la Prairie:** Economic Growth through Business Engagement, Investment Attraction and Workforce Development
3. **Reimagining Portage:** Transforming Downtown, Discovering Assets and Enhancing Community Impressions
4. **Empowering Progress:** Enhancing and Promoting Quality of Life in Portage la Prairie

Initial Strategies

Fifty-one strategies support the Focus Areas. While 51 may initially appear daunting, it's crucial to remember that this is a ten-year strategy, equating to an average of five strategies to be implemented yearly. This approach ensures a manageable and attainable goal for the region, allowing for focused efforts and steady progress toward success.

Of the 51 strategies, 13 are identified as a priority. Some of the 13 strategies are already in progress and only require nurturing or ongoing attention to ensure their continued success. These strategies are included as a priority as they support future identified strategies. This targeted approach ensures immediate attention to key initiatives, laying a solid foundation for the strategy's long-term success.

The priority items are:

1. Collaborative Prosperity: Expand Portage Regional Economic Development Structure and Capacity
2. Collaborative Prosperity: Development of Regional Networks and Partnerships
3. Collaborative Prosperity: Strong Partnership with Economic Development Stakeholders and Agencies
4. BusinessConnect: Fostering Growth – A Regional Initiative for Business Engagement and Expansion
5. Business Registration Process
6. BusinessConnect: BusinessWalks – A Quick Look at the Regional Economy
7. Inclusive Communities: Complete an Immigration Readiness Assessment
8. BusinessConnect: Portage Industrial Stakeholders Committee

9. PortageInvest: Developers Day – Highlighting Portage Development Opportunities
10. Downtown Revitalization: Downtown Core Identification – A Revitalization Kickstart
11. PortageInvest: Reimagining Portage la Prairie Mall – A Design Charrette
12. Inclusive Communities: Portage is Welcoming to All – Foster and Strengthen Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives
13. PortageLive: Enhancing Community Living Through Housing Initiatives

What happens next?

An implementation matrix has been developed as part of the Economic Development Strategic Plan, providing the specific action steps required to implement the first-year strategies. The matrix is provided as a separate working document. It provides the roadmap necessary to ensure the Economic Development Strategy stays on track, is accountable and is monitored to ensure objectives are being met or adjusted depending on existing or evolving conditions at the local level and beyond. The matrix provides the action steps and identifies potential partners, budget requirements and timelines.



Roquette Canada Ltd., Portage la Prairie

Introduction

Disclaimer: We use "community" or "region" extensively throughout this document. The word community or region should not be considered to mean municipal boundaries, but instead the entire area, including the City, Rural Municipality and Indigenous communities that are part of the overall economy.

Welcome to the Region of Portage la Prairie Economic Development Strategy, a blueprint created to uncover and leverage the potential within the region. In the following pages, we outline a comprehensive approach and vision to create an environment where businesses thrive, individuals prosper, and innovation and creativity flourish.

A Community of Possibilities

Portage la Prairie is a community with diverse talents, cultures, and aspirations. Within this diversity lies a wealth of potential and possibilities waiting to be tapped. This Strategy recognizes the community as a place for residents to enjoy a high quality of life and for businesses, entrepreneurs and investment to flourish, creating long-term economic sustainability and prosperity.

Balancing Strengths and Challenges:

Acknowledging the community's strengths is pivotal, yet equally important is addressing the challenges. Economic disparities, workforce availability and perceived negative perception of the area are key areas of concern. However, there are many strengths, including a community willingness to work together to address the challenges, strong investment and land availability, geographic location, building new partnerships and recreational amenities and expanding on the entrepreneurial spirit.

Guided by Inclusivity:

Inclusivity serves as a guiding principle. Gender equality, cultural diversity, and accessibility ensure that every community member has a stake in economic progress. By prioritizing inclusivity, an economic landscape can be created where every community member can contribute and benefit, fostering a more balanced and harmonious society.

A Collaborative Endeavor:

This Strategy is not merely a document; it represents a collective effort. All community members, stakeholders, and partners are invited to engage actively in its implementation. Only by working together can a community transform its challenges into opportunities and its aspirations into achievements, ensuring a prosperous future for all.

Process Methodology

Portage Regional Economic Development Inc. (PRED) identified the development of an economic development strategy as a priority. The geographic areas for the Strategy include the City of Portage la Prairie, the Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie, the Dakota Tipi First Nation, the Dakota Plains First Nation and the Long Plain First Nation. Throughout this report, the study areas may be referred to collectively as the "community," the "region," or, in some cases, "Portage."

Creating a new Economic Development Strategy for the Region of Portage la Prairie began with an economic development service review. This review included:

- Economic development-related reports/studies, including the recently completed City of Portage la Prairie Strategic Direction
- A statistics and data analysis
- The region's competitiveness and advantages
- A comprehensive consultation program consisting of:
 - One-on-one interviews
 - Resident online survey
 - Business online survey
 - Meetings held throughout the area with business owners, elected officials, staff and economic development stakeholders and support agencies
 - Close liaison with the Economic Development Officer

Building on Past Reports and Plans

In developing the Strategy, existing reports and plans were reviewed, including but not limited to:

- **Portage la Prairie Strategic Direction:** Completed in Fall 2023, the document was developed to provide the municipal council and administration with a strategic direction over the next three years. Specific focuses include quality of life, safety, infrastructure and economic development.
- **Portage la Prairie Housing Strategy:** Completed in June 2023, the Strategy addressed six key housing questions, including barriers to accessing housing, housing market comparison, proportion of renters, affordable housing, projected changes, and innovative solutions.
- **Investment Readiness Assessment:** In February 2023, PRED undertook an assessment to determine their investment readiness. The assessment reviewed five key investment readiness components: capacity, marketing, development approvals, property inventory, and electronic readiness. PRED ranked Not Ready, and the report provided specific recommendations to improve readiness.
- **Site Selection Exercise Assessment:** A site selection assessment was also completed as an additional component to the Investment Readiness Assessment. The exercise created a mock site selection process, including an RFP and a community visit. The report provides specific recommendations based on outcomes.
- **Website Report Card:** A third investment readiness component included assessing the PRED website based on an investor's or site selectors' needs. The assessment provided specific recommendations, and PRED will announce its new investment website in Q1 2024.
- **A Feasibility Study of Public Transit in the City of Portage la Prairie:** In the spring of 2021, the community completed a transit feasibility study to identify possible methods of providing affordable public transit throughout the region. Recommendations and next steps were included in the report.
- **PRED Organizational Strategy 2020 – 2024:** The plan identifies four strategic areas for the PRED organization. The strategic areas include governance, financial management & responsibility, communications and regional economic development.

The Role of the Economic Development Strategy

This Economic Development Strategy aims to consolidate past plans into a simplified framework for easier and efficient implementation.




















The Strategy:

- Identifies the challenges and opportunities the community is facing
- Identifies the community's economic value proposition
- Proposes several objectives and actions that will positively affect economic drivers

An example of how the Economic Development Strategy relates to other strategies and plans

The Economic Development Strategy was developed in coordination with previous plans and studies undertaken by the community. The City of Portage la Prairie Three-Year Strategic Direction identified various action items regarding Inclusive Relationships, Economic Opportunities, Marketing and Communications, Downtown/Core and Quality of Life. These items were reviewed, evaluated, and prioritized by the community. Several action items from the report are reflected in the completion of this Strategy. This alignment recognizes that economic development efforts must be coordinated to affect the community's quality of life and economy positively.

In the table below, we present an overview of the strategies identified in this document and their interconnections or links to other existing documents. This table demonstrates the strategic alignment, dependencies, and synergies between different plans, offering a streamlined reference point to understand the document's strategic framework.

	 Portage la Prairie Strategic Direction	 Portage la Prairie Housing Strategy	 Investment Readiness Assessment	 Public Transit Feasibility Study	 PRED Organizational Strategy 2020-2024
Focus Area 1		Alignment to Existing Plans			
Collaborative Prosperity: A Regional Economic Development Framework					
1.1	Expand Portage Regional Economic Development Structure and Capacity				
1.2	Development of Regional Networks and Partnerships				 
1.3	Strong Partnership with Economic Development Stakeholders and Agencies				
1.4	Economic Recovery Preparedness				
1.5	Portage Regional Economic Summit				
1.6	Manitoba's Leader in Economic Reconciliation				
Focus Area 2		Alignment to Existing Plans			
Elevating Portage la Prairie: Economic Growth through Business Engagement, Investment Attraction and Workforce Development					
2.1	BusinessConnect: Fostering Growth – A Regional Initiative for Business Engagement and Expansion				
2.2	Business Registration Process				

	 Portage la Prairie Strategic Direction	 Portage la Prairie Housing Strategy	 Investment Readiness Assessment	 Public Transit Feasibility Study	 PRED Organizational Strategy 2020-2024
2.3	BusinessConnect: BusinessWalks – A Quick Look at the Regional Economy			 	
2.4	Inclusive Communities: Complete an Immigration Readiness Assessment			  	
2.5	BusinessConnect: Portage Industrial Stakeholders Committee				
2.6	PortageInvest: The Opportunity Awaits – Annual Real Estate and Developers Day			   	
2.7	BusinessConnect: New Business Celebration Initiative - Celebrating Community Growth				
2.8	BusinessConnect: Roadmap to Entrepreneurship – A Comprehensive Guide				
2.9	Supporting and Attracting Business and Workforce Immigration				
2.10	Agriculture Centre of Excellence: Growing Together – A Regional Agriculture Committee				
2.11	Agriculture Centre of Excellence: Cultivating Knowledge – Ag in the Classroom Initiatives				
2.12	FutureWorkforce - Labour Force and Training Needs Strategy				
2.13	PortageInvest: Best of Class Investment Readiness			 	
2.14	PortageInvest: Investment Navigator Toolbox – Strategic Resources for Investment Attraction			 	
2.15	BusinessConnect: Business Concierge Program – Guiding Business Success				
2.16	BusinessConnect: Local First Procurement Initiative – Supporting Regional Business				
2.17	Agriculture Centre of Excellence: Value of Agriculture – Regional Ag-Industry Tours				
2.18	Agriculture Centre of Excellence: Food Hub – Creating a Hub for Food-related Activities and Agricultural Initiatives				
2.19	FutureWorkforce - Partnership for Indigenous Labour Force Participation				
2.20	PortageInvest: Developing a Protein Cluster				
2.21	PortageInvest: Community Economic Incentive Program – Encouraging Economic Growth Through Incentives				
2.22	BusinessConnect: Innovation Hub - Cultivating Creativity and Entrepreneurship				
2.23	BusinessConnect: Central Plains Entrepreneur Expo and Trade Show – Providing a Platform for Innovation, Education and Business Opportunities				
2.24	PortageInvest: Smart Cities Initiatives – Transforming Communities Through Smart City Initiatives That Enhance Living and Sustainability				
2.25	PortageInvest: Green Economic Initiatives - Paving the Way to Sustainable Prosperity				

	 Portage la Prairie Strategic Direction	 Portage la Prairie Housing Strategy	 Investment Readiness Assessment	 Public Transit Feasibility Study	 PRED Organizational Strategy 2020-2024
2.26	Agriculture Centre of Excellence: Manitoba's Agriculture Centre of Excellence				
Focus Area 3			Alignment to Existing Plans		
Reimagining Portage: Transforming Downtown, Discovering Assets and Enhancing Community Impressions					
3.1	Downtown Revitalization: Downtown Core Identification – A Revitalization Kickstart				
3.2	PortageInvest: Reimagining Portage la Prairie Mall – A Design Charrette				
3.3	Downtown Revitalization: Transforming into a Vibrant Community Hub				
3.4	Connecting Communities – A Wayfinding Initiative for Regional Exploration				
3.5	BusinessConnect: Storefront Renewal – Enhancing Business Facades for Community Vitality				 
3.6	Unlocking Growth Potential: Addressing Infrastructure Challenges for Industry and Commerce				  
3.7	Portage First: Community Ambassador Program				 
3.8	PortageInvest: Future Portage – Creating Virtual Reality Demonstration Videos				
3.9	InvestPortage: Attracting Downtown Anchor Tenant for Increased Visitation				
3.10	First Impressions Community Exchange Program				
Focus Area 4			Alignment to Existing Plans		
Empowering Progress: Enhancing and Promoting Quality of Life in Portage la Prairie					
4.1	Inclusive Communities: Portage is Welcoming to All – Foster and Strengthen Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives				
4.2	PortageLive: Enhancing Community Living Through Housing Initiatives				 
4.3	PortageLive: Transit-Led Growth – A Strategy for Economic Development				 
4.4	PortageLive: Vibrant Living – Resident Attraction Initiatives				
4.5	PortageLive: Community Voices – Resident Stories				
4.6	Inclusive Communities: Dialogue on Community Development				
4.7	Inclusive Communities: The Growth of the Arts and Culture Sector				
4.8	FutureWorkforce: Healthcare Recruitment				
4.9	PortageLive: The Portage Pride 2030 – Connecting, Caring and Celebrating				

10 Things to Remember about the Portage la Prairie Region Economic Development Strategy

01

PRED will play leading roles, but economic development requires the **involvement** of many individuals, businesses, and stakeholder organizations throughout the region.

02

The recommendations in the Economic Development Strategy are designed to be comprehensive and include some activities that are either currently planned or underway. This report **coordinates with and reinforces** productive activities that are already in place.

03

There is a **close connection between economic development and community development**. One cannot occur without the other.

04

The focus of economic development in the region should be on **entrepreneurship and supporting the expansion of local businesses**.

05

Addressing the region's challenges and achieving overall goals will not be free. **The community must be willing to invest in itself and in economic development**. The following factors will be discussed throughout this report and are important to remember.

06

The Economic Development Strategy is a **living document** that should be reviewed and updated over time to adapt to changes in the marketplace. A system should be set into place for reporting implementation progress back to the community on a regular basis.

07

There are **no silver bullets** that solve community challenges. Addressing the community's challenges takes a coordinated, multipronged approach.

08

There will never be 100% **unanimous agreement** on every recommendation and every word choice in this report. Striving for an elusive consensus will delay and derail implementation.

09

To successfully achieve these economic development strategies, an **unprecedented level of cooperation and communication** is required. It is essential to **set aside differences** and work together towards achieving greater goals.

10

Economic development is a **marathon**, not a sprint. Implementing recommendations will require long-term community investments and continued momentum and patience for years to come.



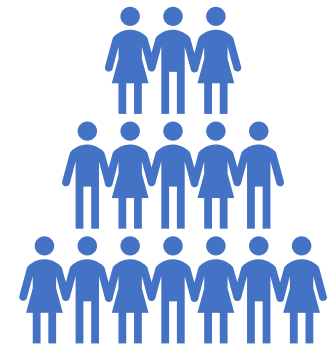
Delta Campground – RM Portage la Prairie

Demographic Snapshot

Portage la Prairie is a community offering an urban centre surrounded by a rural municipality. Individuals, businesses and industries are offered the amenities of city life along with the more tranquil and relaxed rural lifestyle.

Population and Diversity

The population has remained stable over the last number of census periods, with only a small increase between the ten years of 2011 and 2021, when the population increased from 19,521 to 20,160, representing a 3.3% increase. Statistic Canada amended the population count in 2023 to a population of 21,218. This represents a growth of 8.7% from the 2011 census. Manitoba Health, Healthy Living, and Seniors forecast the population to grow by 34.5% between 2021 and 2046. This is a significant increase, and Portage will need to ensure adequate housing, improved infrastructure, and economic stability to accommodate the growth as the community continues to serve as a service hub, offering a mix of residential, commercial, and recreational opportunities.



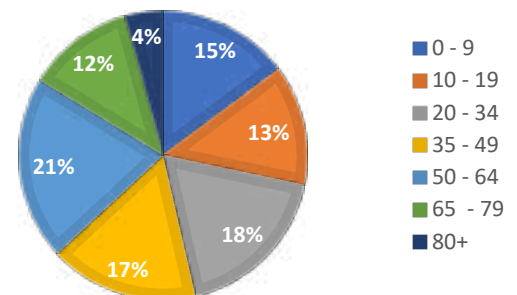
34.5% Population Growth 2021 - 2046

The community engagement process strongly supported the further development of immigration attraction efforts. Of the total population in private households, approximately 8% are immigrants. Currently, the Filipino community represents the group at 32.6%, followed very closely by South Asians at 31.2%.

Age and Education Characteristics

The community has an average age of 40.0 and a median of 39.4. This compares very closely with Manitoba's average age of 38.6 and median age of 38.4. Portage compares favourably with Canada's average age of 41.9 and median age of 41.6. Sixty-two percent (62.2%) of the population are in the working age group between 15 and 64 years only, while over a third (34.5%) make up the younger population, which will be part of the labour force in less than two decades. Immigration has contributed to a younger labour force, with the most common age for immigration being between 25 and 44 years old.

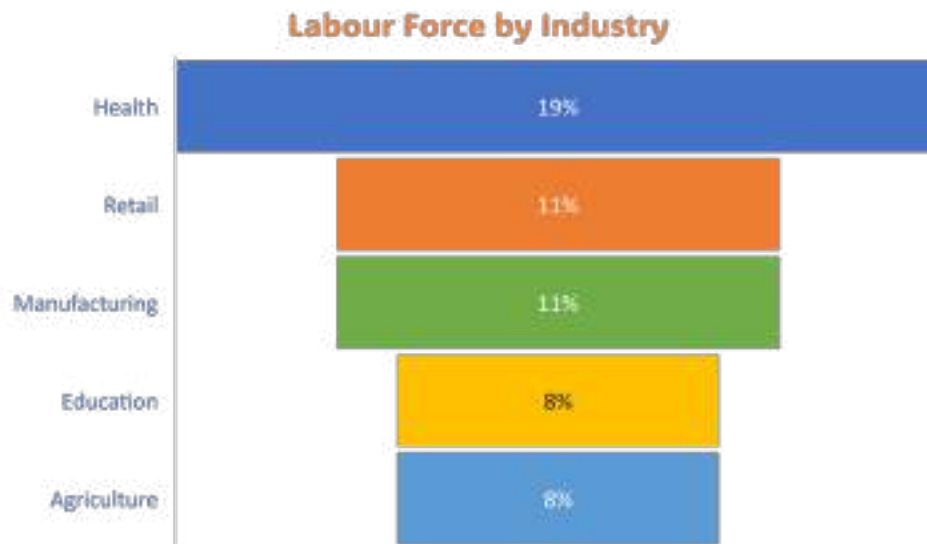
AGE GROUPS BY PERCENTAGE



The Portage area has 17 schools with an enrolment of approximately 3,350 (K-12). The majority of the population leaves the area for post-secondary opportunities. However, there is a well-educated workforce, with over 40% having a post-secondary education. Health is the most popular field of study and 91% of graduates studied in Canada.

Labour Force

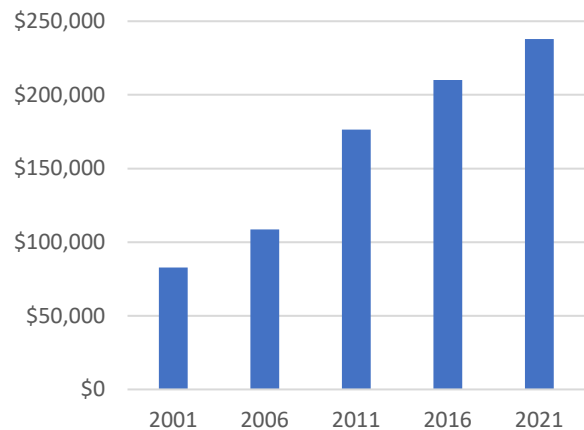
The total labour force is approximately 10,000 individuals, with an employment rate of 67.2% and a participation rate of 70.3%. The unemployment rate has been between 6.0% and 7.0% for the past year. The unemployment rate has been growing by 0.05% per year over the past 10 to 15 years. In keeping with the most popular field of study, health, the leading employment sector is health at 19%, followed by retail (11%), manufacturing (11%), education (8%), and agriculture (8%).



Household Size and Income

There are 18,250 persons in private households with an average household size of 2.4. The total number of families in private households is 5,179, with the average family size being 2.8. Approximately two-thirds (65.1% of households are owned, while the remaining rent (34.9%). The 2021 census indicates the median home value was \$224,000, while the average home value is \$238,000. This represents an increase of 13.3% in housing value. Housing prices have consistently increased but still provide cost savings over the rest of Manitoba, where median housing costs are \$304,000, and the average cost is \$338,800. Savings are even more significant when compared to Winnipeg. The median value in Winnipeg is \$340,000, and the average is \$364,000. This represents savings of 41.1% and 41.7%, respectively.

Cost of Average Home



Single detached houses comprise the majority (70.2%) of the residential buildings, and apartments comprise 4.6% of the housing market. Of all the properties in Portage la Prairie, 3-bedroom units include 1,940 (the highest share), and 2-bedroom units have 1,470 (second-highest share). Notably, when it

comes to the condition of these homes, most of them require regular maintenance (63.6%) and minor repairs (29.1%).

According to the 2021 census, there were a total of 3,420 employment income recipients in 2020 who worked full-time. Their median income in 2020 was \$53,600, and the average income was \$62,650. For those working part-time (2,640 recipients), the median income was \$17,600, and the average income was \$24,140. For all income in 2020, 64.0% was derived from employment, and 22.4% was from government transfers, including employment insurance benefits and COVID-19-related income.

The household total median income in 2020 was \$68,500, and the average household income was \$81,700. For comparison, the Province of Manitoba's total household median income in 2020 was \$79,500, and the average household income was \$97,300.



New Portage Regional Hospital

Community Engagement- Overview

Over 150 stakeholders provided input into the development of the Economic Development Strategy. The consultations consisted of confidential one-on-one interviews, an online survey for residents, an online survey for businesses, and individual meetings with the PRED Economic Development Advisory Committee, staff, local business owners, economic development stakeholders and support agencies, including the Chamber of Commerce and Community Futures. To ensure consistency, the same questions were asked throughout the consultation process. The online surveys also included the questions and allowed for additional flexibility in adding or expanding questions. Key questions covered the current economic development landscape, opportunities, threats, and the importance of economic development in a local economy. In addition, an Economic Development for Local Leaders Workshop was held on October 25, 2023. This workshop brought together all the key stakeholders in the community to provide the context and key functions of local economic development and foundational information about how leaders can support economic development within their community. Approximately 50 stakeholders attended the day-long workshop.

Online resident and business surveys were developed and launched in September 2023. PRED staff managed survey distribution. Ninety-two individuals and business owners completed the survey. Questions were asked in various formats, including multiple-choice, open-ended responses, and ranked choices. Survey questions included the following subjects:

- Demographic information
- Business information
- Strategic priorities
- Regional collaboration
- Education and workforce development
- Growth and development
- Business and entrepreneurship
- Quality of life

Strategic Themes

Strategic and common themes emerged from the online survey and public consultation process. One unifying theme that emerged is the importance of preserving the regional collaboration between the City and Rural Municipality. Additional themes that emerged throughout the consultation process included:

- **Regional cooperation and collaboration.** The community should be a community for everyone, and by working collaboratively and in partnership with each other, the community will be strengthened and ready for economic development opportunities.
- **Quality of Life.** Residents and businesses repeatedly stated the high quality of life, including amenities, services and outdoor assets. Affordability was also a key component of the quality of life many residents enjoy.
- **Locational Advantage.** An overwhelming number of residents, stakeholders and businesses mentioned the easy access to Winnipeg and Brandon.
- **Diversity, equity and inclusion.** Addressing systemic economic inequities is critical for quality of life and resident and workforce attraction. Expanding immigrant attraction efforts and

partnerships with neighbouring Indigenous communities is key to ensuring long-term economic success and community resilience.

- **Health and safety.** The pandemic contributed to challenges of economic fragility, financial security and job security for vulnerable populations.
- **Resident and workforce attraction/development.** Portage la Prairie's employers face several challenges to maintaining and growing their workforce, driven by a number of factors, including housing supply, competition for labour, and a shrinking labour force.
- **Housing supply and affordability.** Although housing is affordable compared to other communities, it still faces rising housing costs and a lack of new housing development.
- **Transportation.** For those who rely on public transportation, the options are severely limited. Residents and businesses have been interested in transit in the community for several years.
- **Industries and employment.** Several economic clusters have strong local representation and offer growth opportunities, including agri-processing and manufacturing.
- **Planning and infrastructure.** Growing strategically and ensuring infrastructure capacity can limit the negative impacts of growth.
- **Business climate and entrepreneurship.** Supporting existing businesses and encouraging entrepreneurship is foundational for the community's economy.
- **Climate and the green economy.** Fostering growth in local businesses seeking solutions to climate change and pioneering sustainable products presents an opportunity to lead with values and grow the local economy.
- **Downtown Portage la Prairie.** A community's downtown is its anchor and "calling card" to visitors. It should offer an opportunity to meet diverse needs across business, housing, entertainment, hospitality and other facets of the community's economy.

Findings and Implications

During the community consultation, including the online survey, respondents provided a broad range of input and viewpoints on the community's most pressing issues. These findings illustrate key themes on which stakeholders strongly agreed or where opinions diverged.

Many individuals and businesses consulted agree that Portage la Prairie is a great place to live. There was significant optimism within the community that Portage is on the precipice of being more and implementing positive actions will contribute to a stronger community in the future. A positive regional working relationship, collaboration, and partnership must be strong for this to be achieved. This partnership must include the City, the Rural Municipality and the neighbouring Indigenous communities of Long Plain First Nation, Dakota Tipi First Nation and Dakota Plains First Nation.

The majority of participants viewed diversity, equity, and inclusion issues as an area of concern. This includes the impact on the diversity and health of the business ecosystem, having a diverse and welcoming population, and improving business and economic outcomes. Many respondents believe Portage is welcoming to racial and ethnic diversity, while some in the community believe that there is work to be done to make individuals feel welcome and equal. Even with differing opinions, almost everyone agreed that working with the local First Nation communities and increasing immigration attraction activities is critical.

All participants indicated a favourable business climate and a strong bedrock of public, private, and educational institution support for innovation and entrepreneurial activities. Furthermore, participants generally agreed upon the biggest challenges to sustaining economic growth in the community. A negative external image of the community combined with the community's own lack of community spirit, keeping youth skilled workers and inadequate transportation infrastructure. Improving business-friendly actions at the local level and housing were identified as additional threats to growth and prosperity.

Additional Survey Findings

The online survey developed for this project asked questions of both residents and businesses. In addition to quantitative analysis, the survey included open-ended questions. The qualitative responses were analyzed, enabling the exploration of stakeholders' perspectives on key issues and topics at a deeper level, and are included in the key findings. The survey collected 92 responses, of which 20 were business owners.

The following page provides an overview of the survey responses.

Online Survey Results

Portage la Prairie

An online survey was developed for this project that asked questions of both residents and businesses. In addition to quantitative analysis, the survey included open-ended questions. The qualitative responses were analyzed, enabling exploration of stakeholders' perspectives at a deeper level on key issues and topics and are included in the key findings. The survey collected 92 responses, of which 20 were business owners.



64%

have lived in the community for more than 15 years



53%

have a positive image of the region



75%

believe non-residents have a negative image of the region



43%

think existing companies staying and expanding as well as the attraction of new companies is the number one goal for economic development



32%

think better lifestyle amenities in the area is the number two goal for economic development



36%

think improving awareness (reputation) of the region is the number three goal for economic development



64%

of business owners say finding and keeping the right people is their number one challenge



46%

of respondents want to see more retail locate or expand in the region



31%

of respondents want to see the downtown area better defined and developed as a gathering place



OS OAKVILLE SUPERMARKET

LIQUOR VENDOR

Oakville Supermarket, RM Portage la Prairie

SWOT Analysis

An important phase of the strategic planning process is looking at the economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). The information is gained through various methods, including stakeholder and community engagement. A SWOT analysis provides an inventory of a community's strengths and weaknesses combined with their opportunities and threats to assess the degree to which each economic factor supports future growth.

The overall goal of the SWOT is to clearly understand strengths and areas of potential that can be built upon and better marketed. The findings of this analysis, combined with other research, are used to develop recommendations for inclusion in the overall strategic economic development plan.

The SWOT was developed through stakeholder discussions, survey information, and consultant observations. We do not intend for this analysis of issues to be all-inclusive. Rather, we focus on those areas that will directly impact specific components of future economic development efforts in the community and region. We define the four aspects of "SWOT" in terms of:

- **Strengths:** Issues or characteristics that can be built upon to advance current and future economic growth opportunities
- **Weaknesses:** Issues or characteristics that, if not addressed effectively, could limit current or future growth opportunities
- **Opportunities:** Assets, events, or trends that offer the potential for economic growth and attraction of new industries and retention and expansion of what you already have
- **Threats:** Obstacles, events or trends that could threaten the economic potential and its ability to attract, expand and start up new employers. These are typically items that are beyond the ability of the community to control

Observations in this report are based on consultation collected from local citizens, businesses, council and staff through meetings, interviews and online survey methods. Analyzing the perception that residents and businesses in the Portage la Prairie area have is an important step in how well the community conveys its strengths or tells its economic development story. Portage la Prairie can examine their strengths and challenges within two key factors, which are important economic development topics:

- Community and surrounding area
- Business and economic development climate

Those looking to locate or expand will analyze these factors to determine how well a community ranks compared to other communities. Portage must be aware of its strengths and opportunities to expand upon them. At the same time, the community needs to be aware of its threats and weaknesses. It is only through understanding the SWOT of a community or region that programs can be developed to adjust and proactively work toward a resolution that will increase opportunities.

Portage la Prairie and its region have some significant strengths. However, it is important to address identified weaknesses to capitalize on the strengths. Failure to recognize and work towards improvement will make achieving the community's goal towards a sustainable and prosperous economy

difficult. The following overview is not a list of priorities but a combination of comments received and observations from the consultants.



Key Messaging

Portage la Prairie has some important advantages and assets. The messaging associated with attraction efforts needs to be controlled and focused. The new Community Profile is a good example of developing a core messaging piece highlighting the community's advantages. The profile includes specific investment data and information that illustrates the strengths and opportunities of the local economy, highlights local accomplishments, and demonstrates how economic development can assist with investment in the community.

Attraction messaging for the community should include the following:

- Affordable properties (residential and land for development)
- Opportunities for small business
- Quality of life (outdoor recreation, education and healthcare)
- Globally recognized companies

Portage can take advantage of its geographic proximity to Winnipeg and Southern Manitoba's regional attributes, including access to highly skilled labour, strong transportation links, excellent quality of life, and post-secondary institutions. While highlighting the wider-region strengths, it will also be important to differentiate Portage from Winnipeg and other Southern Manitoba communities to tell the story of why investment, businesses, and residents should land in Portage versus other communities.

Business and Community Engagement

Engagement with the existing business community is an often-overlooked area of opportunity regarding economic development investment marketing. Much of traditional marketing efforts focus on the external market and attracting investment, with little focus on the investment that could come from the existing business community. In an economic development and investment marketing context, it is important to consider all local businesses as potential ambassadors for Portage. Many businesses in the community have large business and personal networks, and thus, potentially large audiences should they desire to market the region. That is why business engagement and outreach are key economic development and investment marketing components. A community must ensure that it responds quickly to the needs of the local business community and that the local business community has a generally positive view of doing business there. If there is a message to be shared by these individuals, it will likely be influenced primarily by their continued experience with the local community government and administration.

But this informal creation of ambassadors stretches beyond just the business community. Local community residents have a major role in developing and spreading a community's image, which can profoundly affect the community's economic development potential. This is an important point for Portage, as 75% of survey respondents believe non-residents have a poor image of the community.

Messaging to the business community can be easily accomplished through a variety of channels, including:

- Ongoing, formalized Business Retention and Expansion Program
- Semi-regular publication with a high-level report on business activity in the community
- Facilitated business networking opportunities (i.e. workshops, focus groups or business forums)

These efforts promote a positive engagement with the local business community and represent opportunities to shape the opinions of local business people. Reaching the residents of the local community can be slightly more difficult, as economic development personnel do not characteristically connect with the general population. The primary messages should be focused on the community's strengths, such as excellent quality of life, amenities, and small business opportunities. Since the audience is wider and more diverse than the business community, the messages should be clear, logical and concise to reach everyone. The focus of wider community outreach should be information transfer, inspirational testimonials and local success stories.

A wider variety of communication channels is also available with regards to community messaging, including:

- Local media and advertising
- Information kiosks/booths at community events
- Print publications and information packages

- Social media groups or events
- Community presentation opportunities (i.e. Council, Chamber of Commerce)

Business and community outreach is an important part of economic development investment marketing. Both parties have a major part to play in forming the community's image, and both could potentially impact both internal and external investments in the community. Therefore, there should also be an internally focused component paired with all externally focused marketing efforts.



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42.

Strategic Plan and Areas of Focus

The following section lists Focus Areas and strategies that make up the Economic Development Strategy.

While several characteristics distinguish strategic planning from other types of planning and goal-setting efforts, the implementation really sets it apart. The key to strategic planning is that it is action-oriented and focuses on allocating scarce resources to critical issues. The implementation phase is crucial. The success of the strategic planning process comes as much from the process itself as from the strategies defined in the plan. The key to implementation is organization and resources. Although some strategies will be oriented to policy change and removal of administrative barriers and not involve monetary resources, successful strategic planning will require allocating scarce financial resources to implement project-oriented strategies and dedicated human resources.

The programs and actions proposed in this strategic plan are intended to provide the foundation for maintaining and expanding a collaborative working relationship among the residents and businesses in the community, to set forward achievable implementation strategies to guide decision-making based on the concerns expressed during the public consultation process and to provide a successful economic development model for the region.

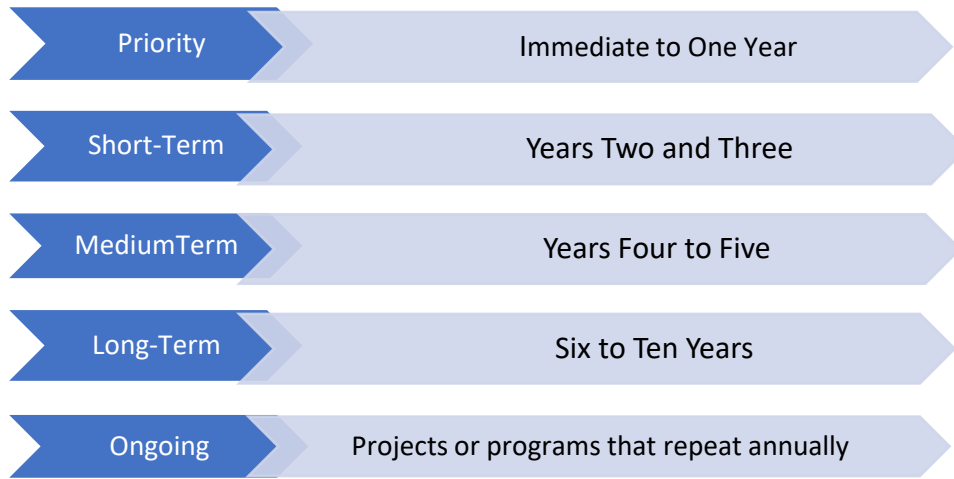
In addition to implementing the Strategy, an economic development organization and its economic development practitioner are responsible for the day-to-day activities. Considerable time is devoted to the following core activities that take place on an ongoing and daily basis. Some of these activities are built into the Strategy, while others involve additional time and resources.

Core Activities:

- Respond to public inquiries daily (phone, email, and walk-in)
- Clearinghouse for information
- Data updates (community profiles, website, customized requests)
- Regional initiatives
- Work with companies or individuals seeking to locate in the community
- Work with groups of companies with specific industry sectors to ensure new markets are developed
- Communications – community, business, government, organizations
- Facilitating partnerships between business, non-profits, investors and area partners
- Connecting individuals and groups with available resources, such as:
 - Community Futures
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Province of Manitoba
- Grant writing support for economic development initiatives

Implementation of the Economic Development Strategy through the recommended actions will focus on the role of PRED and its mandate of creating an environment that successfully attracts new investment, retains and expands current business for the entire community for the City of Portage la Prairie and the RM of Portage la Prairie while leveraging the strong regional approach of the two municipalities working together in collaboration. Some of the actions go beyond the key functions of PRED. They must be implemented in collaboration and partnership with other key organizations and the region's broader community and business groups.

The following provides the rationale for each identified focus area, specific strategies, and the actions required for implementation. Each action is given a specific timeframe according to its priority level. The timeframes are:



A separate Year-One Implementation Matrix will form a separate document and can be used as the economic development work plan. The matrix will break down strategies to be implemented in the first year into specific action steps. In addition to the action steps, the matrix will provide timelines, potential partners, budget, funding sources and implementation monitoring. It provides the roadmap required for PRED to implement the plan.

Partners	
Chamber of Commerce	Immigration Services
Community Futures Heartland	Indigenous Organizations
Community Futures White Horse Plains	Industry Associations
Employment Agencies	Portage Community Revitalization Corporation
Financial Institutions	Post-Secondary Institutions
Healthcare Agencies	Provincial Government Ministries
Housing Organizations	Recreation Services



Southport Aerospace Centre

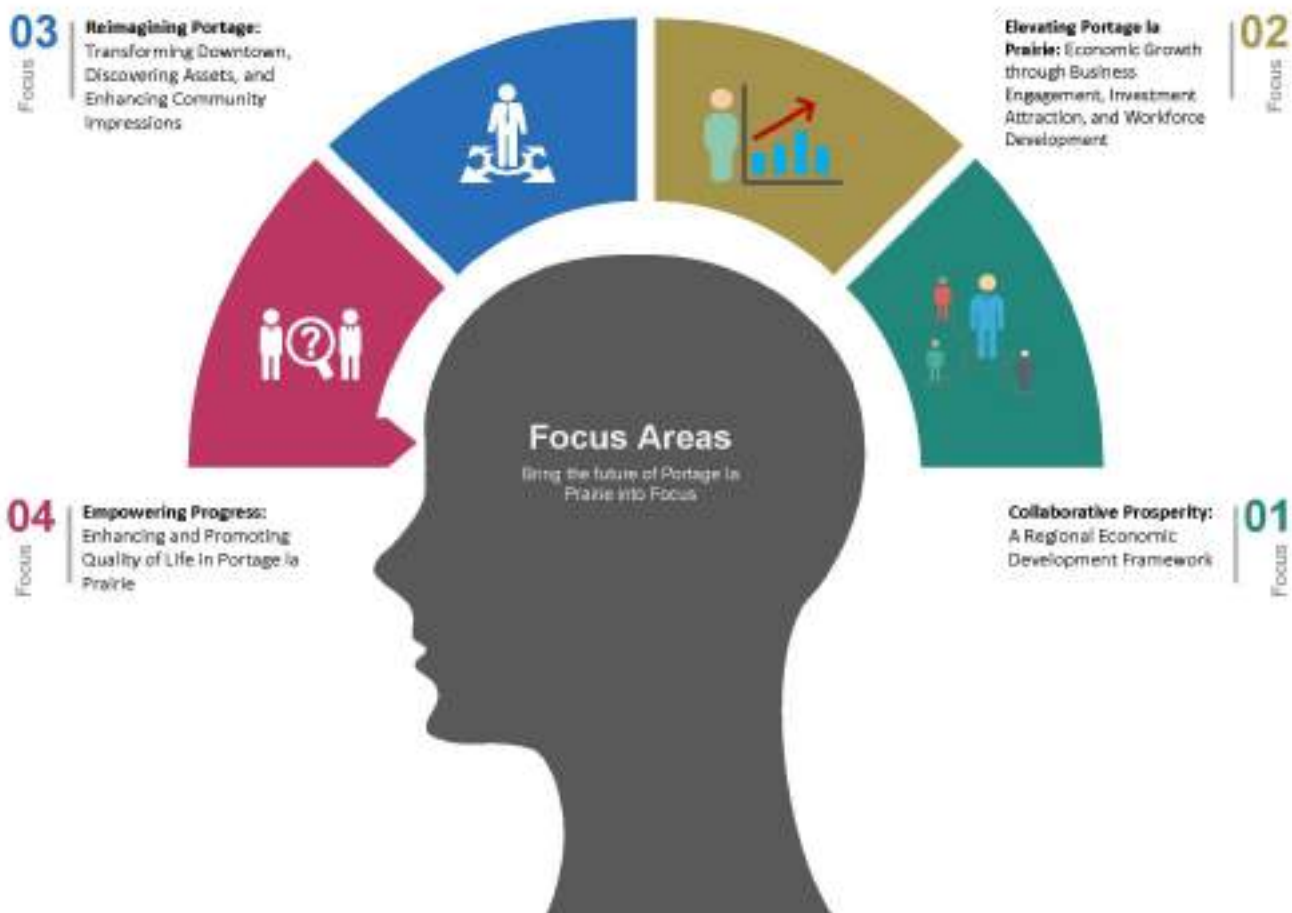
Strategy Direction

The steps toward a comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Portage la Prairie and the Region have been informed by community consultation and the collaborative efforts of stakeholders, PRED, and community leaders. As previously discussed, this inclusive process identifies core themes or focus areas to create a roadmap. These themes have been the guiding principles for developing strategies and actions to advance the region's economic growth and prosperity.

The themes previously discussed were developed from the collective input from the community consultation process, including residents and businesses reflecting the shared values, needs, and opportunities that define the region. In the following pages, we have broken down the strategies and actions under four prominent focus areas that have emerged as the pillars of the Economic Development Strategy. These areas encapsulate the region's core challenges and opportunities, and the strategies and actions are designed to harness the strengths and address the weaknesses.

The overall desired objective of this strategy is to build a strong, sustainable economic development program for PRED.

Pillars of the Economic Development Strategy



Focus Areas Defined

Disclaimer: We use "Community" or "Region" extensively throughout this document. The word community or region should not be considered to mean municipal boundaries, but instead the entire area, including the City, Rural Municipality and Indigenous communities that are part of the overall economy.

Focus Area 1: Collaborative Prosperity: "A Regional Economic Development Framework"

Collaborative prosperity outlines a vision of a thriving and interconnected community where all stakeholders, from local businesses, First Nation communities, economic development stakeholders, government agencies and educational institutions, come together in a united pursuit of economic growth and well-being. Through collaboration, innovation, and a shared commitment to sustainable progress, this is designed to transform Portage la Prairie into a beacon of opportunity and prosperity, setting the stage for a brighter future for all. The strategies and actions within the theme will serve as measures to embark on a journey toward a more vibrant and economically robust Portage la Prairie.

Focus Area 2: Elevating Portage la Prairie: Economic Growth through Business Engagement, Investment Attraction, and Workforce Development

Elevating the Region of Portage la Prairie is an economic development focus on driving economic growth through a multifaceted approach. By actively engaging businesses, implementing investment readiness and attraction strategies, prioritizing workforce development, and cultivating entrepreneurship, this initiative aims to create a dynamic business environment. The goal is to enhance Portage la Prairie's economic landscape, attracting new businesses, promoting existing ones, and cultivating a skilled workforce to foster sustained and inclusive economic progress in the community.

Focus Area 3: Reimagining Portage: Transforming Downtown, Discovering Assets, and Enhancing Community Impressions

Reimagining Portage is dedicated to revitalizing and transforming downtown Portage la Prairie and the Mall into vibrant community hubs. In addition, it encompasses strategies to support the development of community infrastructure, steps to determine how others see the community, supports existing initiatives, and ways to showcase what the community has to offer residents, new industries, small businesses, and more.

Focus Area 4: Empowering Progress: Enhancing and Promoting Quality of Life in Portage la Prairie

Empowering progress is an economic development focus area dedicated to enhancing and promoting the quality of life within the community. Through targeted initiatives, this approach seeks to improve various aspects of community life, including inclusivity, housing, increasing residents and amenities, and overall well-being. By fostering an environment that prioritizes the holistic welfare of residents, Empowering Progress aims to attract and retain a diverse population, contributing to sustained economic growth and a vibrant, thriving community.

Focus Area 1: Collaborative Prosperity: A Regional Economic Development Framework

Collaborative prosperity outlines a vision of a thriving and interconnected community where all stakeholders, from local businesses, First Nation communities, government agencies and educational institutions, come together in a united pursuit of economic growth and well-being. Through collaboration, innovation, and a shared commitment to sustainable progress, this is designed to transform Portage la Prairie into a beacon of opportunity and prosperity, setting the stage for a brighter future for all. The strategies and actions within the theme will serve as measures to embark on a journey toward a more vibrant and economically robust Portage la Prairie. Comprehensive approach to economic development in the Portage la Prairie region. The priority strategies under this framework can be summarized as follows:



1.1 Collaborative Prosperity: Expand Portage Regional Economic Development Structure and Capacity

This strategy aims to strengthen the existing Portage Regional Economic Development (PRED) organization, increasing its capabilities to drive economic growth, attract investments, and support local businesses. By enhancing its structure and capacity, PRED can effectively coordinate inclusive economic development efforts within the region.

1.2 Collaborative Prosperity: Development of Regional Networks and Partnerships

In pursuing economic growth for Portage la Prairie, fostering regional networks and partnerships is essential. Consultation has demonstrated the community's strong desire to build bridges within the region, recognizing that regional collaboration is crucial for success in today's economic development landscape. Portage la Prairie understands that collective action transcends municipal boundaries and that working with Indigenous and neighbouring communities, businesses, and organizations is important. By cultivating these networks, PRED, the City of Portage la Prairie, and the RM of Portage la Prairie aim to leverage shared strengths, pool resources, and tap into a vast network of like-minded partners committed to economic development, sustainability, and shared prosperity in the interlinked regional ecosystem.

1.3 Collaborative Prosperity: Strong Partnership with Economic Development Stakeholders and Agencies

A strong partnership between economic development stakeholders and agencies, including the Chamber of Commerce and Community Futures, is an important component of collaborative prosperity. These strategic collaborations signify a unified effort to drive economic growth, support local businesses, and enhance the overall business climate within a community. Such partnerships involve a cohesive approach, leveraging the strengths and resources of both entities to implement initiatives that attract investments, foster entrepreneurship, and promote sustainable development. There are specific initiatives for partnerships, including PRED involving the Chamber in Business Walks and supporting the Chamber in developing new programs. For example, a shop local program and a local subscription box. It will also be

important to have regular communications with Arrowhead Development Corporation, Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council and other Indigenous stakeholders.

1.4 **Economic Development Communication Strategy**

An economic development communications strategy is a comprehensive plan outlining how a community, region, or organization communicates its economic development initiatives, goals, and achievements to various stakeholders. This strategy involves crafting targeted messages, selecting appropriate communication channels, and implementing cohesive campaigns to inform and engage key audiences. The goals of an economic development communications strategy may include building awareness, attracting investments, fostering community support, and enhancing the overall image of the area for economic development. Key components of such a strategy may include public relations, digital marketing, community engagement, and the use of traditional and social media to effectively convey information and shape positive perceptions about economic development efforts. PRED currently issues quarterly reports; however, through the community public consultation process, it was heard that many businesses did not know what the PRED organization did. There is an opportunity for PRED to expand its communication with businesses and the community as a whole.

1.5 **Collaborative Prosperity: Economic Recovery Preparedness**

Building on the work of the Portage Economic Response Team, this initiative focuses on preparing the region for economic recovery in the face of challenges or crises. It involves planning and implementing strategies to ensure resilience, support local businesses, and facilitate a swift recovery during economic downturns or unexpected disruptions. Economic preparedness is not only for natural disasters but is also important for other economic disruptions, including cyber-attacks and the closure of major employers. Portage has previously lost businesses, including Campbell Soup, Manitoba Development Centre and Agassiz. An economic recovery plan will help the community better respond to these and other disasters as they happen.

1.6 **Collaborative Prosperity: Portage Regional Economic Summit**

The Portage Regional Economic Summit is a pivotal gathering of diverse stakeholders to tackle economic challenges jointly, grasp opportunities, and receive updates from community leaders and PRED regarding steps toward a more prosperous and sustainable future. It acts as a platform to align resources and expertise for common economic goals, benefiting the community. Through educational sessions, community leader updates, and participation from senior government levels, it demonstrates a commitment to contributing to local, regional, and provincial economic growth. A platform for high-level discussions and collaboration among stakeholders.

1.7 **Collaborative Prosperity: Manitoba's Leader in Economic Reconciliation**

This strategy ensures that the community's economic development efforts align with the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). It promotes economic opportunities for Indigenous communities, fostering inclusivity and equity in the region's economic growth. Using indigenous reconciliation resources, including the

Manitoba "Path to Reconciliation Act" and CANDO's Stronger Together toolkit as guiding documents, the local community will work with regional Indigenous communities to identify and implement various initiatives to support economic reconciliation.

Collaborative Prosperity: A Regional Economic Development Framework Strategies

Priority

- 1.1 Collaborative Prosperity: Expand Portage Regional Economic Development Structure and Capacity**
- 1.2 Collaborative Prosperity: Development of Regional Networks and Partnerships**
- 1.3 Collaborative Prosperity: Strong Partnership with Economic Development Stakeholders and Agencies**

Short-term

- 1.4 Economic Development Communications Strategy**

Medium-Term

- 1.5 Collaborative Prosperity: Economic Recovery Preparedness**

Long-term

- 1.6 Collaborative Prosperity: Portage Regional Economic Summit**
- 1.7 Collaborative Prosperity: Manitoba's Leader in Economic Reconciliation**

Focus Area 2: Elevating Portage la Prairie: Economic Growth through Business Engagement, Investment Attraction, and Workforce Development

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2.1 BusinessConnect: Fostering Growth – A Regional Initiative for Business Engagement and Expansion

BusinessConnect will be a pivotal initiative led by PRED, representing a regional initiative to catalyze business engagement and expansion within the community. This program will make PRED and the regional partners the provincial leaders in business retention and expansion. This dynamic program, including several different programs, will focus on nurturing existing businesses, encouraging their growth, and fostering meaningful connections between local entrepreneurs and regional partners. By offering resources, networking opportunities, and tailored support, BusinessConnect paves the way for businesses to thrive and prosper, thereby contributing to the economic sustainability of Portage la Prairie and the broader region. This first component will provide the structure and the basic components of what is known as BRE and will then be complemented by a number of other initiatives. In December of 2023, PRED took the proactive step of acquiring a license for ExecutivePulse, an industry leader in CRM/BRE online platform for managing business relationships and communications. This program will be the primary tool for Engagement, Business Registration, and communication between partners in providing business support.

2.2 BusinessConnect: Business Registration Process

Establishing a business registration process for both existing and new businesses in the region is an important step in establishing initiatives for connecting with businesses. While in some communities, it is a legal requirement accompanied by a fee, a growing trend is to eliminate fees to support businesses and gather essential data about the business environment. This approach facilitates connections between BusinessConnect and their local, regional, and Indigenous governments, enabling the establishment of support systems for various business sectors, including during economic disaster recovery. The business registration process marks the initial phase of creating a comprehensive BusinessConnect program, demonstrating the community's commitment to being business-friendly and supporting existing businesses.

2.3 BusinessConnect: BusinessWalks – A Quick Look at the Regional Economy

"BusinessWalks," an integral part of the comprehensive BusinessConnect program, is designed to provide local leaders and support agencies with a swift and insightful snapshot of the regional economy. These half-day initiatives, led by PRED in partnership with others like the Chamber of Commerce and Community Futures, involve directly engaging with a large number of businesses to gain valuable feedback, assess their needs, and offer guidance by asking a few short questions. By conducting these informative walks, BusinessWalks aims to enhance the business environment, identify growth opportunities, and address challenges, ultimately supporting businesses in thriving within the Portage la Prairie region. This proactive approach exemplifies the commitment to fostering a vibrant and prosperous business community in the area. More details on developing an effective business walks program can be found by downloading a [manual](#) developed by EDCD Consulting.

2.4 Inclusive Communities: Complete an Immigration Readiness Assessment

The Immigration Readiness Assessment is a pivotal strategic initiative aimed at enhancing the economic, social, and cultural fabric of Portage la Prairie. As a forward-thinking community, Portage la Prairie recognizes the importance of welcoming newcomers to the region and ensuring their successful integration. This comprehensive assessment should be led by PRED as immigration is directly related to both workforce development and business attraction. The assessment is designed to evaluate the city's readiness to effectively embrace and support immigrants, fostering a more vibrant and diverse community. The Government of Canada has completed a new toolkit [Measuring Welcoming Communities](#) that contains significant information on how to conduct this assessment.

2.5 BusinessConnect: Portage Industrial Stakeholders Committee

The "Portage Industrial Stakeholders Committee" is a best practice in establishing a collaborative effort that fosters engagement between key industrial stakeholders within the community and potential new industries. The committee is designed to create partnerships and dialogue; it aims to drive economic development by aligning the interests and efforts of various industrial players and identifying current challenges and opportunities. By engaging with other industry associations, like the Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium, this committee, led by PRED, can take a Manitoba "pilot" role in establishing new training and support initiatives. A current initiative underway is a Circular Economy Study. Once completed, PRED will need to identify specific recommendations or actions from the study that must be supported and implemented. A number of Circular Economy Initiatives are included as recommendations in this strategy.

2.6 PortageInvest: Portage: the Opportunity Awaits – Annual Real Estate and Developers Day

The City of Portage la Prairie, in collaboration with the RM and neighbouring communities such as Oakville, Dakota Plains, Dakota Tipi, Long Plain and Southport, is poised with numerous development prospects. Leveraging the competitive advantage of available developable land, there is a pressing need to raise awareness about these opportunities and engage potential developers and businesses. An effective approach for achieving this is

organizing "Familiarization Tours." These tours showcase the region's assets and resources and provide a unique platform for establishing personal connections with prospective clients. When thoughtfully designed, such tours are a potent marketing tool that elevates the community or region's visibility, appealing to local and external investors. In 2023, the community successfully initiated Developers Day, which primarily focused on housing prospects and garnered positive feedback. It is now recommended to expand this initiative into a regional program, encompassing industrial and commercial opportunities and extending invitations to participants from the broader region, including Winnipeg and neighbouring communities. This expanded effort aims to catalyze regional development and collaboration effectively.

2.7 BusinessConnect: New Business Celebration Initiative

This community-focused program will celebrate the growth and vitality of Portage la Prairie. This initiative marks the community's welcome for new businesses and entrepreneurs, or those expanding, by underscoring the importance of their contributions to the local economy. Helping to coordinate celebratory events, like ribbon cuttings, shines a spotlight on their achievements, fosters a sense of community pride, and encourages collaboration between businesses and residents. By recognizing and supporting these new ventures, this initiative not only strengthens the local business ecosystem but also helps the business create an awareness of what they have to offer. This program enhances the overall quality of life in the Region of Portage la Prairie, showcasing a dynamic and thriving community and one that celebrates the success and achievements of others.

2.8 BusinessConnect: Roadmap to Entrepreneurship – A Comprehensive Guide

Developing a strong support system for those looking to start a business in the Region of Portage la Prairie is critical to supporting new entrepreneurs. A guide will help to encourage entrepreneurs to create new businesses and to make it as easy as possible. The development of a web-based Starting a Business Guide to walk individuals through the necessary steps and provide the basic information will demonstrate the support of local businesses. The guide launched by [Port Alberni](#) is an excellent example.

2.9 Supporting and Attracting Business and Workforce Immigration

Like many smaller communities in Canada, Portage la Prairie recognizes the need for proactive economic growth strategies to ensure a vibrant future. The community consultation process showed overwhelming support for immigration attraction as a key strategy. This strategy builds on the need for PRED to coordinate the process of implementing the immigration readiness assessment and then focuses on supporting and attracting business and workforce immigration. This is integral to diversifying the local workforce, overcoming labour shortages, and fostering business growth in the community. It aims to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for newcomers and immigrants, contributing not only to addressing labour market needs but also enriching the community's cultural vitality. Additionally, this initiative aligns with the [Province of Manitoba's Business Investor Stream Program](#), which offers pathways for recruiting and nominating qualified business investors and entrepreneurs worldwide. It also aligns with [the Skilled Worker Stream](#), designed to

meet the local labour market's skill requirements. These efforts are poised to drive economic growth and resilience while ensuring Portage la Prairie's long-term prosperity.

2.10 Agriculture Centre of Excellence: Growing Together – A Regional Agriculture Committee

This regional agriculture committee is dedicated to creating a thriving agricultural community by facilitating dialogue, sharing best practices, and aligning efforts through developing a plan to address challenges and opportunities within Portage la Prairie and its surrounding regions. This new Agricultural Committee would be a representative body, including members of the region's agricultural sector and sub-sectors. Elected officials could also be assigned, although the organization would not be political. Rather, it would be representative of the region, bringing together growers, suppliers and industry customers.

2.11 Agriculture Centre of Excellence: Cultivating Knowledge – Ag in the Classroom Initiatives

This program focuses on education and awareness by introducing the diverse nature of agriculture into classrooms. Through various educational initiatives, it aims to cultivate knowledge about agriculture among students, fostering an understanding of the sector's importance, sustainability, and career opportunities within agriculture-related fields. Agriculture is not just about the land and the crops produced anymore. It is also technology-driven and offers a broad range of career opportunities that students often look outside of the community for. The high school is already working with local businesses, providing apprenticeships. This program can help expand those initiatives and further explain the value of agriculture to schools.

2.12 Future Workforce: Labour Force and Training Needs Strategy

The consultation with businesses clearly demonstrated a significant challenge in the labour force to meet the needs of existing businesses. This challenge will worsen as the community attracts new companies and helps existing businesses grow. In addition, with the development of a new hospital underway, there is an opportunity to further expand the potential of training doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals. Additional research is needed to ensure that the community can meet the needs of industry and other sectors and meet the demands of a growing workforce. By working with Red River College, local Indigenous communities, Southport, Southern Health and others, a complete labour needs analysis must be completed, along with strategies to meet both the labour needs and the development of associated training requirements. Through rigorous analysis and data-driven insights, this study can help to identify areas of workforce demand, skills gaps, and training needs, enabling the development of targeted workforce strategies that align with the community's economic priorities and long-term development goals.

2.13 PortageInvest: Best of Class Investment Readiness

In January 2023, the community completed an Investment Readiness Assessment. PRED took this proactive approach to ensure that Portage la Prairie is well-prepared and competitive in attracting investments that drive economic growth, job creation and community prosperity. This assessment needs to be reviewed annually, with a new self-assessment completed, to

ensure that the necessary actions have been taken, ultimately positioning the community as an attractive destination for potential investors and development projects.

2.14 PortageInvest: Investment Navigator Toolbox

Effective and comprehensive information is essential for economic development. Primary economic development practice is collecting, creating, and disseminating demographic, economic, sector, and other socio-community information to help improve planning and decision-making activities. It is critical to successful economic development to inform partnerships, stakeholders, investors, businesses and residents. The information collected attracts new businesses or residents, markets the community to an external market, and targets specific sectors. While materials exist, they must be monitored and updated to ensure current information is available and various methods are used to distribute it to a wider audience. These materials include the Community Profile, investment-focus website, property sheets, quick facts or sector profiles, etc.

2.15 BusinessConnect: Business Concierge Program

One of the biggest challenges often heard from businesses in any community is the different processes required to start a new business. PRED has done an impressive job in helping to facilitate new investment and supporting existing businesses through the different processes for permits. The Portage Industrial Stakeholders Committee is an economic development best practice. You typically do not see this level of cooperation and communication between existing and potential new businesses. The Business Concierge Program will offer current and future business operators a convenient way to link to resources and get help with navigating both City and RM processes. Whether helping with permits, connecting with local resources, or offering strategic insights, the PRED Business Concierge Program will further demonstrate commitment to ensuring businesses have the tools and assistance they need to thrive.

2.16 BusinessConnect: Local First Procurement Initiative – Supporting Regional Business

The initiative supports and strengthens regional business and economic resilience. This initiative underscores the community's dedication to including, training and prioritizing local businesses when procuring goods and services. A "work with your local community" session, complimented by having experts from Procurement Canada explaining how to do business with the Government of Canada, will further help ensure that local businesses know the legal requirements and how to prepare a competitive bid. By offering this initiative, the community will empower regional entrepreneurs, foster economic growth within the community, and help create a sustainable business ecosystem.

2.17 Agricultural Centre of Excellence: Value of Agriculture – Regional Ag-Industry Tours

This initiative introduces regional ag-industry tours to showcase the significance of agriculture within the community. These tours provide participants with firsthand experiences of agricultural practices, emphasizing the economic, cultural, and environmental value of agriculture in Portage la Prairie and the broader region. Tours would not solely focus on farms but also include sub-sectors like businesses supplying equipment and other support services and those involved in agri-food processing.

2.18 Agricultural Centre of Excellence: Food Hub – Creating a Hub for Food-related Activities and Agriculture Initiatives

The "Food Hub" initiative establishes a central hub for the region's food-related activities and agricultural initiatives. PRED, working with Red River College, Community Futures and others, within this innovative space will catalyze fostering collaboration among local food producers, processors, and entrepreneurs. By providing a physical hub for networking, research, exchanging ideas, packaging and more, the Food Hub will enhance opportunities for food-related businesses, support sustainable agriculture practices, and promote economic growth in the region. It will also further build on the potential for Portage la Prairie to be recognized as Manitoba's Agriculture Centre for Excellence.

2.19 FutureWorkforce: Partnership for Indigenous Labour Force Participation

This initiative is important to ensuring the region has a trained workforce, including diverse Indigenous communities. Many regional businesses have identified a significant challenge in filling skilled positions. Some suggested that they would like to work with Indigenous communities to identify potential training opportunities to develop a workforce for the future. This initiative aims to create pathways for Indigenous individuals to access and excel in the local labour force through partnerships and culturally sensitive approaches, contributing to economic growth, diversity, and social equity.

2.20 PortageInvest: Community Economic Incentive Program – Encouraging Economic Growth Through Incentives.

The use of "incentives" needs to be carefully managed in any community. When offering incentives, you want to protect taxpayers and others if those provided with incentives leave the community when timeframes have ended. However, through the development and promotion of certain incentives, the community can encourage the development of projects where they are most needed. In Portage la Prairie, this could be the development of more housing, subdivision development, and mall redevelopment. The "Community Economic Incentive Program" will be a bylaw established under section 261.2 of the Municipal Act of Manitoba. The program should be designed to encourage new multi-unit residential or create new or redeveloped commercial spaces. This program will aim to support residential developers, attract new businesses, foster expansion among existing ones, and drive employment opportunities. Aligning incentives with the community's economic development priorities bolsters the local economy and ensures a vibrant business environment.

2.21 PortageInvest – Developing a Protein Cluster

As part of a forward-looking and dynamic investment attraction effort, Portage, building on the success of Roquette, has the ability to target Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the burgeoning Protein Cluster sector. This strategy would begin after addressing several of the other strategies, and after discussing with Roquette, to make sure the community is better prepared to capitalize on the efforts. This strategic initiative focuses on creating an environment that welcomes and supports businesses, entrepreneurs, and investors interested in the protein industry, which encompasses agriculture, food processing, and

related sectors. This strategy will further demonstrate Portage la Prairie's commitment to becoming a prominent hub for protein-related industries. With a strategic focus on targeted FDI, this initiative aims to capitalize on the growth potential of the Protein Cluster while contributing to the overall prosperity and vitality of the community and the broader region.

2.22 BusinessConnect: Innovation Hub – Cultivating Creativity and Entrepreneurship

In the past, a co-working space was established at Southport. While it is no longer in existence, a new space downtown has been established (Crossfield Capital) that has been successful and is a good example of what could be established, not in competition, but in cooperation. The Innovation Hub will help to cultivate creativity and entrepreneurship within the community. This hub would be a vibrant ecosystem where innovators, startups, and entrepreneurs can access resources, mentorship, and collaborative spaces to transform their ideas into thriving businesses. This could be accomplished by identifying a location like Red River College or another building that, with community partners like PRED, CF, and others, will then foster a culture of innovation and provide the necessary tools and support. These efforts will help position Portage la Prairie as a hub for entrepreneurial excellence.

2.23 BusinessConnect: Central Plains Entrepreneur Expo and Trade Show – Providing a Platform for Innovation, Education, and Business Opportunities.

The Portage la Prairie region is an entrepreneurial community, demonstrating many firsts from some unique individuals. This initiative is designed for the local community and Central Plains, again making Portage a leader in supporting business. It will also introduce the opportunity of living and investing in the community. The "Expo" will offer a comprehensive platform for innovation, education, and highlighting business opportunities within the Portage la Prairie region. This annual event would bring together entrepreneurs, business leaders, and others to showcase innovative products, share knowledge, and forge valuable connections. By facilitating networking, education, and exposure to innovative solutions, this initiative contributes to the growth of local businesses, fosters economic development, and helps to create a more positive perception that others may have of the community. There is a Southwest Business Expo that promotes entrepreneurship and business development in the Westman Region. An early step would be to attend the Southwest Expo to collect information on how the expo is managed and delivered and to determine if some communities that form part of the Westman region should be included in the Central Plains Expo.

2.24 PortageInvest: Smart City Initiatives: Transforming Communities Through Smart City Initiatives That Enhance Living and Sustainability.

Over time, the community should pursue the development of smart-city initiatives, such as those supported through the Government of Canada Smart Cities Challenge. The Smart Cities Challenge empowers communities to adopt a smart cities approach to improve the lives of their residents through innovation, data and connected technology. The [Community Solutions Network](#) supports communities to advance their thinking on using smart city approaches to help improve the lives of their residents. While PRED is already working with the Intelligent Community Forum (ICF) to conduct a Smart Cities Assessment, as part of this strategy, we have recommended a number of items that will fit into this program.

2.25 PortageInvest: Green Economic Initiatives – Paving the Way to Sustainable Prosperity

Today's successful companies and communities are adopting ways to commit to being sustainable and encouraging sustainable prosperity. This multifaceted approach integrates environmental stewardship with economic growth by supporting green businesses, clean technologies, and environmentally friendly practices. In Portage, we have already seen the attraction of Roquette, which could be considered an active part of the green agri-food economy.

2.26 Agriculture Centre of Excellence: Manitoba's Agriculture Centre of Excellence

Through implementing several initiatives in this strategy, Portage la Prairie is demonstrating how it is committed to maintaining a strong agricultural ecosystem. The community has a rich agricultural heritage, a diverse agricultural landscape, a strategic location on Highway 1 and two major railways, a collaborative ecosystem, agri-food companies with active sustainable practices, and a strong community commitment towards agriculture. These, combined with several agriculture initiatives included in this strategy, position the community well to be identified as Manitoba's Agriculture Centre of Excellence. The designations are typically self-proclaimed, such as Canada's Wine Capital (Oliver, BC) and the Antique Capital of Canada (Shakespeare, Ontario), leading to a formal registration with the Canadian Intellectual Property Office.

Elevating Portage la Prairie: Economic Growth through Business Engagement, Investment Attraction and Workforce Development Strategies

Priority

- 2.1 **BusinessConnect: Fostering Growth – A Regional Initiative for Business Engagement and Expansion**
- 2.2 **Business Registration Process**
- 2.3 **BusinessConnect: BusinessWalks – A Quick Look at the Regional Economy**
- 2.4 **Inclusive Communities: Complete an Immigration Readiness Assessment**
- 2.5 **BusinessConnect: Portage Industrial Stakeholders Committee**
- 2.6 **PortageInvest: Developers Day – Highlighting Portage Development Opportunities**

Short-term

- 2.7 **BusinessConnect: New Business Celebration Initiative - Celebrating Community Growth**
- 2.8 **BusinessConnect: Roadmap to Entrepreneurship – A Comprehensive Guide**
- 2.9 **Supporting and Attracting Business and Workforce Immigration**
- 2.10 **Agriculture Centre of Excellence: Growing Together – A Regional Agriculture Committee**
- 2.11 **Agriculture Centre of Excellence: Cultivating Knowledge – Ag in the Classroom Initiatives**
- 2.12 **FutureWorkforce - Labour Force and Training Needs Strategy**
- 2.13 **PortageInvest: Best of Class Investment Readiness**
- 2.14 **PortageInvest: Investment Navigator Toolbox – Strategic Resources for Investment Attraction**

Medium-Term

- 2.15 BusinessConnect: Business Concierge Program – Guiding Business Success**
- 2.16 BusinessConnect: Local First Procurement Initiative – Supporting Regional Business**
- 2.17 Agriculture Centre of Excellence: Value of Agriculture – Regional Ag-Industry Tours**
- 2.18 Agriculture Centre of Excellence: Food Hub – Creating a Hub for Food-related Activities and Agricultural Initiatives**
- 2.19 FutureWorkforce - Partnership for Indigenous Labour Force Participation**
- 2.20 PortageInvest: Community Economic Incentive Program – Encouraging Economic Growth Through Incentives**
- 2.21 PortageInvest: Developing a Protein Cluster**

Long-term

- 2.22 BusinessConnect: Innovation Hub - Cultivating Creativity and Entrepreneurship**
- 2.23 BusinessConnect: Southern Manitoba Entrepreneur Expo and Trade Show – Innovation, Education and Opportunity**
- 2.24 PortageInvest: Smart Cities Initiatives – Transforming Communities Through Smart City Initiatives That Enhance Living and Sustainability**
- 2.25 PortageInvest: Green Economic Initiatives - Paving the Way to Sustainable Prosperity**
- 2.26 Agriculture Centre of Excellence: Manitoba's Agriculture Centre of Excellence**

Focus Area 3: Reimagining Portage: Transforming Downtown, Discovering Assets and Enhancing Community Impressions

Reimagining Portage is dedicated to revitalizing and transforming downtown Portage la Prairie and the Mall into vibrant community hubs. In addition, it encompasses strategies to support the development of community infrastructure, steps to determine how others see the community, supports existing initiatives, and ways to showcase what the community has to offer residents, new industries, small businesses, and more.



3.1 **Downtown Revitalization: Downtown Core Identification – A Revitalization Kickstart**

A downtown revitalization kickstart refers to an initial set of strategic actions to jumpstart the revitalization process in a downtown area. This kickstart is often characterized by targeted projects, improvements, or events designed to attract attention, create positive momentum, and stimulate further interest and investment. Before any of these actions can be started, there needs to be a step back to identify the geographic area of downtown Portage la Prairie. The community consultation process demonstrated no clear understanding of where the downtown starts and ends. A downtown revitalization kickstart will begin with creating a downtown committee whose first step is to designate where downtown is and start the revitalization process.

3.2 **PortageInvest: Reimagining Portage la Prairie Mall – A Design Charrette**

A Design Charrette is a strategic initiative to transform the Portage la Prairie Mall into a vibrant and innovative community space. This strategy involves conducting a design charrette and gathering input from various stakeholders, including local businesses, residents, and urban planners, to envision a revitalized mall that better serves the community's needs. By reimagining the mall's layout, amenities, and overall design, this approach seeks to breathe new life into the commercial center, fostering economic growth and enhancing residents' and visitors' shopping and recreational experiences. Through collaborative brainstorming and creative solutions, the design charrette process will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the Portage la Prairie Mall, making it a hub for commerce, residential, entertainment, and community engagement.

3.3 **Downtown Revitalization: Transforming into a Vibrant Community Hub**

Once the committee has been formed and the downtown geographic area has been defined, a downtown strategy focused on transforming downtown Portage la Prairie can be developed. The strategy may include physical improvements such as a façade program (the existing Business Storefront Improvement Grants), continued streetscape enhancements (i.e.

the recently completed Saskatchewan Avenue West upgrade) or creating public spaces with available public wifi. Additionally, events, promotions, or economic incentives are designed to draw people back to the downtown area, encouraging residents and businesses to participate in revitalization. A downtown revitalization program aims to catalyze positive change, set the stage for sustained redevelopment, and create a more vibrant and economically thriving center.

3.4 **Connecting Communities – A Wayfinding Initiative for Regional Exploration**

Wayfinding refers to systems that help people find their way from one place to another. Many elements contribute to wayfinding, from landmarks to maps to handheld GPS systems to ask for directions from a friendly stranger. Good wayfinding is a blend of art and science. When executed well, wayfinding can give directional information on what is around to experience. It can lead to additional time spent in the community and surrounding area. It can increase future residents' awareness of what they can see and do if they live there. In addition, businesses will benefit from visitors staying longer in the community and attracting potential residents and workforce. Wayfinding is more than a tourism initiative and works hand in hand with economic development goals.

Wayfinding is typically done by signage or creating an app for smartphone use. Both have pros and cons. Some communities have opted to create or purchase an app that can be downloaded onto cell phones or tablets and connected to wifi or cellular networks. These apps can be used to promote various points of interest and promote local businesses. Portage la Prairie needs to create a wayfinding strategy to determine the best mix of tools to increase awareness of the region.

3.5 **BusinessConnect: Storefront Renewal – Enhancing Business Facades for Community Vitality**

A pleasant community appearance increases the community's first impression as seen by a visitor or potential new resident. It increases home values, encourages new business investment, and demonstrates vibrancy. This strategy works hand in hand with downtown revitalization and can be expanded to include areas outside the downtown core. The City and Chamber have established the Business Storefront Improvement Grants program, which provides financial support for local businesses to improve building exteriors. The community consultation demonstrated that most businesses are unaware of the program, and those who felt they did not have the time to apply. It is strongly recommended the program be continued and, if possible, expanded to include the RM. There may be additional opportunities to bring in new partnerships, including local construction companies, hardware stores (discounts on paint, lumber, etc.), or even a partnership with the School District to utilize students to paint or do minor repairs as part of work experience programs.

3.6 **Unlocking Growth Potential: Addressing Infrastructure Challenges for Industry and Commerce**

Having proper infrastructure for industry and commerce refers to well-developed physical, logistical, and technological facilities and systems that support businesses' smooth operation and growth. Proper infrastructure is crucial for attracting investments, encouraging business

development, and promoting regional economic growth. It creates an environment where industries and commerce can thrive, contributing to job creation, increased productivity, and overall prosperity. PRED can work with existing partners, industry and businesses to ensure there is adequate water, sanitary and transportation capacity in priority expansion areas, including Southport, ensure the adequate supply of industrial and commercial land, review existing policy to ensure flexible infrastructure standards and competitive standards and costs that aid in the ongoing attraction of new business.

3.7 Portage First: Community Ambassador Program:

An Economic Development Community Ambassador Program is an initiative designed to engage and empower community members or stakeholders to act as advocates and representatives for economic development efforts within the community. Ambassadors are crucial in promoting economic growth, attracting investment, and fostering a positive business environment. For this initiative, this type of program should be expanded to not only support the attraction of business but also to the attraction of new residents. A list, managed by PRED in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, of community volunteers willing to meet with potential new residents to tour them to schools, shopping areas, recreation centres, the hospital and more will go a long way to attracting new residents.

3.8 PortageInvest: Future Portage: Creating Virtual Reality Demonstration Videos

One of the newest trends in economic development is the creation of [360° Virtual Reality Videos](#), allowing viewers to discover a new part of the world without physically being on location. 360-degree video allows viewers to be transported to specific places, buildings, and areas by showcasing a region's unique assets, amenities, quality of life, and events. After the RM and the City of Portage have implemented various initiatives identified in this strategy and the strategy developed by 13 Ways, consideration should be given to contracting with a company like Golden Shovel, which has developed the technology to develop these types of videos for communities to focus on Familiarization Tours (for investment attraction), Quality of Life factors, Tourism, and Resident Attraction. All of these focuses will be essential to highlight and will help bring the strength of the Portage Region to a much broader audience in an interactive and informative manner.

3.9 First Impressions Community Exchange Program

People who visit your community for the first time can offer fresh perspectives and unique insights about your services, transportation, accommodations, and tourist attractions. You can tap into these insights through the First Impressions Community Exchange program. The program has you pair up with another community and see what kinds of first impressions your community makes when people visit for the first time. It is a simple and cost-effective initiative contributing to positive and effective community action.

3.10 InvestPortage: Attracting Downtown Anchor Tenant for Increased Visitation

Like shopping malls, thriving downtown areas often benefit from one or two key anchor tenants. These anchor tenants form the foundation of the downtown's appeal, drawing visitors from beyond the typical trade area. Additionally, they serve as a magnet, attracting

customers who, in turn, support the smaller independent retailers within the downtown. Unlike malls, these anchors need not be national retailers or chains. Recent years have witnessed a transformation in downtowns, with a growing focus on residential development and amenities to attract and retain residents in the core areas. For instance, craft breweries are increasingly choosing downtown locations, becoming essential assets alongside other complementary amenities such as specialty food vendors and destination-oriented businesses. These "clusters" become the anchors in the downtown. Smaller downtowns, like Portage la Prairie, face unique challenges distinct from larger communities. By implementing a number of the initiatives in this plan, PRED will be better positioned to begin marketing efforts to attract businesses like a brewery (work with the [Manitoba Brewers Association](#) to market to existing breweries) and to attend events like the [ICSC@Whistler](#) conference that is attended by numerous communities in Western Canada, all marketing to attract new commercial development and mall enhancements.

Reimagining Portage: Transforming Downtown, Discovering Assets and Enhancing Community Impressions Strategies

Priority

- 3.1 Downtown Revitalization: Downtown Core Identification – A Revitalization Kickstart
- 3.2 PortageInvest: Reimagining Portage la Prairie Mall – A Design Charrette

Short-term

- 3.3 Downtown Revitalization: Transforming into a Vibrant Community Hub
- 3.4 Connecting Communities – A Wayfinding Initiative for Regional Exploration
- 3.5 BusinessConnect: Storefront Renewal – Enhancing Business Facades for Community Vitality

Medium-Term

- 3.6 Unlocking Growth Potential: Addressing Infrastructure Challenges for Industry and Commerce
- 3.7 PortageFirst: Community Ambassador Program
- 3.8 PortageInvest: Future Portage – Creating Virtual Reality Demonstration Videos
- 3.9 InvestPortage: Attracting Downtown Anchor Tenant for Increased Visitation

Long-term

- 3.10 First Impressions Community Exchange Program

Focus Area 4: Empowering Progress: Enhancing and Promoting Quality of Life in Portage la Prairie

Empowering progress is an economic development focus area dedicated to enhancing and promoting the quality of life within the community. Through targeted initiatives, this approach seeks to improve various aspects of community life, including inclusivity, housing, increasing residents and amenities, and overall well-being. By fostering an environment that prioritizes the holistic welfare of residents, Empowering Progress aims to attract and retain a diverse population, contributing to sustained economic growth and a vibrant, thriving community.



4.1 Inclusive Communities: Portage is Welcoming to All – Foster and Strengthen Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives

When economic development fosters and strengthens diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, it means intentionally creating an environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds have equitable opportunities to participate in and benefit from economic growth and development. The community consultation process highlighted the importance of coordinating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. This may include developing a comprehensive strategy to integrate DEI principles into the core of economic development and a working partnership between PRED and other organizations like Portage Learning and Literacy Centre (PLLC) and Portage Local Immigration Partnership (PLIP). The initial step will be the creation of a DEI Task Force or Committee that will play a crucial role in promoting and advancing DEI within the community. The PLLC and PLIP may be working on programs to complement this initiative. Any initial steps should incorporate both organizations to ensure there is no duplication. It may be that PRED needs only to be more involved with current initiatives from PLLC and PLIP.

4.2 PortageLive: Enhancing Community Living Through Housing Initiatives

The City, Portage la Prairie Community Revitalization Corporation and PRED commissioned a Housing Strategy in 2023. The Housing Strategy aims to understand better residents' existing housing challenges and what types of housing are needed in the future. The strategy includes two main parts: a housing needs assessment and a housing demand study. While the strategy focused primarily on the City, regional impacts and opportunities were considered. The strategy provides 11 recommendations focused on five key areas. There is a risk of the strategy not being implemented and no clear understanding of who will be the lead. To reduce the risk, a housing committee should be created. The committee would review and implement the housing strategy, address housing-related issues, and advocate for housing policies. The objectives include promoting affordable housing, addressing homelessness and contributing to the overall well-being of residents. While PRED doesn't need to lead the committee, PRED needs to have a seat at the table. The lead organization needs to have a

genuine interest in addressing housing challenges, possess the necessary expertise and be capable of mobilizing resources and stakeholders effectively. Successful community housing committees often involve a collaborative effort, drawing on the strengths of multiple partners to create comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

4.3 PortageLive: Transit-Led Growth – A Strategy for Economic Development

In 2021, the City commissioned a Feasibility Study of Public Transit to identify possible methods of providing affordable public transit in the community, including potential service options to the industrial park(s) and adjacent communities. The report made several recommendations, including undertaking a transit service as a pilot project. The report recommended the pilot project should be a simple system limiting up-front capital investment through the purchase of smaller vehicles (minivans). It should remain in operation for at least two years to allow the community to adapt to the service and establish new travel behaviours. To date, the pilot project has not been implemented. Like the housing committee strategy, PRED does not need to lead this initiative but should be involved as there are strong and direct links between transit and economic development. PRED can assist with sourcing funding resources, advocacy and integration with broader economic development goals

4.4 PortageLive: Vibrant Living – Resident Attraction Initiatives

Attracting residents is a strategic effort communities undertake to attract new residents and retain existing ones. The goal is to enhance the livability and desirability of a place, making it an appealing destination for individuals and families. A well-executed resident attraction initiative contributes to population growth, economic vitality, and community vibrancy, ultimately making a location more competitive in attracting and retaining residents. While PRED has recently released a new Community Profile, an additional profile designed for resident attraction should be developed. The resident attraction profile serves as a marketing tool, providing a comprehensive snapshot of the community's strengths and advantages as a place to live. The profile includes information on the community, quality of life features, healthcare, education, housing, recreational activities, connectivity, local services, community engagement opportunities, testimonials, and success stories from current residents. The profile must also incorporate visuals to enhance the visual appeal and convey a sense of living in the community.

4.5 PortageLive: Community Voices – Resident Stories

This strategy aims to leverage current residents' positive experiences and insights as powerful testimonials, showcasing the community's appeal, livability, and unique qualities to potential residents. Using videos is increasingly becoming important to promote economic development and the livability of a community. Videos should be approximately one minute to keep the audience's attention. They should be fast-moving, include people and scenery and get to the heart of what the community has to sell. Video testimonials can include area residents, businesses, health care professionals, etc. and should be a combination of talking and the opportunities. PRED should consider developing a series of videos like Powell River,

BC, which has resident attractions, and developing videos highlighting the benefits of living and investing in the area.

4.6 Inclusive Communities: Dialogue on Community Development

The community engagement process indicated a desire for an ongoing venue or forum where economic, social, cultural and environmental issues could be individually and collectively discussed. It would allow residents, businesses, community organizations, and local governments to express, listen to, and discuss issues and concerns on various community economic development topics. For the local government(s), it can help inform policy, while for stakeholders, it can help build more common ground for action. Dialogue is different from debate in that it prioritizes listening to enhance understanding. It seeks common perspectives and goals and allows participants to express their interests while emphasizing evidence-based analysis.

4.7 Inclusive Communities: The Growth of the Arts and Culture Sector

It is difficult to quantify the economic impact of arts and culture. Still, it is generally accepted that it is an important contributor to various economic sectors and quality of life. The sector is diverse, embracing the visual and performing arts, events and festivals, museums and other forms of interpretation. Most community engagement participants expressed a desire for the sector's growth, from tour and festival development to exploring Indigenous forms of interpretation and incorporating technology into new experiences. Working with partner organizations, including the Chamber of Commerce and existing art and culture groups, PRED could participate in a visioning process to position the community as a centre for arts and culture. This initiative is not expected to be led by PRED.

4.8 FutureWorkforce: Healthcare Recruitment

Healthcare, specifically trained skilled positions, was identified as a future concern and an upcoming priority during the public consultation process due to the 2025 completion of the hospital. While healthcare is not a regional or local government responsibility, many communities and regions are taking progressive steps to market physicians and other healthcare workers. Leaving the efforts to a health authority may not result in the success that the community would determine acceptable. PRED can work with Southern Health to develop an acceptable healthcare program to meet the needs of all area residents. Any work should be coordinated with other organizations and agencies in healthcare and labour force recruitment. PRED can assist in many ways, including developing specific recruitment materials for healthcare workers, establishing a Healthcare Recruitment Host Team, and working with existing businesses or other agencies to assist in spousal employment.

4.9 PortageLive: The Portage Pride 2030 Initiative: Connecting, Caring, Celebrating

A Civic Pride Program is an initiative to foster a sense of pride, ownership, and engagement among community members in their locality. These programs are designed to promote civic responsibility, enhance the quality of life, and strengthen the community's identity. Civic

pride programs typically involve various activities and strategies to engage residents and build a stronger, more cohesive community. The Portage region does have a lot to be proud of, and that story needs to resonate throughout the community. Diverse business, extensive recreational infrastructure, upgraded Saskatchewan Avenue, a revitalized downtown (after implementation of the strategic items in this strategy), large employers, Southport, new Health Care facilities, a culturally diverse population, and neighbouring Indigenous communities, are just some of the things that need to be celebrated. While it is not expected that PRED would lead this initiative, it is one that they should play a role in. Working with other stakeholders, a committee could be established to lead various community pride initiatives, potentially including initiatives like Community Cleanup Days, Public Art and Beautification, Education and Awareness Programs (Proof Points of many firsts and community strengths), youth engagement and community awards voted on by community members. A program that fosters community pride can be pivotal in cultivating a sense of unity and belonging among residents, enhancing the community's overall quality of life.

Empowering Progress: Enhancing and Promoting Quality of Life in Portage Strategies

Priority

- 4.1 **Inclusive Communities: Portage is Welcoming to All – Foster and Strengthen Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives**
- 4.2 **PortageLive: Enhancing Community Living Through Housing Initiatives**

Short-term

- 4.3 **PortageLive: Transit-Led Growth – A Strategy for Economic Development**
- 4.4 **PortageLive: Vibrant Living – Resident Attraction Initiatives**

Medium-Term

- 4.5 **PortageLive: Community Voices – Resident Stories**
- 4.6 **Inclusive Communities: Dialogue on Community Development**
- 4.7 **Inclusive Communities: The Growth of the Arts and Culture Sector**

Long-term

- 4.8 **FutureWorkforce: Healthcare Recruitment**
- 4.9 **PortageLive: The Portage Pride 2030 – Connecting, Caring and Celebrating**

Region of Portage la Prairie

Economic Development Strategy

2024 – 2034



Tourism Economic Impact Assessment for the Region of Portage la Prairie



**PORTAGE
LA PRAIRIE**

MANITOBA, CANADA

Island on the Prairies

December 2023

SINCLAIR BARNES LIMITED
— BRAND & MARKETING STRATEGY —

PROBE RESEARCH INC.

**GEORGETOWN
NEWBURY GROUP**

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Consultancy Team:

For more information on this report, please contact:



Margaret Egan
Director and Project Strategy Lead

SINCLAIR BARNES LIMITED
— BRAND & MARKETING STRATEGY —


 204-899-5858

 margaret.egan@sinclairbarneslimited.com



Mary Agnes Welch
Principal and Project Data Lead

PROBE RESEARCH INC.

 204-470-8862

 maryagnes@probe-research.com



Wilf Falk
Project Modelling Lead

**GEORGETOWN
NEWBURY GROUP**

 778-533-2918

 wilf_falk@hotmail.com

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Five top takeaways



Tourism in the Portage Region has an overall estimated annual impact on the Manitoba economy of \$29.6 million (GDP).



Roughly 125,000 people stay in Portage's hotels and motels per year – for sports tournaments, events and festivals as well as business.

Visitors spent an estimated \$8.1 million on accommodations and campgrounds, and another \$5.5 million on restaurants and pubs (among other things).

Tourism generates an estimated 445 jobs (directly serving visitors and indirectly in spin-off and supporting industries).



Visitors to Portage generate \$6.5 million in tax revenue (including \$815,000 to local governments).

Recommendations

- Focus tourism development around four opportunities: sports, Indigenous experiences, agri and ecotourism
- Market events as visitor attractors
- Expand the tourism stakeholder committee to increase participation, collaboration and buy-in
- Create a permanent tourism function
- Co-ordinate and collect visitor data to track impact



Where to start in 2024



Market

- Four planned, ticketed events in lead opportunity sectors: Portage Cup, Portage Ex, Adventure Games, Air Show



Build

- Permanent staffed tourism function
- Key visitor tools – events calendar, visitor guide, etc.



Gather

- Visitor data from tourism operators to update the Portage Model

About This Project



This chapter briefly summarizes the project context, objectives and methodology.

Context and background

Background

The Region of Portage la Prairie is home to a growing cluster of international agri-food manufacturers and research facilities. Less well-known for visitors are Portage's natural assets and recreational and cultural amenities. This combination creates significant opportunities to realize the Region's ambitious vision to be recognized as one of Manitoba's most desirable tourist locations. Portage Regional Economic Development (PRED) and specifically the Portage Regional Tourism Committee (PRTC) supported by its place brand Island on the Prairies is "on a strategic journey to ensure that tourism continues to be a self-sustaining industry and grows to meet the needs of the tourism stakeholders".

A key goal of the PRTC's Strategic Plan 2021-2026 is to grow local support for tourism. To harness tourism as an economic driver, Portage needs to build a comprehensive business case and identify transformational strategies to drive its plans.

About this project

As part of its strategic plans, the PRTC needs to benchmark and track the economic impact of tourism within the wider regional economy while also creating strategies to grow tourism that will have the greatest impact on the economy and the Region's quality of life.

To support these dual goals, PRED and the PRTC commissioned a team of consultants led by:

- Margaret Egan, Sinclair Barnes Limited
- Mary Agnes Welch, Probe Research Inc.
- Wilf Falk, former Chief Statistician of Manitoba, now with the Georgetown Newbury Group

The project was carried out between September and December 2023 and relied heavily on the input and guidance of Portage la Prairie's tourism leaders and operators. As well, we worked closely with Eve O'Leary, PRED's Director of Economic Development, and Kellie Verwey, the Region's Tourism Coordinator. We are very grateful for their active and valuable collaboration.

What we did

To benchmark the economic value of tourism and to offer some recommendations for growth, the consulting team did the following:

Measured visitor numbers and value

- Estimated visitor numbers in the past year, with a focus on “heads in beds”
- Estimated spending patterns and impact (spending, GDP value, jobs and tax revenue)
- Created an economic impact model that can be reproduced relatively easily to allow the PRTC (and other communities) to estimate their tourism impact

Consulted stakeholders, tourism operators and the wider community

- In-depth interviews with more than 35 stakeholders and site visits to attractions and tourism assets
- A short community survey (N=380), to identify the Region’s hidden gems and gaps in the visitor experience

Determined the key drivers of tourism to Portage and the competition

- Based on qualitative data-gathering

Created recommendations and strategies for future investment and collaboration

- With a focus on the Region’s existing strategic goals

Tourism Economic Impact

In this chapter, we estimate the impact of visitors on the Region's economy, jobs and tax revenue.



The Region's tourism assets

The Portage Region has 110 tourism assets – the kinds of museums, local shops, walking and biking trails, family-friendly waterparks, summer festivals and quirky roadside attractions that are unique to Portage and that ensure visitors have a complete experience.

About 20 per cent of these are in the City of Portage la Prairie, but the rest are in the RM, including many of the major draws such as Delta Beach, Delta Marsh, the National Indigenous Residential School Museum and the Manitoba Airshow.

However, only about 20 per cent of Portage's assets are market ready, meaning they are reliable enough to support sustained tourism, have strong branding and website content, do some of their own marketing and can be part of packages and discounts with other operators to entice visitors. Many of Portage's assets are in need of significant improvements and upgrades to meet and exceed visitor expectations and to bring them up to market readiness.

Number of tourism assets by category



Tracking visitors to the Region

Improvements to data-gathering by tourism operators would strengthen our understanding of who visits, how long they stay and what they spend. We have some anecdotal insights from operators (detailed on Page 24), and some attractions do keep useful data that help us calibrate the size of some drivers of visitation. But more work gathering and tracking day trippers would be valuable.

As well, Travel Manitoba tracks visitation patterns throughout the province using mobile phone tracking. In 2019, before the pandemic, about 73 per cent of Portage's visitors were from Manitoba (mostly from Winnipeg, but some from Brandon and Winkler) and about 21 per cent were from elsewhere in Canada. Another six per cent were from the United States and beyond.



In 2023, the Whoop & Hollar Folk Festival brought an estimated 200 out-of-towners to Portage. That includes about 50 people who camped at the festival for the weekend and likely spent additional dollars in town on meals, shopping and gas.

Fort la Reine sold over 2,650 admission tickets and welcomed 600 students in the summer of 2023. About 60 per cent of those were from outside the Portage Region.



Tourism's total economic impact

Total estimated visitors to the Portage Region: 125,000

An estimate of how many visitors spent a night (or more) in the Region at hotels and motels between Sept. 2022 and Aug. 2023. Another 1,400 people stay at the Region's campgrounds on average each day during the 15-week summer season.

Total direct spending by visitors: \$26.5 million

An estimate of what visitors spent in the Region between Sept. 2022 and Aug. 2023 on fuel, accommodations, food, attractions, VLTs, etc.

GDP: \$29.6 million

The final impact on the Manitoba-wide economy – the amount of direct and spin-off visitor spending that remains in the province and the value of goods and services produced in the Manitoba economy. It's not possible to isolate the GDP impact on Portage alone, though a great deal of the overall impact would be felt in the Region.

Employment: 445 jobs

Both part-time and full-time jobs, direct and in spin-off industries.

Tax revenue: \$6.5 million

Taxes to all three levels of government generated by visitors to Portage, including income taxes, PST, GST and others.

Caution: These economic impacts should be treated as general estimates only and never as absolutes. Having said that, these estimates are very conservative, with some of our assumptions detailed in the following pages. The spending, occupancy rates and length-of-stay estimates were deliberately calibrated to the low end of the scale to ensure credibility.

As well, these estimates do not include spending by day trippers because very little reliable data exists on the number of short, tourism-driven visits to Portage's attractions. Similarly, these estimates do not include spending by drive-through travellers who may stop in Portage for gas or a meal.

A detailed report on the economic impact figures is available in Appendix D, with a glossary of terms on Page 78.

Key economic impact figures: Breakdown

	Hotel guests	Campers
Capacity	344 hotel rooms	615 campsites (seasonal and overnight)
Estimated occupancy	50%	65%
Estimated average party size	2 people (staying on average 1.5 nights)	3.5 people
Estimated number of visitors	125,500	113,900 person days (not unique visitors)
Estimated nightly rate	\$113 including taxes*	\$30 on average for overnight stays, \$2,300 per season for seasonal sites
Estimated total spending (meals, shopping, accommodations, etc.)	\$20.8 million	\$5.7 million
Estimated total tax revenue (all levels of government, including spin-off revenue)	\$5.2 million (including \$700,000 to local governments)	\$1.3 million (including \$115,000 to local governments)
Estimated jobs (direct and spin-off)	345 jobs	100 jobs
Estimated GDP impact (to the province)	\$22.9 million	\$6.7 million

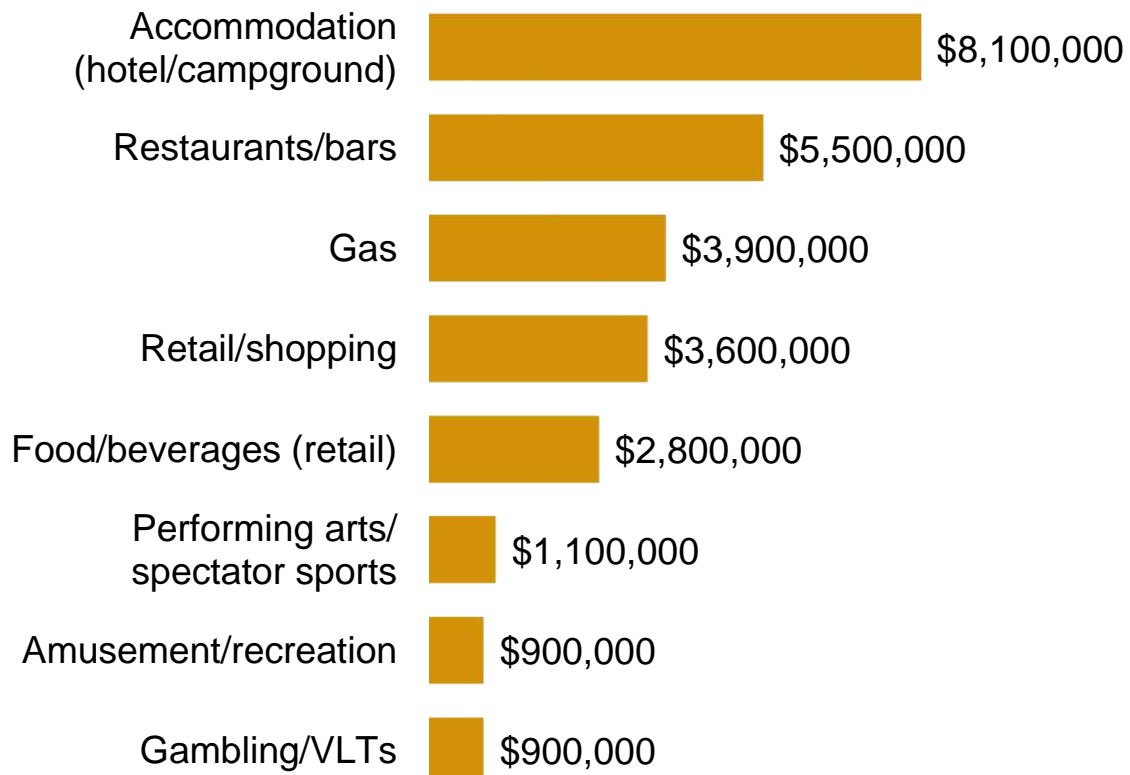
*Members of the PRTC, in vetting and validating these estimates, felt this figure was low. However, we opted to keep this estimate at \$113 to ensure our impact estimates remain conservative, partly because the impact estimates are driven so strongly by the “big ticket item” of accommodation costs.

How we estimated tourism's impact

- 1** We focused on “heads in beds” – hotel and motel guests and short-stay and seasonal campers. The tourism industry typically defines a tourist as someone who travelled more than 40km to visit a location, so using overnight visitors as the foundational input for this economic impact study makes sense. We can be confident nearly all heads in beds (or tents) are indeed visitors. As well, overnight visitors tend to be the high-value ones. They spend at restaurants, shops and attractions to a higher degree than day trippers.
- 2** We approached local accommodation operators for data on occupancy rates, visitor spending and other visitation data. Responses from the Region's hotels and campgrounds was limited, however. So, in most cases, we used provincial and publicly available data to estimate occupancy rates, average visitors per room and other inputs.
- 3** We estimated the average daily visitor spend on restaurants, accommodations, attractions, gas, etc. This helped determine the total visitor spending in the Region, as well as the spin-off or trickle-down effects of this spending.
- 4** We vetted and validated our estimates with local operators, including the PRTC, to ensure we had not over- or underestimated occupancy rates, party size and spending.
- 5** The visitor spending figures were run through an economic model (the same one used by the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics) to estimate the direct and spin-off effects of visitor spending. This includes the spending that hotels, gas stations, attractions and other tourism-related business do on staff, supplies, etc. It also includes trickle-down effects of visitor spending – hotel workers who then spend their wages in the community, for example, or suppliers to hotels who pay their own suppliers. The model also helps estimate the spin-off effects on jobs and tax revenue. The multipliers used in this model to estimate the spin-off effects of visitor spending are those of Statistics Canada from 2020, the best available. Details of these spending and spin-off figures are on the next page.

Visitor spending estimates

Estimated total visitor spending in each category (2022-2023)



Highlights of key estimates

(Detailed estimates are available in Appendix D)

- 344 hotel rooms in the Region at eight properties (including the Barker Suites at Southport, but not including the former Days Inn, now the Howard Johnson by Wyndham, which was closed during the study period)
- 615 campsites, over six campgrounds
- 50% hotel occupancy rate on average*, and a 65% campsite occupancy rate
- Average room rate: \$113 with taxes. Rack rates range from \$85 to \$140 per night, however discounted rates are common, so we used an estimate on the low end of the scale
- Average length stay: 1.5 nights for hotels
- Average daily hotel visitor spending on restaurants and bars: \$30 per person for the first day and \$15 for the second
- Average spending on gas: \$40 per person for a 1.5-night hotel stay

*To compare, occupancy rate data gathered by Domo and generously supplied by Travel Manitoba suggests that the average occupancy of Manitoba hotels outside of Winnipeg and Brandon was 63% during our study period. For the Morden Winkler area, it was 49%. No specific data exists yet for the Portage Region, so we used an estimate on the very low end of available Domo data.

Impact of future tourism growth

Small increases to visitor stays and spending can have a significant effect on the Region's local economy. For example:

- If average hotel occupancy increases from 50 per cent to 53 per cent, this adds an additional 8,000 new visitors to the Region and increases consumer spending by about \$1.3 million.
- If average hotel stays are increased from 1.5 night to 2, the total visitor spending could increase by as much as \$4 million.
- Similarly, if average visitor spending in high-value areas such as restaurants and bars increased by an additional \$10 a day, this adds nearly \$2 million in total visitor spending.



Next steps in impact data gathering

Collecting good visitor data over the long term

The economic impact figures in this report are estimates – reasonable ones but estimates all the same. Like nearly every smaller jurisdiction, establishing visitor counts, spending and origins is difficult, but the PRTC could lead by building trust and collaboration with accommodation operators to create a low-barrier process to gather their data, including:

- Average occupancy rates and average party size for both hotels and campsites
- Average room/site rates
- Average length of stay for both hotels and seasonal/overnight sites
- Visitor origins (from postal codes, for example) to allow the PRTC to better target marketing.

The PRTC could also ensure all major hotels in the Region are contributing to hotel occupancy data tracked by Travel Manitoba (gathered by the data firm STR). Four hotels in a region are needed to create localized findings, and Portage is one short.

Similarly, there is a significant opportunity to support attractions, festivals and venues to gather at least basic data on day trippers coming from 40km or more away – their numbers, their origins and their visitation patterns.

Updating the Portage Model

As part of this project, the tool created to calculate tourism's economic impact in Portage can also be used in-house by the PRTC to track growth over time. The specific inputs and estimates would need to be reviewed and refined each time – and ideally updated with actual data from the Region's hotels and accommodations. The impact multipliers would also need to be updated occasionally. But the tool can be used to benchmark the impact of increased overnight visitors, major events that might boost average spending on restaurants and attractions and other variables.

The Portage Model can also be replicated easily in other smaller tourism destinations in Manitoba who may wish to learn from Portage's innovation.

What We Heard

In this chapter, we summarize what we heard from stakeholders, local leaders, tourism operators and the community at large that helped inform our insights and recommendations.

What stakeholders told us

This Tourism Economic Impact Assessment conducted more than 35 site visits and interviews with stakeholders, municipal leaders and others with specific knowledge of Portage's tourism assets and potential. These interviews focused on practical ideas to maximize the impact of tourism and the current barriers operators and businesspeople face in doing so.

As background, we note that there is overwhelming support for tourism as a sustainable economic development driver. Stakeholders – most of whom are also Portage residents – are confident tourism can grow in a way that benefits stakeholders, promotes the Portage brand in a positive manner while also honouring the wishes of the community to maintain the character of their Region.

The insights that follow summarize the key themes gleaned from stakeholders, and these insights also informed our understanding of the drivers of tourism and our recommendations for growth. (A full list of those interviewed is included in the Appendix.)

Stakeholders are cautiously optimistic

“ It's not there yet. Not everyone buys into tourism yet, but it is better since PRED took over. So, I'm optimistic.

There is a lack of common understanding

“ Some people are against tourism, but we really haven't laid out the benefit, the value of tourism, and it's not just the revenue or more events – all these things – the recreation, the museums, the nicer shops, protecting the rural way of life. They're for us too, the residents. It all comes down to quality of life.

And a lack of municipal self-esteem

“ We are our own worst critics. We talk ourselves down, so how can we expect visitors to become interested?

What stakeholders told us (cont'd)

Key gap: a tourism department

- “ We don't make it easy for visitors to know what to do, what's open and when. There's no one stop shop.
- “ A central events calendar that visitors know where to find – that would make such a difference.

Confusion about who funds tourism

- “ I think that's not clear. I think they're trying to earmark the accommodation tax for this.

Portage can be great hosts

- “ We're great when we collaborate like the hockey tournaments, but we don't do that enough.

Losing volunteers is a problem

- “ We have to find a way of retaining volunteers and bringing on new ones so that the same people aren't asked to do everything.

Location as an advantage

- “ If we make things interesting for people, then our location is not a problem – 45 minutes from Winnipeg or Brandon.

Restaurant scene is improving

- “ Yes, we've got the franchises, which work great for hockey teams, and there are some good ethnic ones as well which newcomers are opening.

Crime is an issue

- “ I do think people overstate this, but it's something we think about because we're looking at bringing in more sports rentals.

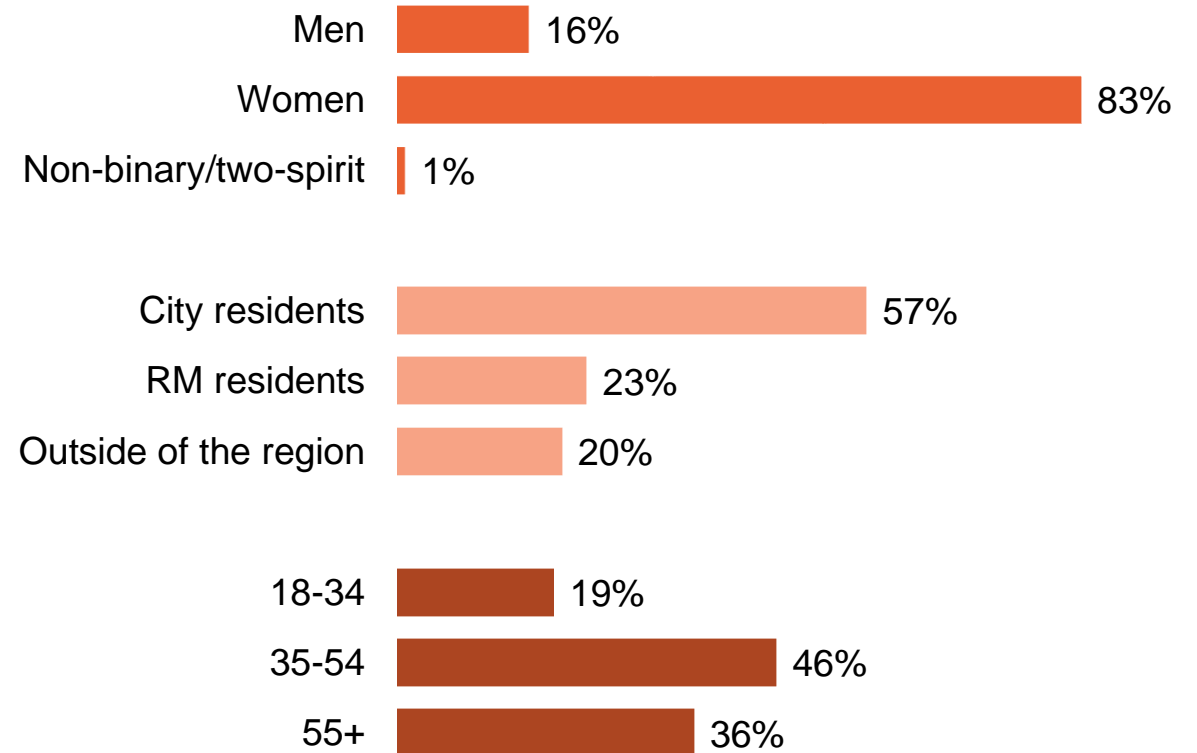
What the community told us

In addition to stakeholder interviews, we also conducted and analyzed a short community survey to understand what regional residents (and some visitors) think makes Portage unique and how it could develop visitation.

This survey was:

- In field starting Oct. 31, 2023 for four weeks
- Shared on social media (through the Island on the Prairies brand, PRED's channels and amplified by members of the PRTC)
- While the survey was completed by 380 people, it is not statistically representative of the regional population so unlike a true public opinion poll, the results can't be applied to the Region's population as a whole. However, its insights are valuable in understanding the public's views on Portage's tourism potential.

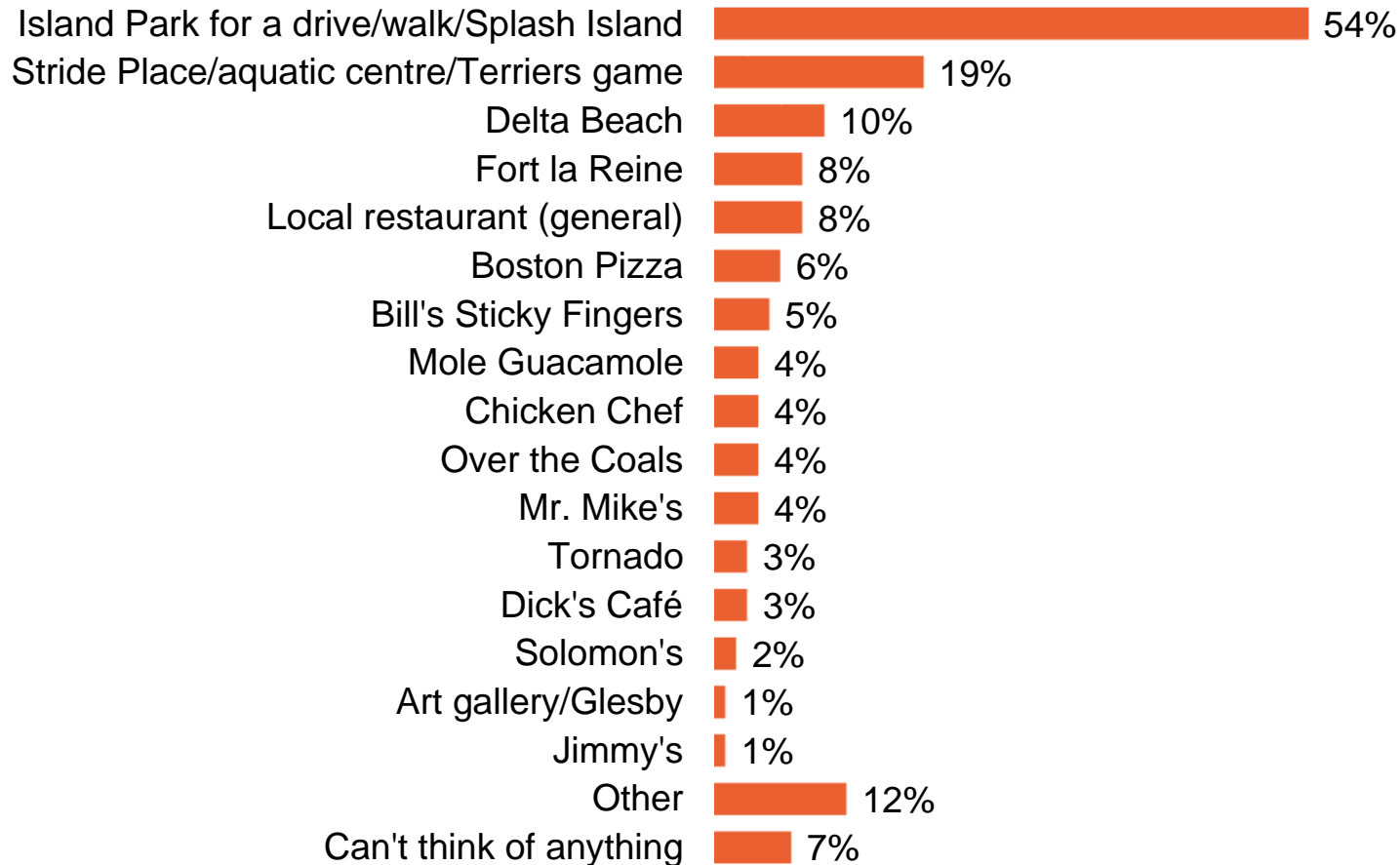
Profile of N=380 respondents



Portage's top attractions

Island Park, Stride Place and various restaurants top the list of places residents take visitors

Q1. When family and friends visit Portage – the City and the RM – where do you take them? (Could be a restaurant, shop, museum, park, attraction – a hidden gem or something well-known.)



Outdoor/recreation: 83%



Restaurants: 44%

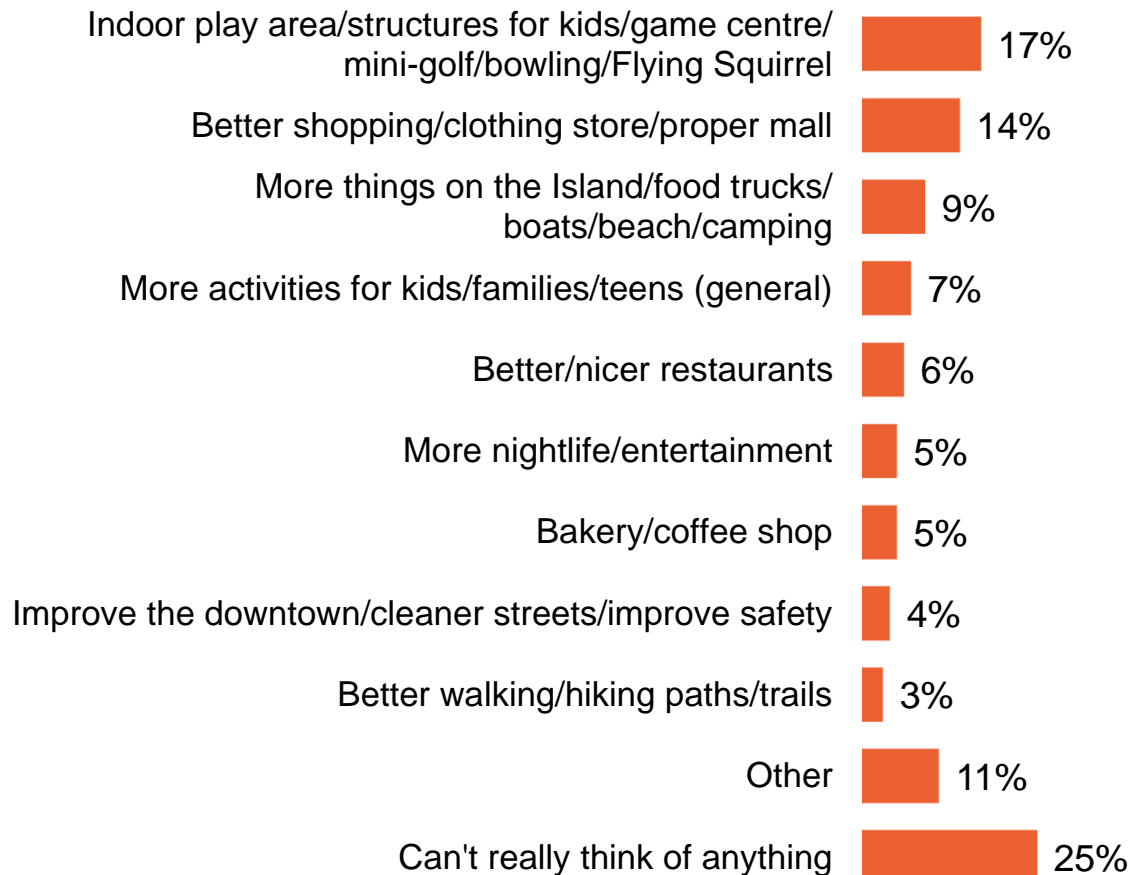


History/art: 9%

Community ideas for tourism growth

Attractions for families, especially indoors, along with better shopping and eating top the wish list

Q3. What is one thing you wish visitors could do or experience in Portage? What is the area missing that could appeal to visitors?



“ It would be nice if there was more fun things to do, escape rooms, bowling, laser tag, arcades. Something both children and adults can part take in and have fun with!

“ A shopping mall. Shopping local is always encouraged but where does one buy clothes. It's very limited here.

“ Pedal boats for Crescent Lake. Canoes & kayaks are a great addition but pedal boats for young kids would be great.

“ More good restaurants (no more pizza or chicken places) and a nice coffee shop/bakery.

“ A place to go and dance and have a couple drinks where you feel safe.

“ A non-chain coffee shop that focuses on good baking and lattes.

“ The core area of town has become less safe and less attractive. Our downtown is receiving a make-over, but it is not safe to take a stroll. Especially after dark.

Drivers of Tourism

A photograph of a water park with a large, multi-lane slide structure in the background. In the foreground, a swimming pool is filled with people of various ages. The scene is set outdoors with trees in the background. The entire image has a semi-transparent green overlay.

In this chapter, we look at the drivers of Portage tourism identified by stakeholders, specifically:

- Who visits Portage now?
- The role of Portage's attractions, events, marketing initiatives and enabling environment

Who visits now (and why?)

Why do people visit the Region of Portage la Prairie? And how can Portage encourage them – and other similar visitors – to visit more often, do more things, stay longer and spend more? To answer those questions, Portage needs to understand current visitors and their motivations to ensure its attractions, events and marketing have maximum appeal and set Portage apart from other nearby destinations targeting the same visitors. Though most operators in the Region don't keep hard visitor numbers, they have a strong anecdotal understanding of who visits and why. Allowing for overlap, these are the main visitor groupings:

Friends & family

Existing Portage connection. Visits are often driven by occasions like weddings and typically not counted as overnight hotel visitors if staying with family.

Independent sports visitors

Hunters, cyclists, bird watchers – attracted by distinctive offerings in the Region or new-to-them experiences such as trails. Generally, these visitors stay at a “base” but present opportunities for added activities (other recreation experiences, restaurants, shopping, museum visits, etc.).

Festivals/special interest

Event-driven visitors – to the Portage Ex or (in 2024) Manitoba Air Show or the Whoop and Hollar Folk Festival. This also includes subject/special interest-driven international visitation to the National Indigenous Residential School Museum of Canada.

Business visitors

To Roquette, McCain, Southport. This includes many international visitors who prize a quintessential prairie experience. Some stay for extended periods so opportunities abound to engage more with attractions, amenities, sports equipment rentals etc. Some are visiting to consider Portage as a place to re-locate or invest.

Families

Including regular, seasonal residents at cottages or seasonal campsites. This also includes day trippers to the beach, Splash Island, Fort la Reine.

Sports tournaments (especially hockey)

Event-driven vs. location driven. These visitors go to where the tournament is held, so reputation for hosting is key and wins bids. Teams tend to stay together in groups, so there is significant potential for impact with chosen hotels and restaurants. Accompanying families are another target, especially for add-on activities, shopping etc.

The role of attractions

The Region has a surprisingly diverse range of attractions for a location its size. However, their quality and effectiveness vary. Attractions range from strong (Stride Place's sports facilities, Splash Island, Prairie Fusion, Crescent Lake) to evolving with high potential (Southport, NIRSM, Delta Marsh). Others, such as Fort la Reine, are in need of upgrades.

These attractions all have potential to drive additional tourism but many have a lot of work to do to become market ready and to offer visitors a complete experience. This is acknowledged by operators and stakeholders, who are positive and optimistic about the future but frustrated by a lack of money, staff, and time to develop the programming and ideas they know will attract more visitors.

All stakeholders we spoke to are keen to collaborate with other businesses and other attractions to create joint programming, visitor itineraries and packages and to cross-promote each other's attractions. They see this as both increasing visitation and revenue for them and creating more compelling visitor offerings and experiences. The caveat is that they cannot do this

alone but would welcome a strong tourism department that could develop concepts, pull together participating organizations and promote these experiences.

An additional challenge is that Portage's attractions tend to be self-contained. Visitors typically visit one destination and not any others or any supporting assets like restaurants and shops. For example, school groups bussed to Fort la Reine often eat packed lunches outdoors on-site, then leave without going into the city itself. Hunters to Delta Beach – high-value visitors – rarely leave the hunting locations and cabins. Business visitors – even long stay – are not often inspired to try local restaurants or see local attractions.

Stakeholders (and residents via the community survey) also said that supporting assets like restaurants, interesting shopping and nightlife need to be improved. However, there is progress, including unique ethnic restaurants such as Taste of Spice, Om, Boun's Lao Street Eatery in Oakville and the Tiki Bar at St. Ambroise. Better information and promotion of these businesses would add options to the visitor experience and boost spending in the Region.

The role of events and festivals

Increasingly, visitors plan trips around occasions and specific events as opposed to a generic desire to visit a destination “someday”. Special events create a sense of excitement, something different from the everyday, outside many visitors’ experiences. Their limited duration prompts visitors to schedule and plan, which creates predictability for tourism operators. Events can generate additional impetus to shop, eat, drop into a museum and spend money.

The Portage Region has some strong events – national sports tournaments at Stride Place, the Portage Cup, the Manitoba Air Show (returning in 2024). All are successful, well managed and attract visitors from across Canada and the US. Most event organisers aim to provide information on Portage’s other attractions, although all admit this would be easier with some central information and marketing.

Portage also has events such the Portage Ex, the Portage Potato Festival and the Whoop & Hollar Folk Festival which draw visitors from outside the Region and beyond.

These have the added benefit of showcasing interesting visitor-appealing aspects of the character of the Region – such as agriculture and music – and provide visitors a chance to meet the locals. Unfortunately, these named events are all at risk as their volunteer base erodes and their long-time volunteer organisers retire.

A stronger central tourism office can create a planned and predictable calendar of Portage Region marquee events. For organisers, this will reduce scheduling conflicts, facilitate shared event resources such as volunteers, encourage collaboration and spin-off involvement of restaurants and shops and give Portage a clear, simple and differentiating visitor-attracting tourism “lineup” to market.



Portage’s tourism asset database counts 12 events and festivals. However, only three could be considered market ready – the Manitoba Air Show, the Portage Ex and the Whoop & Hollar Folk Festival.

The role of marketing initiatives

Portage has differentiating assets and characterful events which could showcase the Region and draw visitors if only they knew about them. Currently, even pre-disposed visitors must work hard to find out what's happening. This lack of awareness and key visitor information was mentioned frequently by stakeholders and seen as a key responsibility of a central tourism function. The Island on the Prairies site is not well known enough yet or high on SEOs. Even if potential visitors find the site, at the time of our interviews, its Events Calendar was not populated.

What not to do is create expensive and mass-market advertising promoting Portage as a destination having “something for everyone”. Instead, Portage’s marketing dollar will go further faster by promoting specific events that also promote Portage, around both scheduled and spontaneous visits from Winnipeg, Brandon and nearby towns.

This occasion and event-led promotion should be backed up with Portage visitors guides, both online and in print. This includes more targeted and themed communication pieces such as the recent (and much-praised) Eat Local and Shop Local postcards.

However, while visitors are the external target, there is an equally important internal marketing imperative. Not all residents are in favour of increased visitation. In some cases, specifically in the RM, there have been incidents such as visitors straying onto private property which have caused conflict. A strong central tourism function that consults, collaborates, coordinates events and ensures buy-in for product development in a manner that works for everyone would go a long way toward mitigating conflict and encouraging investment that works for residents and the Region as a whole.

“ Our reputation in Portage is a lot different from the reality. Tourism is a big part of changing that, part of changing our story.

“ People complain that there’s nothing to do. I think they just don’t know what there is to do. We’re not making it easy – or exciting.

The role of an enabling environment

Stakeholders are encouraged by a renewed sense of importance for tourism and the central tourism office pilot project, although there is some concern that inconsistent levels of funding could stall progress.

Stakeholders stressed the importance of the City and the RM working together on programming, events and promotions. There is strong support for co-ordination, collaboration and joint initiatives that will be mindful of residents' wishes across the Region while showcasing the quality of life of the Region as a whole and creating more opportunities for better visitor experiences. This is especially the case because so many of the differentiating tourism assets are in the RM (two beaches, two hotels, two museums, Delta Marsh) while most of the supporting infrastructure – the restaurants and shops – are in the City.

In a practical sense, there is universal support for a central tourism function that curates and develops tourism products and experiences as well as promotes them. Much of the need is foundational, backroom work – creating a central events calendar to avoid scheduling conflicts, creating visitor communication online and offline, helping operators upgrade their websites and booking sites, building relationships and buy-in. Also, a tourism function that includes a wide range of stakeholders in development can create new initiatives, partnerships, packaging, use of new formats and generally a better, more visitor-appealing tourism industry.

“ It's unique in Portage. We're all doing our own thing, and we don't talk to each other. We need something that brings us together, co-ordinates tourism.

The Competition

In this chapter, we look at what other communities are doing to boost visitation, how Portage stacks up and lessons Portage can learn.



How does Portage stack up?

As discussed, the Portage Region has a surprisingly diverse range of attractions for its size. This alone, if well exploited, provides a competitive edge. Improving the current attractions, creating an occasion and event-driven tourism calendar and effective, creative and targeted marketing can make the difference.

So – what locations does Portage compete with? If a visitor were to choose between Portage and other nearby and somewhat similar locations, how would Portage stack up? Even before the pandemic, three-quarters of Portage’s visitors were Manitobans – mostly from Winnipeg or Brandon. So, we have compared Portage’s tourism appeal to three Manitoba locations – Gimli, Morden and Neepawa.

These three are all close to Winnipeg and could be considered both as day-trip or weekend destinations. All three have some of the same characteristics and structure as Portage – town/city amenities with additional assets in the outlying rural area. All three also face the same challenges as Portage – how to maximise attractions, how to use events as

tourism drivers, how to create more effective marketing and how to bring the community along with tourism development. Finally, in recent years, all three have upped their game and improved their appeal to visitors. Portage can learn lessons from their experiences.

However, these three locations need not be viewed as direct competitors. Today’s visitors want to try different things at different times, see different places, and have a range of local experiences. It’s a matter of “and” (Portage this time, and Gimli next time, etc.) instead of “or” (Portage or/instead of some other destination).

Instead, the concern is standards. Visitors have increasingly high standards for a complete and seamless visitor experience – so, an attraction or event plus great accommodations, good food and drink, easy booking, a few unique, often independent shops. To be competitive, Portage must ensure all these aspects are up to local, national and international standards.

Competitor case study: Gimli

Gimli is a classic Manitoba summer beach town with a growing permanent population. Long a summer resort, it is now developing assets and activities for locals and visitors, particularly in winter by expanding its ice-fishing infrastructure.

Gimli also has well-developed visitor infrastructure – including lodgings, restaurants, a centrally located beach which offers sports equipment rentals. This is further supported by amenities geared to residents as much as to visitors and cottage owners throughout the Interlake – big box stores and so on. Gimli has encouraged small, independent, often family-owned shops and restaurants. It has a year-round music and arts scene with an arts club and gallery as well as a music-oriented pub. This has given the town a unique character and drives significant revenue, particularly in the summer season and increasingly throughout the year. While Gimli plans to upgrade some of its amenities, it will do so while maintaining the historic charm that adds to the town's character and personality.

Gimli has proved that strong, scheduled events drive visitation and spending. Its two marquee summer events, the Gimli Film Festival and the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba, are both professionally run with paid staff. In recent years, an experienced recreation director has initiated successful year-round events for locals and visitors (pickleball tournaments, etc.). Attractive yet practical marketing and visitor materials concentrate on building awareness of events (dates, details, where to stay, etc.) versus selling Gimli overall. Gimli also effectively uses social media.

What lessons can Portage learn from Gimli?

- Importance of well-managed events as visitor drivers
- Importance of interesting, independent retail, food, culture to build a unique character
- It doesn't happen overnight (the film festival started in 2001)
- Build for locals, and the visitors will join in
- Importance of strong, coordinated tourism office with staff
- Having the right, high-quality infrastructure to support visitation

Competitor case study: Morden

Morden has two tourism boulders – the Corn & Apple Festival, Manitoba’s largest street festival, and the Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre, currently planning an expansion.

Over the last few years, Morden has made significant investment in its outdoor experiences based around its central Lake Minnewasta. Morden’s aim is to ensure people can just turn up and play, so it has invested in equipment rentals and encouraged further rentals at local sports stores. Morden has also leveraged its historic downtown and several character venues to develop a wedding industry which boomed during the pandemic. Now well-established, this boosts visitation and helped create businesses catering to the wedding market including clothing, health and beauty, restaurants and a family-run microbrewery.

Tourism is managed as a partnership between Morden, Winkler and the RM of Stanley. Assets vary across the area with most of the visitor-attracting assets in Morden while the large, good-quality hotels are in Winkler. There are plans for unique-stay options such as yurts across the area including in the RM.

Morden benefits from strong, creative marketing. It is very visitor-focused. Good collaboration among operators allows for partnerships and packaging – the best local B&B provides a discount for ziplining, for example. There is also good targeting of Winkler’s business visitors to Morden’s visitor assets, as well as courting film production companies as locations for Hallmark films.

What lessons can Portage learn from Morden?

- Think like a visitor – what do they need and want? – even before they think of it
- Collaboration, such as coupons for other local amenities
- Opportunities for non-tourism businesses that drive occasion visitation, such as Morden’s wedding businesses
- Consider interesting accommodations near central lakes – yurts, tiny cabins – which will also be Instagrammable
- Tourism can be developed jointly with neighbouring municipalities, even with different asset types in each
- Encourage unique retail with visitor appeal, especially in the town centre

Competitor case study: Neepawa

Neepawa, though often voted Manitoba's prettiest town, was not a tourist destination. Located on the Yellowhead Highway, it is often a drive-through for travellers en route to Riding Mountain National Park. Its legacy tourism assets were fading due to volunteer burnout, retirements, the pandemic and a general lack of investment. However, when Neepawa's economy improved with the expansion of the HyLife pork processing plant, the community partnered with its now-largest employer to develop the HyLife Back Forty, an all-season, 40-acre, accessible trail system for all ages and all skills. This has both benefitted the community and gained prominence within extreme sports circles, attracting national visitors.

Neepawa's economic success is due to proactive and collaborative economic development efforts. The town courted a new hotel and a new hospital – and got both. To encourage community involvement and buy-in, particularly from the business community, Neepawa created an option for Chamber of Commerce members to join the tourism committee when they renewed their Chamber membership. Take-up was high, which has bolstered business support for tourism.

Neepawa also created a welcoming environment for its growing Filipino population, most of which was recruited by HyLife. The Filipino festival and local shops both serve the growing newcomer population and attract visitors from the larger Filipino community in Winnipeg.

With a small budget and staff, Neepawa makes good use of targeted marketing, including in sports and Filipino media, and encourages repeat visitors with compelling offers and messaging.

What lessons can Portage learn from Neepawa?

- Be proactive. Target and go after the type of amenities, including retail and events, you want.
- Not only welcome but involve your newcomers. They help add differentiation to your town and their friends will visit.
- Get on the niche sports circuit. Junk Yard Dogs attracts some of the same cyclists who visit the HyLife Back Forty.
- Consider expanding the wider tourism group to include non-tourism businesses.
- Target visitation. Match your assets with special interest visitors who will appreciate niche assets.

Recommendations

In this chapter, we bring together some recommendations to help Portage achieve its tourism goals, to grow its tourism and to measure and track this growth.



Approach to recommendations

The PRTC's 2021-2026 Strategy says the Region's tourism vision is:

“To be recognized as one of Manitoba's most desirable tourist locations”.

This vision is ambitious and achievable. The next step is to make it more specific and make it a perfect fit for Portage – aligned not only with Portage's economic development goals and that of its tourism stakeholders but also aligned with the Region's overall community ambitions.

Tourism can be a powerful force both as an economic driver and as a tool in strengthening the Portage brand. Visitors who have a positive experience have potential to drive revenue – by staying longer, returning, spending more while visiting – and telling their friends! On a larger scale, good visitor experiences are a key part of highlighting the Region's personality and quality of life. Tourism has a key role in promoting the Region as not only a good place to visit but to live, to work, to invest. Tourism can be a key part of crafting the narrative and of showcasing what is best about the Region, why people live here, why they love it, why you can too.

Critical, however, is for Portage to focus and manage these opportunities. To do so, Portage must leverage its existing assets to create a narrative that differentiates and inspires both visitors and locals who can be encouraged to play tourist in their own region and support attractions and events. This also includes upgrading the basic infrastructure that supports tourism such as restaurants, shops and signage as well as strengthening the enabling environment that helps to plan, foster and market its tourism. In the following pages we summarize:

- Guiding strategies and barriers to developing Portage tourism
- Lead opportunities in the PRTC's four goal areas
- Strategic recommendations to enhance competitiveness and attract visitors
- Some immediate steps to get started in 2024

Strategies to develop Portage tourism

Leverage existing, differentiating assets. Use what you have. Maximize the value of your current differentiating assets like Crescent Lake and the Island and unique attractions such as NIRSM. Invest in making these better and competitively market-ready first before developing new assets.

Become occasion-driven vs. destination-driven. Use events as specific occasions to create definite and scheduled reasons to visit. Move visitor motivation from “might visit Portage some day” to “must visit Portage when that event is on”. Leverage existing and particularly multi-day events to encourage overnight stays. Amp them up with additional collaborators. Create media buzz around them.

- **Example:** Specific scheduled events vs. general exhibits at museums, packages and promotions to extend visitor stays at the Manitoba Air Show, the Portage Ex, etc.

Target. Don't mass market. Target visitors whose specific interests align with your assets (e.g., cyclists who would find Junk Yard Dogs worth a visit). Avoid mass marketing the location or using a “something for everyone” pitch.

Develop a visitor mindset. What will enhance a visitor's experience, especially those with time to stay and opportunities to spend? What will help visitors plan and book?

- **Example:** Additional canoe and kayak rentals at Crescent Lake, local food pop-ups/food trucks at museums, coupons and discounts for local attractions, specific interest guides such as walking tours of historic homes.
- **Example:** Accurate information on all operator websites, easy booking mechanics, schedules for events and attractions.

Create tourism as a permanent function or department.

Extend the pilot to ensure a one-stop shop that creates a central calendar of events, provides up-to-date visitor information, curates packages and promotions and directs visitors to individual sites and operators to book.

- Use this department to bring operators together to collaborate, develop ideas, cross-promote, and allow for shared resources.
- Continue to grow an engaging social media presence.

Barriers to overcome

Money is tight

- A problem for everyone which means that tourism is not generally a priority (for visitors, for municipalities, for sponsors).
- But good value – packages and promotions – will appeal.

Funding is unpredictable and inconsistent

- Impacts efforts to develop and promote tourism.
- Especially negatively impacts long-range planning, investments in upgrades etc.

Volunteers are retiring

- Retirements and burnout puts some of Portage's legacy events at risk, such as the Portage Ex and the Potato Festival.
- But if sufficiently interesting and not a “forever commitment” volunteer opportunities can appeal to community members
 - **Example:** this year's Junior A Hockey tournament

Visitor-focused training and skills are lacking

- Visitors expect increasingly high standards. To remain competitive, operators need to constantly improve customer service training and skills such as social media marketing.
- The central tourism function could organize up-skilling opportunities at rates operators can afford.

Fear of over-tourism

- Some fear that tourism will destroy Portage's charm as a small, rural city. This fear and resulting opposition to tourism constitutes a barrier.
- Reframing tourism by focusing not on tourism as an industry but on welcoming visitors to certain things and at certain times in a collaborative and managed fashion would be a way to showcase Portage in its best light and increase revenue while appealing to visitors and respecting community wishes.

Portage has what visitors want

Visits with Purpose



What visitors want

- Learning something new
- Doing something meaningful

What Portage has

- Moving toward reconciliation while learning beading at NIRSM
- Trying out new sports like fat-biking at Junk Yard Dogs

Accessible Wilderness



What visitors want

- Nature and outdoors but not too remote
- All levels, and multi-generational
- All skills, including for people with disabilities

What Portage has

- Camping beside stunning beaches but close to city amenities (and with a Tiki bar)
- Watching bird migration at Delta Marsh and St. Ambroise and even in the middle of the city on Crescent Lake

Localism



What visitors want

- Meeting and learning from locals
- Local life, unique food and drink
- Sense of welcome and being an authentic part of a community (if only for a short time)

What Portage has

- Local food and farming festivals such as Portage Ex, Potato Festival
- Visiting a farm at Farm Away Retreat

Lead opportunities

While Portage has a range of opportunities to develop tourism, four segments stand out as lead opportunities:



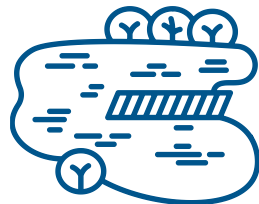
Sports tourism



Indigenous tourism



Agritourism



Ecotourism

Several factors make these particularly relevant and practical for Portage:

- They align with the PRTC's development goal as identified in its strategic plan
- They have scope for both immediate action and longer-term development
- They have existing traction in Portage
 - Assets (even if not yet fully developed)
 - Operators with relevant expertise or experience
- All are recognized global tourism segments with successful examples and with credible professional associations (such as Sports Tourism Canada) which can support development with learning, advice and connections.

Lead opportunity: Sports tourism

Opportunity

According to Sports Tourism Canada, sports tourism is now the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry. This includes tournaments that attract large visitor numbers for multiple days and use supporting assets (accommodations, restaurants). It also includes individuals who collect sports experiences, such as visiting every cycle adventure park in an area. Portage already has a strong reputation for organizing and hosting tournaments, particularly hockey. It also has an international reputation in hunting and attracts high-value, often repeat visitors. The challenge is to inspire those visitors to venture out from their base venue (rink or hunting lodge) and spend more in the community.

Leveraging the opportunity

- Use the existing success and hosting know-how of hockey tournaments such as the annual Portage Cup and hunting expeditions such as at St. Ambroise to create a comprehensive sports tourism strategy.

This strategy could include targeted outreach to teams and with packages and promotions to attractions and amenities during the tournament, and awareness-building to other hunters through the hunt/fish media.

- Once hunting and tournaments begin to pay dividends, similar strategies could be used for other sports, such as curling and cycling.

Low-hanging fruit

- Leverage the Portage Cup (slated for March 2024) as the initial sports tourism pilot project. Explore opportunities to amplify the tourism potential of the event with hockey-themed promotions and offers at other attractions.
- Explore collaboration and cross-promotion with arts and music in the arena.

Longer-term goals

- Create targeted communications and PR around other sports – such as cycling at Junk Yard Dogs and the new Adventure Park (when completed).

Lead opportunity: Indigenous tourism

Opportunity

Portage is on the traditional lands of some of the province's most entrepreneurial and innovative First Nations, including Long Plain. In fact, two of the Region's best assets – the new Microtel hotel and the National Indigenous Residential School Museum – are on First Nations land. Visitors are very interested in authentic Indigenous experiences, so Portage has genuine opportunities here, particularly NIRSM and the new Indigenous exhibits at Fort la Reine. Additionally, the Arrowhead Games, following a successful pilot, has plans to become an annual event combining the family-friendly aspects of sports tournaments with the differentiation of Indigenous sports.

Leveraging the opportunity

The “how” must be Indigenous-led by operators including NIRSM and the Arrowhead Development Corporation along with Indigenous Tourism Manitoba and the PRTC.

Low-hanging fruit

- Work with the 2024 Arrowhead Games to amplify its impact, awareness and reach.
- Host mini-demonstrations of the Indigenous sports in public places – Saskatchewan Avenue, around Crescent Lake, at campgrounds, at Southport – as examples of the sports themselves. This can raise local awareness, preview the games themselves and add to the media coverage of the event.

Longer-term goals

- Support Indigenous tourism operators and organisations in exploring the creation of cultural camps at NIRSM and elsewhere in the Region for visitors to learn about Indigenous culture including food, sports, games and crafts.

Lead opportunity: Agritourism

Opportunity

As a thriving agricultural centre, Portage could benefit both economically and in terms of positioning by tapping into the global visitor interest in agritourism. However not all aspects of agritourism are practical or make business sense. Farm-located initiatives face increasing barriers including insurance costs, health and safety regulations for facilities and activities, availability and cost of staffing and possible disruption to their core business. Could Portage instead create an agritourism strategy on a municipal level that could reduce some barriers and drive incremental visitation and revenue while supporting Portage's position as an agricultural hub?

Leveraging the opportunity

- Re-imagine Portage's agricultural fairs, markets and farm shops to make them more compelling and lucrative visitor propositions.
- Create a Portage Farmers Market Guide with maps (online and offline, plus signage) to the farmers markets and seasonal farm shops.

Low-hanging fruit

- Work with the Portage Ex to reimagine the livestock section as a wider agrifood exhibit. Encourage additional vendors and attractions that amplify the theme.
- Upweight on-trend food (such as pop-up restaurants) and non-food attractions (such as rural crafts and culture). Showcase to visitors, including business visitors and investors, not only agriculture but specifically the products made in Portage (e.g., farmers markets collaborating with the protein processors to create a must-attend market that also promotes the benefits of pea protein).

Longer-term goals

- Work with farmers to create an annual weekend event around Portage's farm network. Develop dedicated marketing material and visitor information including maps, vendor profiles, promotions, samples, cultural add-ons etc. If farmer-led and supported by Portage tourism, it could be a visitor attraction and a benefit to farmers while sharing event resources among vendors.

Lead opportunity: Ecotourism

Opportunity

Ecotourism is a huge global travel trend and a natural fit for the Portage Region, which has significant wetlands and waterfowl eco-assets ranging from the urban ecosystem around Crescent Lake to the wilderness areas of Delta Marsh. Could these be responsibly and sustainably developed – and importantly, not over-developed – to enhance their value as an eco-tourism destination?

Leveraging the opportunity

Portage can develop its nature-oriented assets into a full ecotourism strategy. Interpretive signage already exists around the Crescent Lake Walking Trail and at Delta Marsh. While this could be expanded in these locations and elsewhere in the Region (such as St. Ambroise and at various campgrounds), there are also opportunities to create eco-activities such as canoeing through the Marsh, counting waterfowl migration, taking a curated nature walk on the Island, photography walks and in time, science-based education.

Low-hanging fruit

- Work with the high school to develop a family adventure self-directed eco-savenger hunt-type game/app based on the Crescent Lake Walking Trail Interpretive signage. Challenge all ages and add a social media contest element featuring prizes connected to Portage attractions and retail.

Longer-term goals

- Convene an experts' group to begin to explore the feasibility of developing responsible visitation possibilities at Delta Marsh.
- Consider citizen-scientist opportunities – especially linked to wetlands and waterfowl. Avoid mass-tourism ideas.

Recommendations: Summary

Focus on a limited number of specific tourism segments

- Sports tourism: Create a tournament-related strategy to market additional experiences and assets to participants.
- Indigenous tourism: Support the Arrowhead Games and the NIRSM to amplify their awareness and reach.
- Agritourism: Leverage the Portage Ex, the Region's farmers market and, longer-term, farmer-led, food-related experiences.
- Ecotourism: Focus on experience development around Crescent Lake and Delta Marsh.

Become occasion-driven vs. destination driven

- Promote specific events vs. simply Portage or the assets overall. Organized, scheduled, limited-duration events prompt planning and scheduling vs. "I'll get around to visiting sometime".
- Create a central events calendar for both planning and promotion.

Expand the tourism community and bring it together

- They want to collaborate but need a format and plan, and an office (with physical space) that organizes, coordinates and markets their efforts.
- Expand the tourism community to include the larger business community including non-tourism businesses.

Build on the current pilot to create, fund and staff a central tourism function for the Region

- Critical to sustaining tourism, operator initiatives and collaboration, public buy-in and consistent funding.
- Also critical to ongoing data collection.

Coordinate and collect visitor data (to show impact)

- Create operator buy-in for the Portage Model and its data collection process.
- Create a portal for operators to easily share data annually (hotels/campgrounds first, and later attractions with day trippers).
- Update the visitor impact assessment model (2-3 years).
- Capture visitor details to create a database to allow Portage to target to repeat visitors with promotions and incentives to visit.

Immediate next steps for 2024

Market

- Leverage four already-planned events in 2024 in the four lead opportunity areas to drive visitation and support Portage's story:
 - Portage Cup (March)
 - Portage Ex (July)
 - Manitoba Air Show (August)
 - Arrowhead Games (TBD)
 - Support events in other areas as resources allow (Potato Festival, Whoop and Hollar Folk Festival)
- Work with organizers to create:
 - Targeted outreach to interest groups
 - Media plan
 - PR plan, including "previewing" events across the Region (downtown, at campgrounds, on signage, etc.)
 - Cross-promotion opportunities with other tourism assets

Build

- Tourism function/department with additional staff (continue with one full-time tourism staffer and add at least one part time/summer student)
- Create a central events calendar
- Create additional opportunities for all the Region's tourism operators to gather, network and collaborate, over and above the PRTC's regular meetings
- Create and deploy a Visitors Guide
 - Begin with online, especially events listings and visiting/booking information
 - If budget allows, consider some print and ensure copies are available at hotels, restaurants, Stride Place, etc.

Gather

- Leverage the Portage Model to create a data collection process and online form that allows the Region's hotels and campgrounds to share occupancy data annually confidentially (including with STR)
- Encourage/support key museum and recreational assets to begin tracking day-trip visitors
 - Includes collecting postal codes or visitor origin data or setting up online ticketing processes
 - Includes emails to re-contact potential repeat visitors
- Consider the timing to update the economic impact calculations – every year? Bi-annually?
- Consider sharing the economic impact model with other jurisdictions to support local tourism benchmarking

Appendix A: Stakeholder Engagement

Who we spoke with for this project.

Stakeholder consultations

Insights were gathered from 35 stakeholders via interviews, site visits and general conversations. We are extremely grateful for the time and ideas the following people shared, and their commitment to Portage's tourism development.

Kameron Blight, RM of Portage la Prairie

Corey Braaksma, Creekside Camping & RV Park

Cody Buhler, Portage Terriers

Madison Connolly, Southport Aerospace Centre

Lorraine Daniels, National Indigenous Residential School Museum

Sterling Ducharme, St. Ambroise Beach

Stefanie Dunn, Portage la Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce

Emma Ens-Maclver, Fort la Reine Museum

Kelly Funk, Portage Cup

Guy Gauthier, CN Railway Museum

Blair Geisel, Junk Yard Dogs Cycling Club

Todd Goranson, Industry Development Branch, Agriculture Manitoba

Gordon Goldsborough, University of Manitoba

Scott Greenlay, Delta Beach Association

Kyle Hamilton, RM of Portage la Prairie

Autumn Hunter, Canad Inns Destination Centre Portage la Prairie

Bob Jones, CN Railway Museum

Lorna Knight, Prairie Fusion Arts and Entertainment

James Kostuchuk, Portage Heritage Committee

Sharilyn Knox, City of Portage la Prairie

Peggy May, Southport Aerospace Centre

Cindy McDonald, Southport Aerospace Centre & Potato Festival

Tom McCartney, CN Railway Museum

Michaela MacKenzie, Roquette Canada

Guy Moffat, Portage la Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce

Shyam Moorthi, Industry Development Branch, Manitoba Agriculture

Terry Myran, Arrowhead Development Corporation

Linda Omichinski, Whoop & Hollar Folk Festival

Nathan Peto, City of Portage la Prairie

Morgan Peters, McCain Foods Canada

Angie Shindle, Stride Place/PRRA

Katlyn Richaud, Portage Industrial Exhibition

Tracy Wood, Farm Away Retreat

Josh Wright, Whoop & Hollar Folk Festival

Robin Young, Food Development Centre

Appendix B: Community Survey

Detailed results of the community engagement survey.

Profile of respondents and methodology

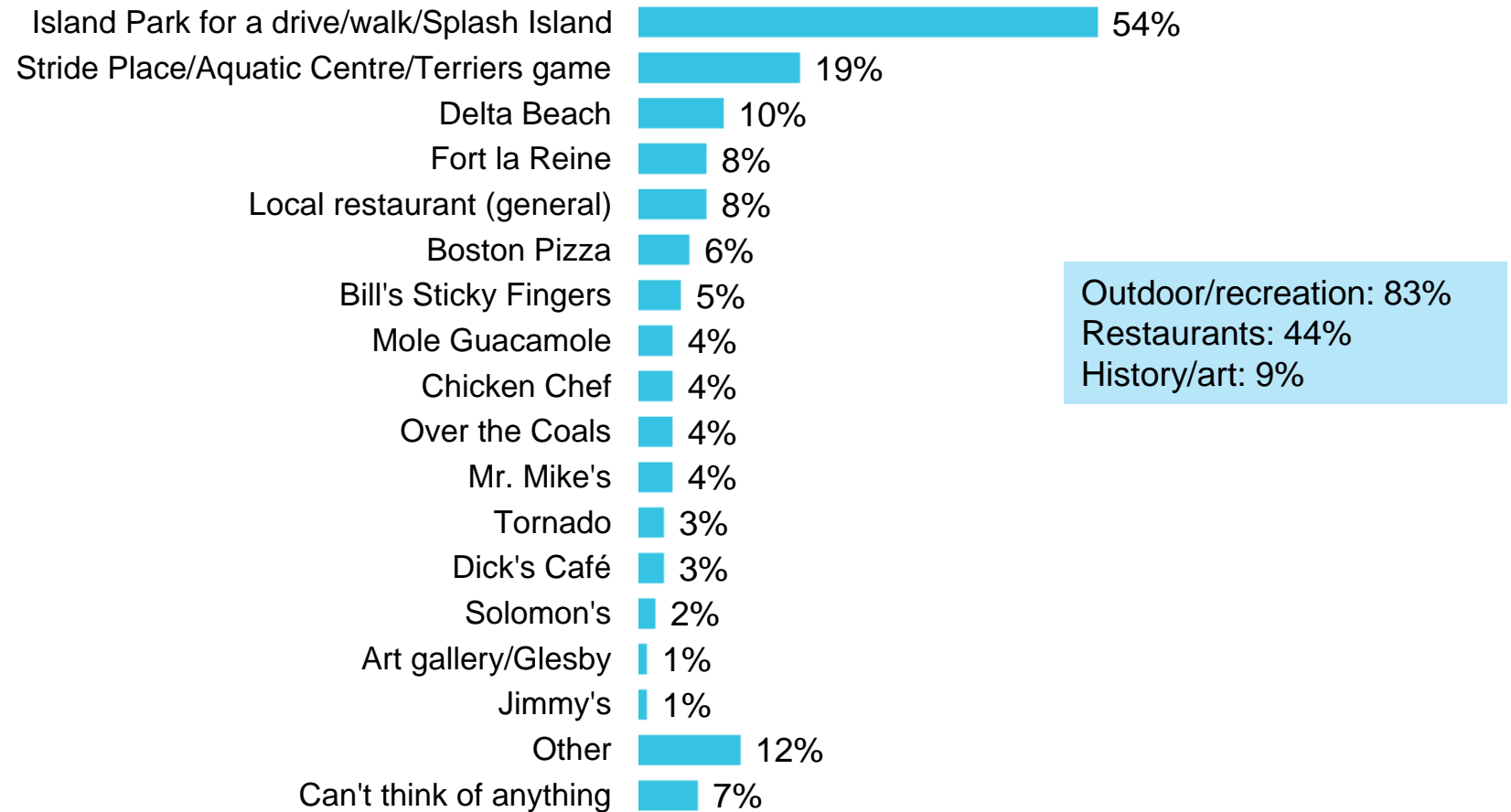
- Survey questions designed in collaboration with PRED and the project team to engage residents in the tourism discussion and to uncover any additional assets or unique strengths in the Region.
- Survey in field starting Oct. 31, 2023 for three weeks. The link to the community survey was shared on social media and amplified by members of the PRTC.
- All data analysis and coding of open-ended responses done by Probe using SPSS software.
- No margin of error can be applied to this survey because it was not a random or representative poll of all adults in the Region. Indeed, the sample skews heavily female. However, given the sample size of N=380, a random and representative survey of this size would carry a margin of error of +/-5.4%, 19 times out of 20.

(Unweighted)	Total (N=380) (%)	Portage la Prairie (n=217) (%)	The RM of Portage la Prairie (n=87) (%)	Outside the Region (n=76) (%)
Gender				
Male	16	16	15	18
Female	83	84	84	82
Age				
18-34	19	20	18	14
35-54	46	44	47	49
55-60	13	12	10	17
60+	23	24	24	20

Portage's Top Attractions and Hidden Gems

Island Park, Stride Place and various restaurants top the list of places residents take visitors

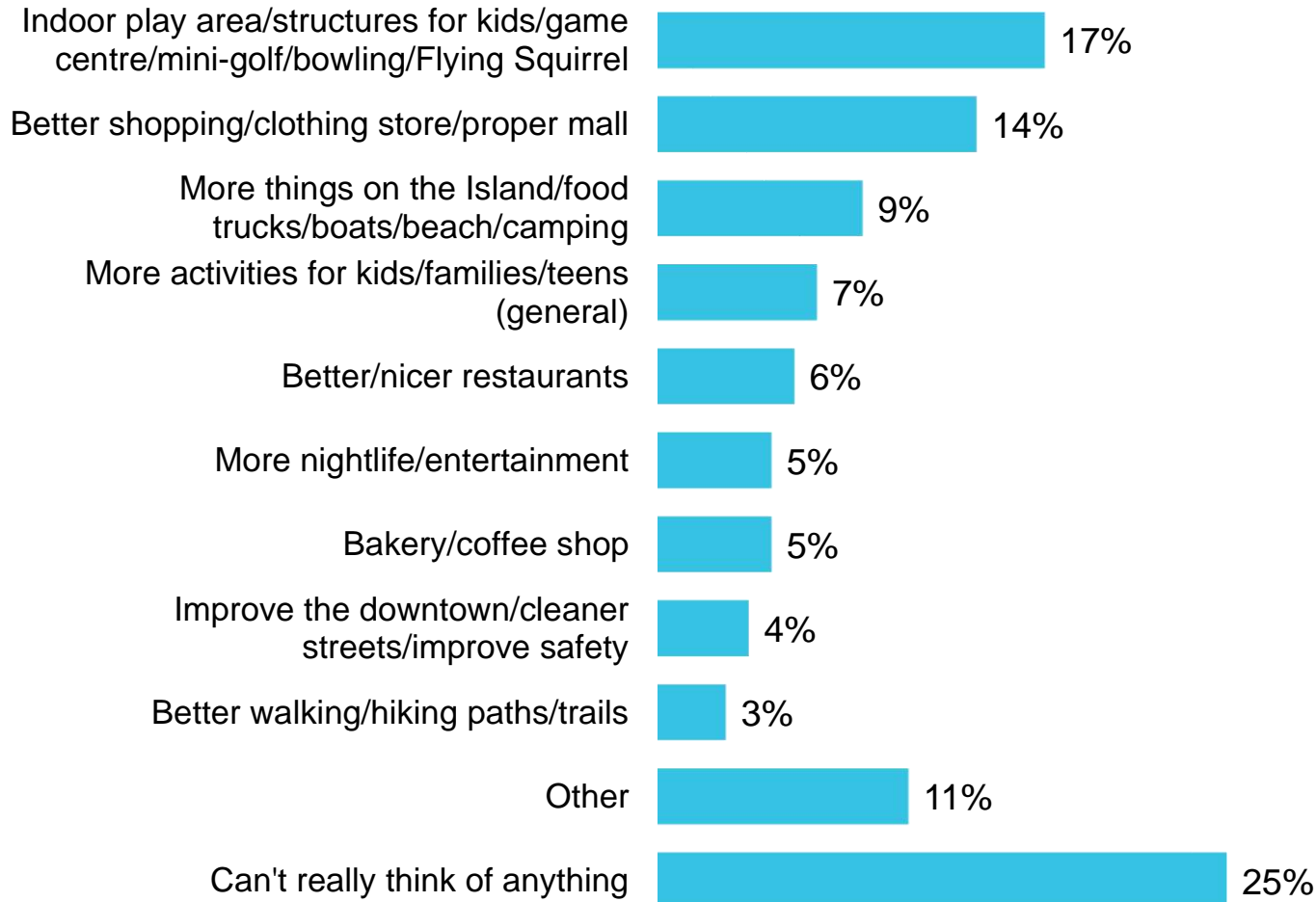
Q1. When family and friends visit Portage – the City and the RM – where do you take them? (Could be a restaurant, shop, museum, park, attraction – a hidden gem or something well-known.) Base: All respondents N=380



Ideas for Product Development

Attractions for families, especially indoors, along with better shopping and eating top the wish list

Q3. What is one thing you wish visitors could do or experience in Portage? What is the area missing that could appeal to visitors? (Base: All respondents N=380)



“ It would be nice if there was more fun things to do, escape rooms, bowling, laser tag, arcades. Something both children and adults can part take in and have fun with!

“ A shopping mall. Shopping local is always encouraged but where does one buy clothes. It's very limited here.

“ Pedal boats for Crescent Lake. Canoes & kayaks are a great addition but pedal boats for young kids would be great.

“ More good restaurants (no more pizza or chicken places) and a nice coffee shop/bakery.

“ A place to go and dance and have a couple drinks where you feel safe.

“ A non-chain coffee shop that focuses on good baking and lattes.

“ The core area of town has become less safe and less attractive. Our downtown is receiving a make-over, but it is not safe to take a stroll. Especially after dark.

Appendix C: Regional Tourism Asset Database

A listing of all current tourism assets in the Region and an estimate of their market readiness.

Tourism assets

Outdoor recreation and camping	Market readiness
Corn Maze at Fort la Reine	Doors open
Creekside Camping & RV Park	Visitor ready
Delta Beach (and camping)	Visitor ready
Delta Marsh Wildlife Management Area	Doors open
Island Park	Visitor ready
Miller's Camping Resort	Visitor ready
Ofty's Riverside Campground	Visitor ready
Portage Flying Club	Doors open
Portage Golf Club	Visitor ready
Portage Industrial Exhibition Campground	Visitor ready
Portage Junk Yard Dogs	Visitor ready
Rock Road ATV Park	Doors open
Portage Snowmobile Trails	Doors open
St. Ambroise Beach	Visitor ready
Simplot Central Park Splash Pad & Rotary Skate Park	Doors open
Skating on the Crescent	Visitor ready
Southport Golf Course	Visitor ready
Splash Island Waterpark	Visitor ready

Market Readiness Definitions

Doors open: An experience is available if a visitor knows where to look.

Visitor ready: An operator is fully permitted and licensed, has a basic Facebook page or other web presence, has consistent hours and contact info, does some basic local marketing.

Market ready: An operator actively markets and can take advanced bookings with published prices and cancellation policies, offers visitors details about what they can see and do, has some specialized training or certification and builds partnerships.

Export ready: An operator is able to market to and through the travel trade's distribution sales channels using a commission structure and guaranteed advanced pricing, works with destination marketing organizations to welcome international visitors with very high-quality marketing materials, experiences can be tailored to specific visitors (language, etc.)

Tourism assets (cont'd)

Indoor recreation	Market readiness
BDO Centre	Visitor ready
Central Plains RecPlex	Visitor ready
Portage Cup	Visitor ready
Portage Terriers	Visitor ready
Stride Place	Market ready
Community-wide events & festivals	Market readiness
East End Market	Doors open
Farmers Market	Doors open
Made in Manitoba Expo	Visitor Ready
Manitoba Airshow	Market ready
Portage Industrial Exhibition	Market ready
Portage Potato Festival	Visitor ready
Prairie Fusion Night Market	Visitor Ready
Rotary Pond Hockey Championship	Doors open
Rotary Santa Parade of Lights	Doors open
United Way Shopping Night	Doors open
Whoop & Hollar Folk Festival	Market ready
Winterfest	Doors open

Tourism assets (cont'd)

Hotels & accommodations	Market readiness
Barker Suites	Market ready
Canad Inns Destination Centre	Market ready
Days Inn by Wyndham	Market ready
Farm Away Retreat	Market ready
Hi-Way Motel	Visitor ready
Microtel Inn and Suites	Market ready
Midtown Motor Inn	Doors open
Mynarski House	Visitor ready
Sunset Motel	Doors open
Super 8 by Wyndham	Visitor ready
Westgate Inn	Visitor ready
Yellowquill Motel	Doors open
Restaurants & bars	Market readiness
A&W	Market ready
Bar Burrito	Visitor ready
Benvenuto Pizzeria	Visitor ready
Bill's Sticky Fingers	Visitor ready
Boston Pizza	Market ready
Boun's Lao Street Eatery	Doors open
Chicken Chef	Visitor ready
Dairy Queen	Visitor ready
Dick's Cafe	Visitor ready
Domino's Pizza	Market ready

Tourism assets (cont'd)

Restaurants & bars (cont'd)	Market readiness
George's Burgers and Subs	Doors open
Great Wall Chinese Restaurant	Doors open
Jimmy's Submarine & Dairy Delight	Doors open
Lake Shore Restaurant & Bar	Doors open
Lita's Station	Doors open
Little Caesars	Visitor ready
Little Spruce Cafe	Visitor ready
Mary Brown's	Visitor ready
May Mei Chen's Chinese Restaurant	Doors open
McDonald's	Market ready
Mole Guacamole	Visitor ready
Mr. Mike's Steakhouse Casual	Visitor ready
Om Indian Cuisine	Visitor ready
Oriental Pearl	Doors open
Over the Coals	Visitor ready
Pizza Hotline	Visitor ready
Pizza Hut	Visitor ready
Popeye's Louisiana Kitchen	Visitor ready
Prairie Donair	Visitor ready
Subway	Visitor ready
Taste of Spice	Visitor ready
Tavern United	Visitor ready
Tim Horton's	Market ready
Tornado's Restaurant & Lounge	Visitor ready
What's the Scoop	Visitor ready

Tourism Assets (cont'd)

Arts & entertainment	Market readiness
Prairie City Cinema	Doors open
Prairie Fusion Arts & Entertainment at William Glesby Centre	Market ready
Indigenous tourism	Market readiness
Arrowhead Games	Doors open
Four Winds Cultural Centre – Southport	Doors open
Keesh Conference & Gaming Centre	Visitor ready
National Indigenous Residential School Museum	Visitor ready
Shopping	Market readiness
3's Company Boutique	Visitor ready
Connery's Berry Farm	Visitor ready
GME Thrift Emporium	Doors open
Jeffries Berry Patch	Visitor ready
Mil-Jeanne Flowers & Axcenz	Doors open
Portage MCC Thrift Shop	Doors open
Portage MCC Furniture Plus	Doors open
Our Farm Greenhouses	Doors open
Riverbend Orchards	Visitor ready
Solomon's Home Garden Gift	Visitor ready
The Little Red Barn	Visitor ready
Vintage Heather's Antiques	Doors open

Tourism assets (cont'd)

Roadside attractions	Market readiness
Dutch-style Windmill	Doors open
Golden Eagle at Keeshkeemaquah	Doors open
Great Grey Owl statue	Doors open
Royal Canadian Airforce Silver Star	Doors open
World's Largest Coca-Cola can	Doors open
Heritage & historic destinations	Market readiness
Canadian Pacific Railway Heritage Park & Interpretive Centre	Visitor ready
Fort la Reine Museum	Market ready
Heritage Walking Path	Doors open
Manitoba Softball Hall of Fame and Museum	Visitor ready

Appendix D: Detailed Economic Impact Model

Detailed results and estimates used to create the impact figures, and how the model can be replicated in future.

GEORGETOWN NEWBURY GROUP

Impact Assessment Highlights

The Georgetown Newbury Group (GNG) developed an economic and tax revenue impact assessment for the expenditures of visitors to the city and rural municipality of Portage la Prairie during the period Sept. 1, 2022 to Aug. 31, 2023. This impact assessment was undertaken as part of the Tourism Economic Impact Assessment for the Region of Portage la Prairie working with Sinclair Barnes Limited and Probe Research Inc.

The GNG Manitoba-level impact assessment was developed for three separate groups:

- Hotel and motel guests
- Seasonal campers
- Overnight campers

Several conservative key assumptions (e.g. room capacity, occupancy rates, room rates, daily consumer spending) were required due to a lack of necessary data from visitors and operators.

It should be noted that the GNG impact results cannot provide a complete or absolute measure of the impact of direct expenditures of visitors to the Portage la Prairie Region. Therefore, the presented economic and tax revenue impacts should be treated as general estimates only and never as absolutes.

Impact Assessment Highlights (cont'd)

Highlights of the total economic and tax revenue impacts include:

- Daily, there were an average of 572 occupied accommodation units. Seasonal campers represented 55% of the occupied accommodation units, followed by hotels and motels at 30%.
- Total visitor person days in the Portage la Prairie area are estimated at 302,265 days. This was influenced by the average number of persons in the visitor parties for the various visitor groups. For hotel and motel rooms, it was two persons per room, while for the seasonal and overnight campsites, the average party size was 3.5 persons.
- Hotel and motel visitors accounted for 63.2% of the overall person days. Far behind were the campers. Seasonal campers accounted for 27.4%, while overnight campers were at 10.3%.
- Hotel and motel visitors' average daily spending of \$186 was driven by the room rate. Only an estimated \$73 in daily spending was for non-accommodation expenditures. In comparison, seasonal campers and overnight campers spent approximately \$50 and \$33 respectively on non-accommodation expenditures.
- Total expenditures of \$25.5 million is dominated by hotel and motel visitor spending of \$19.7 million. Thus, hotel and motels will contribute the highest share of the total economic impacts (e.g. GDP 77.2%).
- Total Gross Domestic Product at Market Prices (GDP), the net monetary benefit to the provincial economy, is estimated at \$29.6 million.
- Largest contributors to the total GDP level of \$29.6 million were:
 - Accommodation, \$8.3 million
 - Food and drinking places, \$5.5 million
 - Gasoline purchases, \$4.6 million
 - Retail, \$3.3 million

Impact Assessment Highlights (cont'd)

- Labour income of \$16.5 million was 55.7% of the total GDP impact of \$29.6 million.
- A total of 445.9 jobs were associated with the total spending of visitors to the Portage la Prairie Region. The top four spending areas with the largest number of jobs were:
 - Food and drinking places, 110.6 jobs
 - Accommodation, 101.1 jobs
 - Gasoline purchases, 68.8 jobs
 - Retail, 57.2 jobs.
- The average labour income for these 445.9 jobs was \$37,000.
- Total tax revenue for all levels of government is estimated at \$6.5 million. The estimated distribution of the revenue was:
 - Hotels and motels, 79.6%
 - Seasonal Campers, 16.0%
 - Overnight Campers, 4.4%.
- Tax revenue by government level was distributed as:
 - Provincial government, \$2.9 million (46.0%)
 - Federal government, \$2.6 million (41.4%)
 - Local governments, \$0.8 million (12.7%).
- A significant portion of the local government tax revenue is attributed to the Region's 5% accommodation tax. It amounted to \$304,500.

I: Approach

To develop a Manitoba-level impact assessment model, the Georgetown Newbury Group (GNG) looked at three specific visitor components. They are:

- Hotels and motels
- Seasonal campsites
- Overnight campsites.

Spending for these three visitor components was estimated for eight specific commodity groups:

1. Accommodation
2. Gasoline
3. Retail
4. Food and beverage stores (groceries, liquor)
5. Food and drinking places (restaurants, pubs, etc.)
6. Performing arts, sports, heritage
7. Amusement and recreation
8. Gambling (including VLTs).

There are two areas that were not assessed due to the lack of reliable information on the volume, flow and spending of these visitors. The first component was the impact of day-visitors to Portage la Prairie. The second was the estimation of “short time” visitors who stop their traveling in Portage la Prairie for food, gasoline, or other consumer items. Therefore, the presented economic and tax revenue estimates underestimate the overall impacts of Portage la Prairie visitors spending during the Sept. 2022 to Aug. 2023 period.

GNG used the latest Manitoba-level information from Statistics Canada’s Input-Output Supply and Use tables. The supply and use tables present an integrated picture of the economy in terms of industries, products and final use categories. The tables illustrate the flow of goods and services from their origin (domestic production or imports) to their destination (inputs by industries to produce other products, capital investments by industries, changes in inventory, exports, and final use by households, governments and non-profit institutions).

The generated economic multipliers from these economic linkages were used to estimate the economic impacts of visitor spending. It needs to be noted that the GNG economic and tax revenue impact results cannot provide a complete or absolute measure of the impact of tourist spending. Therefore, the presented impacts should be treated as general estimates only and never as absolutes.

II: Key Assumptions

Obtaining needed information to conduct the economic and tax revenue impact was a challenge. As a result, several key assumptions were required. The objective of these key assumptions was to be conservative.

Table 1 lists the key assumptions for each of the three impact components. While all assumptions are important, three assumptions are vital for the analysis. They are:

- Average cost per night before taxes
- Average daily occupied nights
- Average daily spending per person

Table 1: Key Assumptions

Assumptions	Hotels and Motels	Seasonal Campsites	Overnight Campsites
Daily room/campsite capacity	344	615	615
Average occupancy rate	50%	65%	65%
Average cost per night before taxes	\$97.00	\$30.67	\$30.00
Average daily occupied nights	172	315	85
Average number persons per room/campsite	2.0	3.5	3.5
Person days in Portage la Prairie	188,340	82,688	31,238
Average daily spending per person before taxes	\$185.99	\$80.00	\$63.00

III: Visitor Volumes and Spending

Using the various key assumptions and other variables, visitor volumes for the year-long study period were calculated. Table 2A presents four of the higher-order visitor statistics for the three accommodation types.

Daily, there were an average of 572 occupied accommodation units. Seasonal campers represented 55% of the occupied accommodation units, followed by hotel and motel guests at 30%.

Total person-days in the Portage la Prairie Region were estimated at 302,265 days. This figure is influenced by the average size of the various visitor groups. For hotel and motel rooms, it was two persons per room. For the seasonal and overnight campsites, the average party size was 3.5 persons. Hotel and motel visitors accounted for 63.2% of the overall person-days. Far behind were the campers. Seasonal campers accounted for 27.4%, and overnight campers 10.3%.

Spending levels, estimated at \$25.5 million, were dominated by hotel and motel guests. Their spending was \$19.7 million or 77.4% of the total. Campers contributed the remaining 22.6%. Hotel and motel visitors' average daily spending of \$186 was driven by the room rate. Only an estimated \$73 daily was for non-accommodation expenditures. In comparison, seasonal campers and overnight campers spent approximately \$50 and \$33 respectively per day.

Table 2A: Selected Visitor Statistics

Selected Statistics	Hotels and Motels	Seasonal Campers	Overnight Campers	Total
Average daily rooms/campsites occupied	172	315	85	572
Total person days in Portage La Prairie	188,340	82,688	31,238	302,265
Total spending per day	\$185.99	\$80.00	\$63.00	\$144.00
Total spending (not taxes included)	\$19,744,300	\$4,551,800	\$1,198,200	\$25,495,500

III: Visitor Volumes and Spending (cont'd)

Table 2B presents the distribution of the \$25.5 million in expenditures across the three accommodation types plus the eight individual spending areas. Spending highlights include:

- Hotel and motel occupants spent \$6.1 million on their rooms, excluding PST, GST and the 5% accommodation tax. This represents 30.8% of the total spend of \$19.7 million for this accommodation type. Food and drinking places had the second highest expenditure level at \$4.2 million or 21.4% of the total spend.
- Seasonal campers spent \$4.6 million for consumer goods and activities. The top two top spending areas were retail and food and beverage stores. Both had spending at \$1.2 million.
- Overnight campers had spending estimated at \$1.2 million. The top two spending areas were retail at \$0.25 million and food and drinking places at \$0.23 million.
- Overall, spending was highest for accommodation (\$7.1 million) and food and drinking places (\$5.1 million).

Table 2B: Spending by Accommodation Type

Spending Area (No taxes included)	Hotel and Motels	Seasonal Campers	Overnight Campers	Total Spending
Accommodation	\$6,089,700	\$724,500	\$267,800	\$7,082,000
Gasoline	\$3,766,800	\$106,300	\$40,200	\$3,913,300
Retail	\$2,118,800	\$1,240,300	\$249,900	\$3,609,000
Food and beverage stores	\$1,412,600	\$1,240,300	\$156,900	\$2,809,800
Food and drinking places	\$4,237,700	\$578,800	\$234,400	\$5,050,900
Performing arts, sports, heritage	\$706,300	\$330,800	\$125,000	\$1,162,100
Amusement and recreation	\$706,300	\$165,400	\$62,500	\$934,200
Gambling	\$706,300	\$165,400	\$62,500	\$934,200
Total	\$19,744,300	\$4,551,800	\$1,198,200	\$25,495,500

IV: Determining the Economic Impact of Visitor Spending

To assess the economic impact of the estimated total spending of \$25.5 million, along with the three separate accommodation types and the eight spending areas, Statistics Canada's 2020 Manitoba-level economic multipliers were employed. These annual multipliers were available on the Statistics Canada website on Dec. 8, 2023.

The starting point to obtain multipliers of interest is from Statistics Canada at:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3610059501>

Table 3A presents the online structure to access the Direct Multiplier for the variable GDP at Market Prices. The selected industry is Traveller Accommodation for the year 2020. Not shown in this form is the geography, which is Manitoba.

Table 3A: Statistics Canada Input-Output multipliers, provincial, detailed level

Multiplier type:

Variable:

Industry:

Reference period
From To

IV: Determining the Economic Impact of Visitor Spending

Table 3B illustrates the economic multipliers by type of multipliers and the three economic variables of this study

- GDP at Market Price at Market Prices
- Labour Income
- Jobs

The GDP and Labour Income multipliers are per \$1 of direct spending, while the Jobs multiplier is calculated per \$1 million of direct spending.

Table 3B: Manitoba Traveller Accommodation Multipliers

Impact Effect	GDP at Market Prices (per dollar of spending)	Labour Income (per dollar of spending)	Jobs (per million dollars of spending)
Direct Impact	0.362	0.213	8.613
Indirect Impact	0.423	0.234	4.087
Induced Impact	0.221	0.086	1.577
Spinoff Impact (Indirect +Induced)	0.642	0.32	5.664
Total Impact	1.005	0.533	14.278

Source: Statistics Canada Table 36-10-0595-01 (released 2023-12-05)

IV: Determining the Economic Impact of Visitor Spending (cont'd)

Similar multiplier tables to Table 3B were developed for the remaining seven spending areas, as displayed in Table 2B.

The definition of these impact effects is discussed in the glossary of terms on page 78.

Table 3C presents the application for the traveller accommodation multipliers to the estimated direct spending of hotel and motel guests. The total impact is \$7.1 million on the direct spending of \$6.1 million.

The direct effects is estimated at \$3.2 million, representing 45.3% of the total impact. The spin-off effect, combining the indirect and induced effects, is the remaining 54.7%.

The direct multiplier in Table 3C can be computed as 0.532. The reason why it differs from the 0.362 in Table 3B is due to the addition of indirect taxes such as the 5% accommodation tax. This adjustment was the only one made to the direct multipliers used in this study.

Table 3C: Traveller Accommodation Spending Impacts

Gross Domestic Product	Total spending	Direct	Spin-offs	Total Impact
Accommodation	\$6,089,660	\$3,239,699	\$3,909,562	\$7,149,261

V: Economic Impact of Visitor Spending: Hotels and Motels

Total direct spending of persons staying in hotel and motels was estimated at \$19.4 million, excluding applicable taxes. The top two spending areas were accommodation at \$6.1 million and food and drinking places at \$4.2 million.

Table 4 illustrates the estimated economic impacts (direct + indirect + induced) of the spending of \$19.4 million for:

1. Gross Domestic Product at Market Prices (GDP)
2. Labour Income
3. Jobs
4. Average Labour Income

Table 4's format will continue for the subsequent impacts for seasonal campers, overnight campers and for the overall total impact of the three accommodation types.

Table 4: Economic Impact: Hotels and Motels

Spending Area	Total Spending (no taxes included)	GDP Impact	Labour Income Impact	Jobs Impact	Average Labour Income
Accommodation	\$6,088,700	\$7,149,300	\$3,245,800	86.9 jobs	\$37,300
Gasoline	\$3,765,800	\$4,388,300	\$2,184,700	66.3 jobs	\$33,000
Retail	\$2,118,800	\$2,568,000	\$1,426,000	33.6 jobs	\$42,500
Food and beverage stores	\$1,412,600	\$1,745,900	\$1,049,500	26.6 jobs	\$39,400
Food and drinking places	\$4,237,700	\$4,593,600	\$3,023,400	92.8 jobs	\$32,600
Performing arts, sports, heritage	\$706,300	\$795,300	\$564,300	11.1 jobs	\$51,000
Amusement and recreation	\$706,300	\$858,100	\$588,300	17.2 jobs	\$34,200
Gambling	\$706,300	\$802,300	\$489,400	10.8 jobs	\$45,200
Total	\$19,744,300	\$22,900,800	\$12,569,600	345.3 jobs	\$36,400

V: Economic Impact of Visitor Spending: Hotels and Motels (cont'd)

Impact highlights for hotels and motels include:

- Total GDP of \$22.9 million on expenditures of \$19.7 million. GDP is the net value-added resulting from the direct spending. Furthermore, the GDP is the net benefit to the Manitoba economy.
- The largest contribution to GDP were accommodations at 31.2% and food and drinking places at 20.1%.
- Labour income impact was \$12.6 million. This represents 55.0% for the total GDP impact.
- Just like GDP, the top two contributors to Labour income were accommodation and food and drinking places.
- There were 345.3 jobs associated with the direct hotel and motel spending of \$19.7 million.
- The overall average labour income turns out to be \$36,400.

VI: Economic Impact of Visitor Spending: Campers

Tables 5 and 6 provide the economic impacts for seasonal and overnight campers respectively. Table 7 provides the combined economic impacts for all campers.

For the combined seasonal and overnight campers, highlights include:

- Total expenditures of \$5.7 million, dominated by the seasonal camper spending of \$4.6 million.
- Total GDP impact of \$6.7 million. Largest contributors to this GDP level were retail at \$1.8 million and food and beverage stores at \$1.7 million.
- Labour income of \$3.9 million was 58.5% of GDP impact of \$6.7 million.
- A total of 101 jobs were associated with the spending of campers.
- The average labour income for these 101 jobs was \$39,200.

Table 5: Economic Impact: Seasonal Campers

Spending Area	Total Spending (no taxes included)	GDP Impact	Labour Income Impact	Jobs Impact	Average Labour Income
Accommodation	\$724,500	\$814,300	\$386,200	10.3 jobs	\$37,300
Gasoline	\$106,300	123,800	\$61,700	1.9 jobs	\$33,000
Retail	\$1,240,300	1,503,200	\$834,700	19.7 jobs	\$42,500
Food and beverage stores	\$1,240,300	\$1,533,000	\$921,600	23.4 jobs	\$39,400
Food and drinking places	\$578,800	\$627,400	\$412,700	12.7 jobs	\$32,600
Performing arts, sports, heritage	\$330,800	\$372,400	\$264,700	5.2 jobs	\$51,000
Amusement and recreation	\$165,400	\$200,900	\$137,800	4.0 jobs	\$34,200
Gambling	\$165,400	\$187,900	\$114,600	2.5 jobs	\$45,200
Total	\$4,551,8	\$5,363,100	\$3,133,400	79.6 jobs	\$39,300

VI: Economic Impact of Visitor Spending: Campers (cont'd)

Table 6: Economic Impact: Overnight Campers

Spending Area	Total Spending (no taxes included)	GDP Impact	Labour Income Impact	Jobs Impact	Average Labour Income
Accommodation	\$267,800	\$301,000	\$142,700	3.8 jobs	\$37,300
Gasoline	\$40,200	\$46,800	\$23,300	0.7 jobs	\$33,000
Retail	\$249,900	\$302,900	\$168,200	4.0 jobs	\$42,500
Food and beverage stores	\$156,900	\$193,000	\$116,000	2.9 jobs	\$39,400
Food and drinking places	\$234,400	\$254,000	\$167,000	5.1 jobs	\$32,600
Performing arts, sports, heritage	\$125,000	\$140,700	\$99,900	2.0 jobs	\$51,000
Amusement and recreation	\$62,500	\$76,000	\$52,000	1.5 jobs	\$34,200
Gambling	\$62,500	\$71,000	\$43,300	1.0 jobs	\$45,200
Total	\$1,198,200	\$1,385,200	\$812,400	21.0 jobs	\$38,700

VI: Economic Impact of Visitor Spending: Campers (cont'd)

Table 7: Economic Impact: Seasonal and Overnight Campers

Spending Area	Total Spending (no taxes included)	GDP Impact	Labour Income Impact	Jobs Impact	Average Labour Income
Accommodation	\$992,300	\$1,115,300	\$528,900	14.2 jobs	\$37,300
Gasoline	\$146,500	\$170,600	\$85,000	2.6 jobs	\$33,000
Retail	\$1,490,200	\$1,806,100	\$1,002,900	23.6 jobs	\$42,500
Food and beverage stores	\$1,396,500	\$1,726,100	\$1,037,600	26.3 jobs	\$39,400
Food and drinking places	\$813,100	\$881,400	\$579,700	17.8 jobs	\$32,600
Performing arts, sports, heritage	\$455,700	\$513,100	\$364,100	7.1 jobs	\$51,000
Amusement and recreation	\$227,900	\$276,900	\$189,800	5.6 jobs	\$34,200
Gambling	\$227,900	\$258,800	\$157,900	3.5 jobs	\$45,200
Total	\$5,749,900	\$6,748,300	\$3,945,900	101.0 jobs	\$39,200

VII: Total Economic Impact of Visitors to Portage la Prairie

Highlights of the total visitor spending impacts of the three accommodation types – hotels, motels and campers – are presented in Table 8. The highlights include:

Table 8: Economic Impact: Hotels, Motels, Seasonal Campers and Overnight Campers

Spending Area	Total Spending (no taxes included)	GDP Impact	Labour Income Impact	Jobs Impact	Average Labour Income
Accommodation	\$7,081,900	\$8,264,600	\$3,774,700	101.1 jobs	\$37,300
Gasoline	\$3,913,300	\$4,558,900	\$2,269,700	68.8 jobs	\$33,000
Retail	\$3,609,000	\$4,374,200	\$2,429,000	57.2 jobs	\$42,500
Food and beverage stores	\$2,809,000	\$3,472,000	\$2,087,100	52.9 jobs	\$39,400
Food and drinking places	\$5,050,700	\$5,475,000	\$3,601,200	110.6 jobs	\$32,600
Performing arts, sports, heritage	\$1,162,000	\$1,308,400	\$928,400	18.2 jobs	\$51,000
Amusement and recreation	\$934,100	\$1,135,000	\$778,100	22.8 jobs	\$34,200
Gambling	\$934,100	\$1,061,200	\$647,300	14.3 jobs	\$45,155
Total	\$25,494,200	\$29,649,200	16,515,437	445.9 jobs	\$37,038

VIII: Generated Manitoba-Level Tax Revenue

There is considerable tax revenue generated from visitor spending in the Portage la Prairie Region. For this impact assessment, tax revenue estimates have been kept separate from consumer expenditures. The primary reason for this is that incurred direct tax revenue is not a multiplying factor. Effectively, tax revenue goes into bank accounts for the respective level of government.

Table 9 displays the estimated tax revenue flows for the three government levels. Of note:

- Total tax revenue for all levels of government is estimated at \$6.5 million. The estimated distribution of the revenue was:
 - Hotels and motels, 79.6%
 - Seasonal campers, 16.0%
 - Overnight campers, 4.4%

- Tax revenue by government level was distributed as:
 - Provincial government, \$2.9 million (46.0%)
 - Federal government, \$2.6 million (41.4%)
 - Local governments, \$0.8 million (12.7%)
- A significant portion of the local government revenue is attributed to the 5% accommodation tax. It amounted to \$304,500.

Table 9: Tax Revenue by Level of Government

Level of Government	Hotels and Motels	Seasonal Campers	Overnight Campers	Total	Percent Share
Provincial	\$2,400,700	\$505,900	\$138,650	\$3,045,300	46.8%
Federal	\$2,081,500	\$445,900	\$121,200	\$2,648,600	40.7%
All Local	\$699,400	\$91,000	\$24,000	\$814,400	12.5%
All Governments	\$5,181,500	\$1,042,800	\$283,700	\$6,508,300	100.0%

IX: The Portage Model

As noted in Section II: Key Assumptions, there were several assumptions necessary to complete the economic impact assessment. There can be differing opinions on what the “right assumptions” should be. In addition, there may be a desire to simulate the outcomes or impacts based on a different set of assumptions, such as increased room occupancy rates or visitor spending.

Therefore, as a key part of this Tourism Economic Impact Assessment, we have created the Portage Model. Any user will be able to use this software tool, created in Excel, to input their own views of variables such as room capacity, occupancy rates, room rates and daily consumer expenditures. The tool is applicable to Portage la Prairie or any other Manitoba community.

Currently, the tool is in test mode. For access to the full tool, please contact the Portage Regional Economic Development.

Example of the Portage Model (Hotel Guest Spending)

	First day	2nd day	Total	Per Day	Total spending
Number of room occupants	115,560				
Average length of stay (days)	1.5				
Total days in PJP	173,340				
Daily Consumer Spending estimates					
Per Person					
Accommodation (2 Nights)	\$ 113	\$ 113	\$ 226.88	\$ 113.5	\$ 7,134,962
Gas/ies	\$	\$ 40.0	\$ 40.0	\$ 20.00	\$ 1,796,800
Retail	\$ 15.0	\$ 7.5	\$ 22.5	\$ 11.25	\$ 1,316,025
Food and Beverages	\$ 18.0	\$ 9.0	\$ 27.0	\$ 13.50	\$ 1,482,150
Food and Drinking Places	\$ 40.0	\$ 25.0	\$ 65.0	\$ 32.50	\$ 6,121,050
Performing Arts/Spectator Sports	\$ 5.0	\$ 2.5	\$ 7.5	\$ 3.75	\$ 796,125
Amusement and Recreation	\$ 5.0	\$ 2.5	\$ 7.5	\$ 3.75	\$ 796,125
Gambling	\$ 5.0	\$ 2.5	\$ 7.5	\$ 3.75	\$ 796,125
	\$ 201	\$ 188	\$ 389	\$ 195.98	\$ 22,662,952
			\$ 196	\$ 196	including taxes of \$ 1,015,263
			\$	\$	including accommodation cost
			\$	\$	including accommodation cost
Economic Impacts of Total Spending					
	Total spending	Direct	Spill-offs	Total Impact	Spending Multiplier
Accommodation	\$ 8,089,800	\$ 1,130,699	\$ 3,205,962	\$ 1,248,201	1.17
Gas/ies	\$ 5,796,800	\$ 1,414,529	\$ 1,573,800	\$ 4,306,322	1.17
Retail	\$ 2,116,025	\$ 1,385,712	\$ 1,182,304	\$ 2,568,016	1.23
Food and Beverages	\$ 1,412,150	\$ 971,634	\$ 734,077	\$ 1,745,912	1.24

X: Glossary of Terms

Direct Manitoba Expenditures: Direct Manitoba Expenditures identifies the volume of total expenditures estimated to be spent directly in Manitoba. Only expenditures in Manitoba can impact Manitoba GDP, labour income and employment etc. Direct Expenditures outside of Manitoba are a direct leakage from the economy, and do not impact Manitoba GDP, labour income and employment levels.

Direct Manitoba Supply: The value of Direct Manitoba Expenditures estimated to be produced by Manitoba industry. To yield high impacts relative to direct expenditures, the direct supply should approach the value of direct expenditures. A relatively small direct supply value results in lesser impacts to the economy.

Gross Expenditures: Additional expenditures by businesses and persons are levered by the Direct Expenditures. The Gross Expenditures statistic provides a measure of these expenditures, which includes re-spending of the initial direct expenditures by suppliers and wage earners. It represents the gross monetary benefit to the economy.

GDP at Market Prices: A measure of the total value of goods and services produced in the economy, GDP at Market Prices is the net monetary benefit to the economy. This statistic removes the double counting of expenditures and expenditure leakages from the economy, which are included in the Gross Expenditures statistic.

Labour Income: The sum of all wages, salaries, supplementary Labour income and net income of unincorporated businesses. Any or all of these may be present in the Direct Expenditures and resultant Direct, Indirect and Induced Impacts.

Employment: The employment estimated to result from the above Labour Income. Jobs are presented as "full-time equivalent person years" (i.e., one job represents the equivalent of one person being employed on a full-time basis for a period of one year).

Federal Taxes: The sum of Federal Income Taxes (Corporate and Personal), Other Direct Federal Taxes and Indirect Federal Taxes, estimated to be collected in Manitoba.

Provincial Taxes: The sum of Provincial Income Taxes (Corporate and Personal), Other Direct Provincial Taxes and Indirect Provincial Taxes, estimated to be collected in Manitoba.

Local Taxes: An estimate of the total taxes, of any description, accruing to all local municipalities in Manitoba because of the project or activity being assessed and its spin-off activities.

