



Portage la Prairie, Manitoba: A Welcoming and Inclusive City for Newcomers Strategic Plan 2018 - 2020



Prepared by: **Prepared by Portage la Prairie Local Immigration Partnership
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Table of Contents



I. Introduction

| | |
|---|----------|
| Mayor's Message | 3 |
| Coordinator's Message | 3 |
| Local Immigration Partnership Council Members | 4 |

II. Current Demographics

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| Population Growth Estimates | 7 |
| Aging Population | 8 |

III. Strategic Plan at a Glance

| | |
|------------------|-----------|
| Values, Vision | 9 |
| Mission, Mandate | 10 |

Strategic Directions

| | |
|---|-----------|
| IV. Guiding Principle 1: Communication Goal #1: Develop a Marketing plan | 11 |
| V. Guiding Principle 2: Connections Goal #2: Facilitating Connections | 12 |
| X. Guiding Principle 3: Community Goal #3: Creating Linkages | 12 |
| XI. Strategic Direction 1: Language learning and Educational opportunities | 13 |
| Goal #4: Coordinating with Government partners | 13 |
| Goal # 5: Working with Education providers and employers | 13 |
| XII. Strategic Direction 2: Social Integration | 14 |
| Goal #6 : Public Education | 14 |
| Goal #7: Help newcomers learn about indigenous peoples | 14 |
| Goal #8: Develop inclusive recreation opportunities | 14 |
| XIII. Strategic Direction 3: Meeting Labour Market Needs | 15 |
| Goal # 9: Supporting local employers | 15 |
| Goal # 10: Developing inclusive workplaces | 15 |
| XVI. Strategic Direction 4: Affordable Housing | 15 |
| Goal # 11: Affordable Housing | 15 |
| XVII. Strategic Direction 5: Public Transportation Options | 16 |
| Goal # 12: Affordable Housing Options | 16 |

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Future Plans | 16 |
|---------------------|-----------|

Portage la Prairie Mayor's Message:

Possibly the paramount item on the City of Portage la Prairie's own Strategic Plan is our list of Organizational Values. Of the five main values on that list, three line up most precisely with the goals of the Portage la Prairie Local Immigration Partnership (PLIP).

First is **Respect**, further described as being inclusive and welcoming. We value diversity and we treat everyone fairly and with respect.

Another of our values is **Collaboration**. We work together as a whole team. We value all of our community partners.

The third one is **Wellness**. We care about our health, safety, social and economic well-being.

As a Council, our desire to foster economic development and growth must begin with our values, and we are so pleased to collaborate with PLIP in finding more and better ways of satisfying these values and accomplishing goals. Investing in our newcomers is an investment in our entire citizenship and can only benefit the quality of life for all in our City of Possibilities.

We are pleased to work with PLIP and to see you move forward with your own strategic plan.

Mayor Irvine Ferris,
City of Portage la Prairie



Portage la Prairie Local Immigration Partnership (PLIP) Coordinator Message:

The main goals of the Local Immigration Partnership are to work with the community members in building community in Portage la Prairie and area, while addressing the gaps and maximizing our best practices to attract, retain and include Newcomers fully in local activities and life. By meeting with the Stakeholders in the Local Immigration Partnership Council of Portage la Prairie and surrounding area, we are able to utilize our strengths to leverage plans and strategies to make our community more welcoming and inclusive to Newcomers.

Another manner in which we are gaining insight from our Newcomers is through the Immigration Advisory Table group. This group is comprised of 8-10 local Newcomers who regularly share their "lived experiences" in moving to Portage la Prairie. They educate the Local Immigration Partnership Council about things that need improvement, and areas that we are excelling at. There are also two Newcomers represented on the Partnership Council so that ideas and concepts are communicated between the groups.

As the Local Immigration Partnership Coordinator, I am so pleased to work with the Newcomers and Stakeholders to make our community more diverse, rich and as eclectic as possible. With the addition of new cultures comes the opportunity to learn about traditions, taste savory cuisine, and just become a well-rounded and global citizen of this planet called "Earth".



It is my pleasure to work with the Local Immigration Partnership Council and the Immigrant Advisory Table to bridge the gaps and learn how vibrant this community can and will become in the present and near future. Anything that is done intentionally for the Newcomers also enhances the lives of all citizens in and around Portage la Prairie. I am proud to be associated with this worthwhile work and look forward to many years of welcoming Newcomers to Portage la Prairie and area.

Michelle Cudmore

Local Immigration Partnership Program Coordinator

Portage la Prairie Local Immigration Partnership Co-Chair Message:

The Portage Local Immigration Partnership is more of an organism than an organization. It is fluid entity that adapts, evolves, grows and shapes the community. It is both reflective of realities and perceptions as it attempts to be a creative and positive facilitator in moving the community towards being more welcoming for all Portage la Prairie and surrounding residents. It is our intention that by having the right people, discussing the relevant concerns and dreams, in a progressive and respectful way; a true community partnership will thrive. This strategic plan, is to be our guide on this journey towards becoming a more welcoming community.

Don Boddy and Marianne Woods

Co-Chairs of the Portage Local Immigration Partnership

Introduction to Portage la Prairie and Area:

When Canada's vast western lands were wild and free, this was the place on the Assiniboine River known as "Prairie Portage"-the swiftest overland link between the waters of the Assiniboine and Red River systems and those of Lake Manitoba. Portage la Prairie's place in the world has grown with the times from its rich history to a present day bustling business centre.

Located in south central Manitoba on the picturesque Assiniboine River, Portage la Prairie is, and has always been, an important transportation centre, dating back to its inception as a fur trading post. Today, it is connected to the rest of Canada via the Trans-Canada and Yellowhead Highway systems, with service from both major railways, and air through Southport.

Strategically situated in the centre of the continent astride major east-west routes, (only 45 minutes west of Winnipeg and one hour north of the international border, and one hour east of Brandon) Portage la Prairie is in an ideal position to accommodate additional industries. Residents of Portage la Prairie utilize the Assiniboine River as their water source. A flood control dam provides an reservoir that ensures more than adequate water needs for the entire community.

Agriculture and related processing and services remains the major industrial focus of the area. Affordable land prices, good drainage and excellent soil conditions have been conducive to the high agricultural output of the region. The farming community of the Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie produces many specialty crops such as carrots, onions, asparagus, parsnips, broccoli, beans, rutabagas, cauliflower, peas, potatoes, various grains and oil seeds, strawberries, saskatoon berries, raspberries and much much more. Much of the R.M. of Portage la Prairie is under irrigation, and additional acreage can be incorporated into the existing irrigation system. The diverse agricultural production of the Portage area has drawn many food processing plants to the city.



Portage la Prairie residents are also extremely proud of their education system, health care services, multitude of recreational facilities, arts and cultural opportunities, housing selection, service clubs, religious services and the range of media services. (City of Portage la Prairie Visitor Guide 2012)

Background:

The Local Immigration Partnership was established in November 2017 with a mandate to help Portage la Prairie and surrounding area to become increasingly welcoming and inclusive, and to support the economic, social, cultural and civic/political integration of newcomers moving into the area.



**Portage la Prairie Local Immigration Partnership
Council Members
2017-2018**

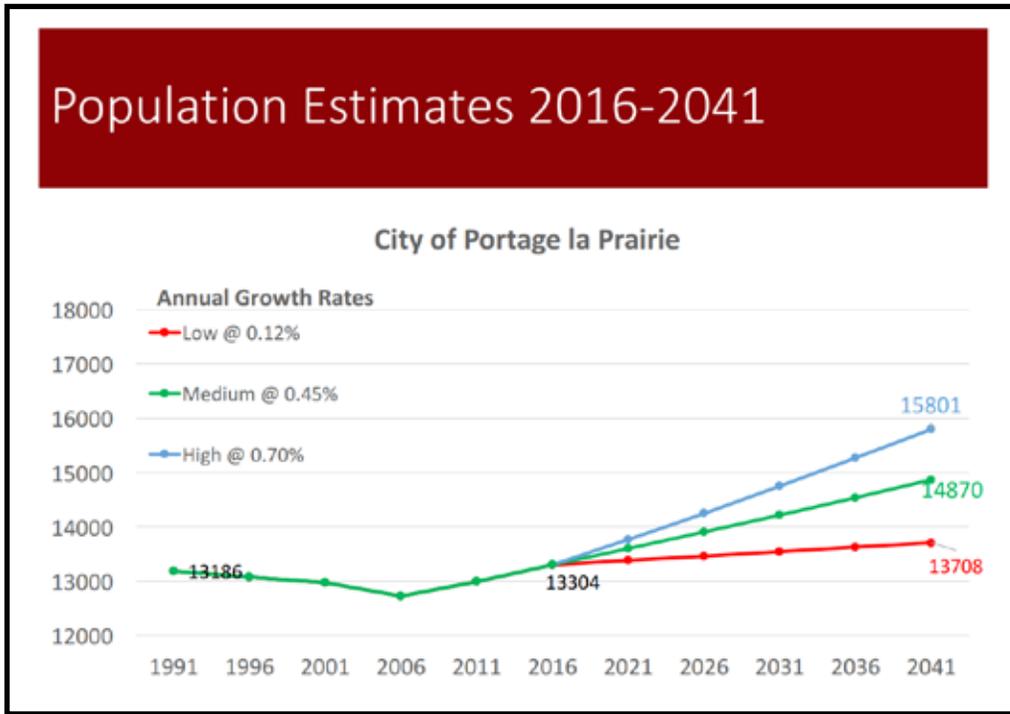
| Sector | Title | Organization | Name |
|---|---|--|---|
| Settlement Services | Settlement Coordinator | Learning & Literacy Center | Miriam Turyamwijuka |
| Settlement Services | Regional Coordinator | MANSO (<i>Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations</i>) | Don Boddy |
| K-12 Education | Superintendent | Portage la Prairie School Division (<i>PLPSD</i>) | Todd Cuddington |
| Post-Secondary Education | Regional Campus Manager | Red River College/ Stevenson Aviation | Guy Moffat/Neal Lavoie |
| Municipal Government | Mayor | City of Portage la Prairie | Mayor Irvine Ferris |
| Law Enforcement/ Francophone Representative | Inspector | RCMP | Inspector Jarrid St-Pierre |
| Municipal Government | Reeve | Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie | Reeve Kam Blight/ Councillor Arnold Verway |
| Federal Government | Assistant Manager Small Centers, PNT | Immigration, Citizenship and Refugees, Canada (<i>IRCC</i>) | Connie Jonasson/ Renee Barnabe |
| Provincial Government Education and Training | Program Planning and Policy Analyst | Immigration and Economic Opportunities Division, Manitoba Education and Training | Anna Bird |
| Provincial Government Education and Training | Regional Manager | Manitoba Education and Training, | Mario Gordon |
| Business/Economic Development | Executive Director | Chamber of Commerce | Cindy McDonald |
| Economic Development | Executive Director | Portage Regional Economic Development (<i>PRED</i>) | Vern May |
| Economic Development | CEO | Southport | Peggy May/ Curtis Calvert |
| Health | Executive Director - North | Southern Health-Santé Sud | Marianne Woods |
| Housing | Regional Manager | Manitoba Housing | Scott Lawrence |
| Immigrant Representatives | Members of the Community | Citizens | Maria Victor/Mostafa Skouta |
| Economic Development | Executive Director | Portage Community Revitalization Corporation | Victoria Espey |
| Local & Regional Research, Childcare Specialist | Independent Researcher & Daycare Specialist | | Betty Kelly |
| Indigenous Representative | Principal | Dakota Plains School | Joan Smoke |
| Recreational Representative | General Manager Stride Place (PRRA) | Portage (PRRA) | David Sattler |
| Employer Representative | General Manager | HiTech Industries | Jeff Wiebe |

Current Demographics

According to the 2016 Census, Portage la Prairie has a population of 13,304, a 2.6% increase from 2011. There were 815 immigrants living in Portage la Prairie or 6.1% of the population. The largest groups are Filipinos (204), Indian (120) and European (275). However, out of 290 recent immigrants (those who came to Canada between January 2011 and May 2016), 125 came from the Philippines, 100 from India and only 10 from Europe.

Population Growth Estimates

As depicted in the graph below, the low population estimate for 2041 will keep the population slightly above current levels while the high estimate will bring an increase of 18.9%.



Quick Facts

Region: Central Plains (City of Portage la Prairie and the Rural Municipality combined. Statistics Canada 2016 Data)

Site: 84 km west of Winnipeg, on the TransCanada Highway #1 in Central Manitoba

Land Area: 24.03 sq. km

Elevation: 261 metres above sea level

Neighbouring Communities: Delta Beach, St. Ambroise, High Bluff, High Bluff, Poplar Point, Newton, Westbourne, Elm Creek, Macdonald, Edwin, Oakland, Oakville, MacGregor, St. Claude, Long Plain First Nations, Dakota Tipi First Nations, Dakota Plains First Nations, Southport Aerospace Centre, Bagot, Rosendale, New Rosedale Colony, Baker Colony, Sunnyside Colony

Longitude: 98 degrees 18" W

Latitude: 49 degrees 58" N

Temperature: January average -18.7 degrees C July average 20 degrees C

Frost Free Days : 131 days

Annual Precipitation: 467.2 mm/yr.

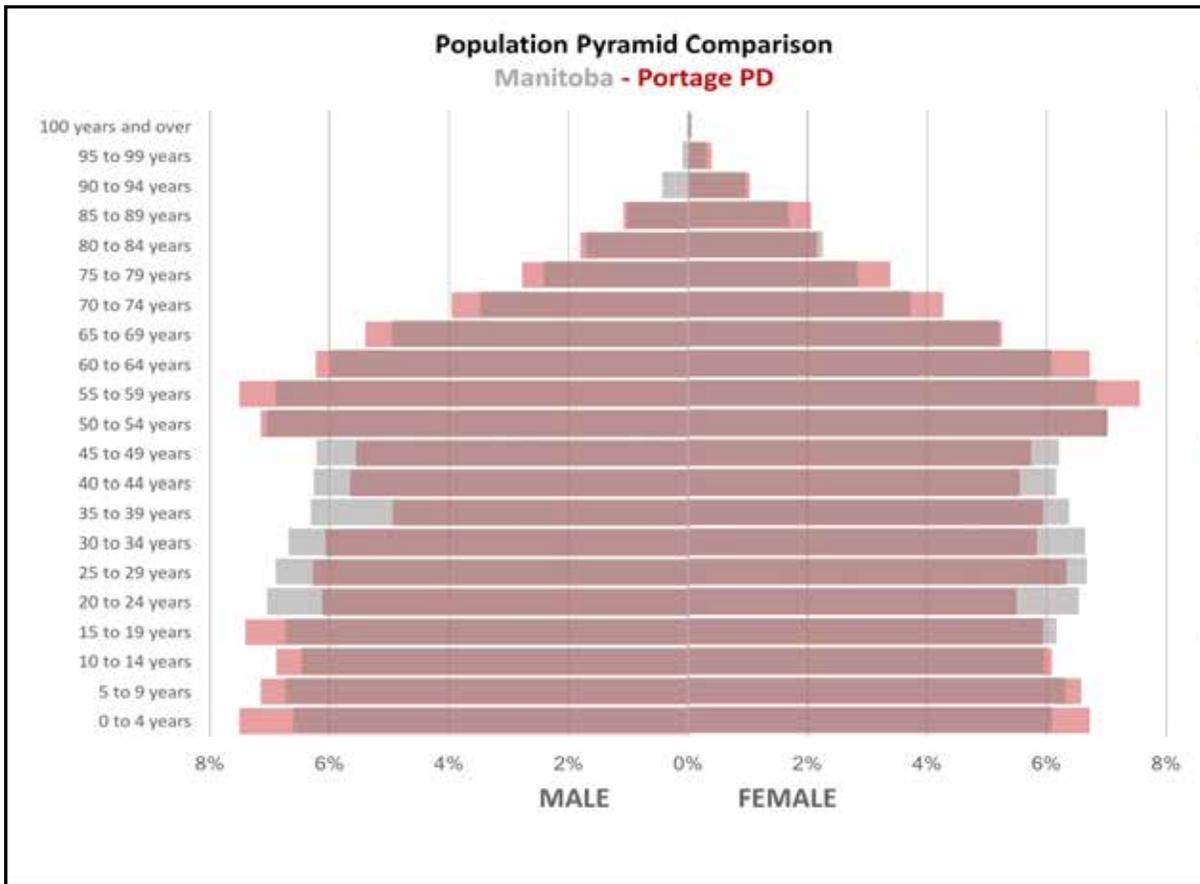
Population Breakdown: Portage la Prairie's population is 20,155 according to the 2016 Census (City and Rural Municipality combined Stats Canada)

| AGE | MALE | FEMALE |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 0-4 | 740 | 700 |
| 5-14 | 1380 | 1315 |
| 15-19 | 730 | 610 |
| 20-24 | 600 | 565 |
| 25-44 | 2270 | 2435 |
| 45-54 | 1255 | 1325 |
| 55-64 | 1375 | 1490 |
| 65-74 | 930 | 995 |
| 75-84 | 360 | 570 |
| 85 and over | 155 | 355 |
| TOTAL | 9,795 | 10,360 |

An Aging Population

As Canada's current birthrate is below replacement levels, Portage la Prairie needs immigration to meet the growth projections noted above.

The community also needs immigrants to offset a rapidly aging population with 6,095 (nearly half the population, 45.8%) as a whole aged 60 or older while 93% of the immigrant population is under 45. As illustrated below Portage la Prairie already lacks people in their prime working age of 19-55.



Compared to Manitoba, the District's population has:

- More people under age 20
- More people over age 55
- Less people ages 20 to 25
- The District is under represented by those in their prime working age
- Additional services (*education, health, child care, recreation*) may be required of children, youth and seniors

¹ Census Profile Portage la Prairie <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=4609029&Geo2=PR&Code2=46&Data=Count&SearchText=Portage%20la%20Prairie&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Immigration%20and%20citizenship&TABID=1>

² Portage la Prairie Planning District Development Plan Review, 2018 <http://www.ptgplanningdistrict.ca/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/PD-Presentation.pdf>

Strategic Plan at a Glance

Values

The Portage la Prairie Local Immigration Partnership believes that all residents of Portage la Prairie deserve to live in a welcoming and diverse community. It values:

- **Dedication to excellence in work and teamwork: helping others to access the resources that they need to thrive**
- **Large scale cooperation: leveraging resources and working together for the common good**
- **The potential of newcomers to help Portage la Prairie and surrounding communities grow and thrive**
- **Encouraging innovative approaches and solutions to help newcomers integrate into both the Portage la Prairie economy and community life**
- **The development of an attitude of welcome, diversity and inclusiveness as approach to daily life: a community characteristic, not a slogan**

Newcomers are much more than a labour source - they are essential for the vitality of our community.

Vision

Portage la Prairie is a welcoming and inclusive city of possibilities for newcomers where all residents feel a sense of respect, community purpose and belonging. For newcomers and long-term residents, Portage la Prairie is home.



Mission

The Portage la Prairie Local Immigration Partnership works to identify opportunities and designs initiatives for improving the social, civic and economic integration of newcomers and helps coordinate responses to newcomer settlement which will enable Portage la Prairie and surrounding areas to respond holistically to the challenges of housing, transportation, language, employment, education and social/civic isolation facing newcomers.



Mandate

The mandate of the Portage la Prairie Local Immigration Partnership is to foster a more welcoming and inclusive community while working collaboratively to improve economic opportunities, social integration and civic engagement of, and for, newcomers.



Strategic Directions

Guiding Principle (GP) 1: Communication

Clear and open communication is a key to building trust and community spirit. The Local Immigration Partnership will develop a public profile to ensure that newcomers are aware of available services in the community while current community members have opportunities to learn about the culture of newcomers and interact with them. Sharing positive stories of newcomers' contributions to Portage la Prairie with the public is a priority.



Goal #1: Develop a comprehensive marketing plan to:

1. Raise the profile of the Local Immigration Partnership as a key facilitator of newcomer recruitment, settlement and integration in Portage la Prairie;
2. Ensure that newcomers are aware of, and connected to, organizations and services in the community;
3. Provide all members of the Portage la Prairie community with opportunities to interact with and learn about each other;
4. Share positive stories of newcomers' contributions to Portage la Prairie's growth and prosperity;
5. Advocate for newcomer language training that will enable them to meet their educational and employment goals.

Guiding Principle (GP) 2: Connections

In collaboration with the organizations that developed the Portage la Prairie Resource Guide and the Portage la Prairie Seniors Resource Guide, the Local Immigration Partnership will contribute to comprehensive inventory of all service providers, government, educational and community and charitable organizations, community groups, industry and businesses in Portage la Prairie and surrounding areas—to be updated annually- so that PLIP can establish broad-based community/ business/industry support for its initiatives.

Goal # 2: Facilitate connections between organizations and groups working with newcomers and service providers, government, educational, charitable organizations, community groups, industry and businesses.



Guiding Principle (GP) 3: Community

The Local Immigration Partnership will work to achieve the priorities of the 2017-2022 Five Year Community Plan for Portage la Prairie and area, and the 15 Year Community Sustainable Development Plan launched in 2016. The priorities of these plans (including immigration, transportation, housing, recreation and community engagement) are crucial to helping Portage la Prairie continue to grow and thrive and are important to the community building mandate of the PLIP.

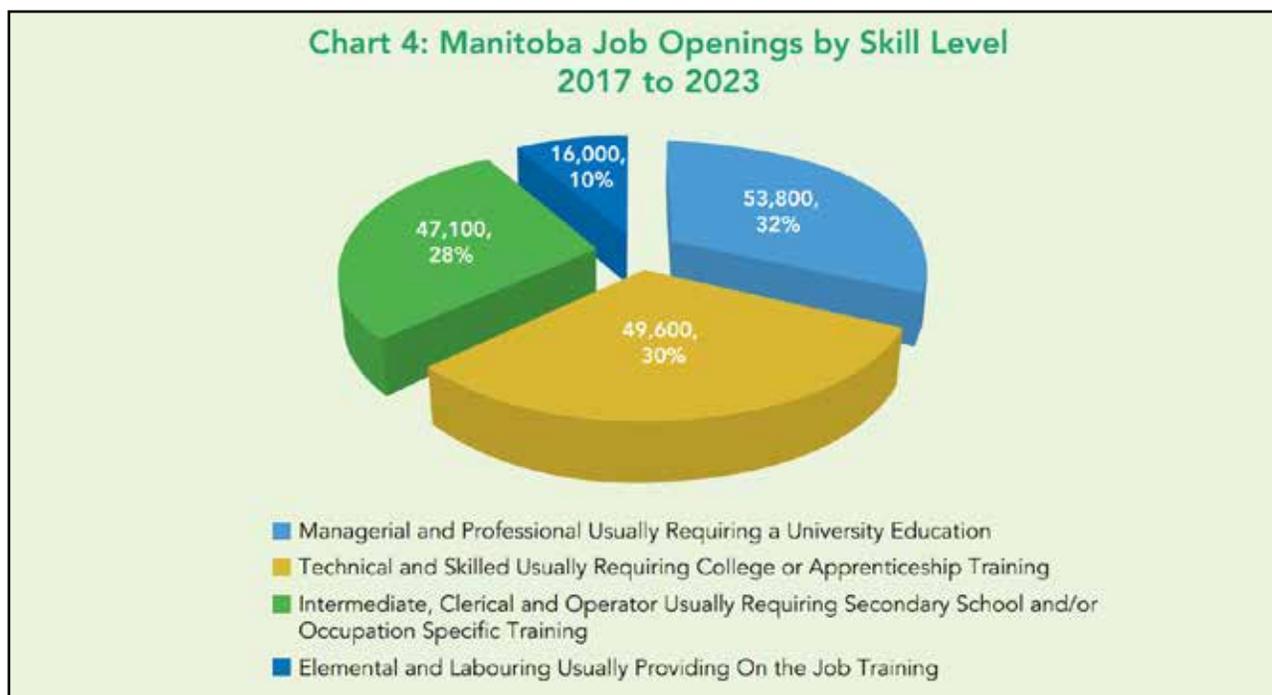
Goal # 3: Establish linkages to the initiatives in the Five Year Community plan for Portage la Prairie and area and to the 15-year Community Sustainable Development Plan that are most relevant to meeting the needs of newcomers and facilitating their integration into the community.

Strategic Direction 1: *Language Learning & Education Opportunities*

Newcomers require a high level of language proficiency in order to attain a position in the labour market and integrate socially. A lack of language skills can be a major detriment to newcomers' efforts to gain employment that matches the skills they have from previous training and experience. This can also lead to social isolation. The Province of Manitoba is 2017-2023 Labour Market Forecast, projects that only 10% of jobs will be available to those without some post-secondary education. Currently, most post-secondary institutions in Manitoba require a Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) 7-8 for entrance. Newcomer youth aging out of the school system without a credential or marketable skills are particularly at risk for being unable to attach to the labour market. Therefore, the PLIP will work with the K-12 system, Settlement and Language Service Providers, volunteer organizations, post-secondary providers and employers to ensure that every newcomer can access the language training that they want and need AND that newcomers receive the information that they need about the educational opportunities available in the community.

Goal # 4: Coordinate with Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and Service Providing Organizations (SPO's) to ensure that Newcomers are connected with the appropriate formal face-to-face, blended or online language learning opportunities. The PLIP will also work with SPO's and other stakeholders including the Province of Manitoba to develop volunteer/community/schoolbased and informal language learning opportunities to fill identified gaps (for example, language learning opportunities for Newcomers who have become Canadian citizens and are no longer eligible for IRCC funded services) and to promote interaction between newcomers and community members. Newcomers can easily access programs and support services that increase their language skills for the workplace and enhance their employability.

Goal # 5: Work with the school division, particularly the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program, municipal government, employers and post-secondary institutions to develop a job-shadowing program specifically for newcomer youth so that they can learn about potential careers, gain hands on experience at local industry and be able to make more informed choices about their future schooling and careers.



Manitoba Job Openings by Skill Level

³ Manitoba Occupational Labour Market Forecast 2016-2022. http://www.gov.mb.ca/jec/busdev/lmi/pdfs/occ_report.pdf

Strategic Direction 2:

Social Integration and Building a Sense of Community

Historically, in Portage la Prairie, a majority of Newcomers have been employed in occupations that fall under the National Occupational Classification (NOC) Code D. These jobs relatively low-skilled agricultural or industry jobs have the highest level of turnover in Portage la Prairie and elsewhere. As a result, the newcomer population tended to be quite mobile. The more recent trend is to attract skilled immigrants to fill skilled labour gaps. With an aging population, there is a need to help Newcomers settle in Portage la Prairie on a permanent basis and integrate into the community. By fostering a sense of community and becoming more welcoming, Portage la Prairie will be able to retain Newcomers and increase population over time.

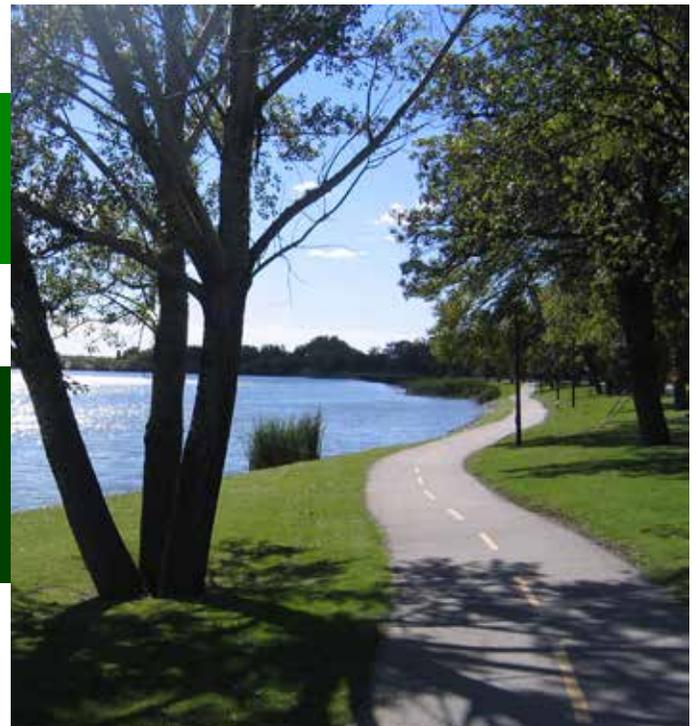
Goal # 6: Coordinate a public education campaign that helps the residents of Portage la Prairie and surrounding areas learn about the culture(s) of newcomers and how newcomers contribute to the growth and development of the community. The Local Immigration Partnership will support and advocate for innovative approaches to integrating Newcomers into the community. These types of initiatives will involve both a broad base of community volunteers and specific groups. (*E.g., retirees, Elders, Youth Groups.*) The campaign will involve media partners to ensure that the positive newcomer contributions and success stories are told. Community building initiative such as a mentorship program and annual cultural festival will be established.

Goal # 7: Support services providing organizations and other community groups to help newcomers to learn about the history and culture of Indigenous people(s) in Canada including the findings and recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The PLIP will collaborate with local Indigenous groups to develop opportunities for Newcomers to meet and interact with Indigenous people.

Goal # 8: Work with all stakeholders to develop an ethos of inclusion for social, sports and recreation opportunities in Portage la Prairie and environs. In practical terms, Newcomers will be part of the development and organization of events and their participation will be encouraged and facilitated.

“We need to look past complexion and see community.”

“When you invite someone to the dance, make sure they have a partner when they arrive.”



⁴Portage la Prairie, Phase II Labour Market Needs Assessment, 2011

Strategic Direction 3:

Meeting Labour Market Needs

The population in Portage la Prairie and surrounding communities has remained relatively constant at around 13,000 people for almost two decades . While the population used to be below the provincial median age, the population, particularly in skilled occupations, is aging. In order to maintain a viable workforce for local business and industry, it is necessary to recruit—and retain-- skilled immigrants. The Local Immigration Partnership will work to make Portage la Prairie a place where newcomers choose to come for employment and choose to stay for the community and quality of life.

Goal # 9: Portage la Prairie and area employers are supported in identifying and recruiting skilled immigrants to meet their labour force needs. The Local Immigration Partnership will assist in coordinating recruitment efforts such as overseas advertising and community job fairs within Portage la Prairie and area.

Goal # 10: Portage la Prairie and area employers are supported in acquiring the knowledge and capacity to develop workplaces that are more inclusive.

**Newcomers discover Portage la Prairie:
as the welcoming island on the Prairies**

Strategic Direction 4:

Affordable Housing

A lack of affordable rental housing and the high cost of home ownership are significant barriers to newcomers' long-term settlement in Portage la Prairie and the surrounding communities. Almost 60 % of respondents to a 2017 Community survey indicated that lack of adequate rental space was a major problem for Portage la Prairie residents. If Portage la Prairie is successful in bringing in Newcomers to boost population and meet labour market needs, this need will only grow.

Goal # 11: Work with local contractors, all levels of government, Canada Mortgage and Housing and community groups such as Habitat for Humanity to explore innovative ways to develop quality, affordable opportunities for rental or home ownership housing for all residents of Portage la Prairie and surrounding communities.

⁵ Labour Market Needs Assessment, Note 2

Strategic Direction 5:

Enhancing Public Transportation Options

Although Portage la Prairie is a “city with a small town feel” and “you can get anywhere in five minutes” that sense of freedom of movement and access is limited to those who have their own car or access to a car. For those who have to rely on public transportation, the options are severely limited. The shuttle system is generally regarded as inadequate and a lack of public transportation is viewed as a significant problem for Newcomers and many long-term residents alike.

Goal # 12: Work with stakeholders including the Chamber of Commerce, PCRC, Portage la Prairie School Division, Portage la Prairie Transportation Committee, City of Portage la Prairie, Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie, Red River College-Portage la Prairie Campus, Southern Health-Santé Sud, Southport, local businesses/industry and the federal and provincial governments to develop a plan to leverage existing transportation related assets. This will facilitate the development of an integrated transportation plan that offers convenient, affordable transportation to the public at peak times of need for people commuting to work and school.

Future Plans

The next steps for the Portage la Prairie Local Immigration Partnership is to create working groups that will make action plans to facilitate and initiate the goals from this Strategic Plan. A call to the community for particular “Working Groups” and members to actively pursue solutions to the strategic needs of the area will commence.

“Our transportation proposal cannot be everything to everyone, but it can be something for most people”.

**“Providing affordable and accessible transportation to get Portage la Prairie residents to where they live, work, shop, and play;
EVERY DAY!”**



