

Island on the Prairies



Portage Regional Tourism Committee Strategic Plan 2021-2026



Introduction

This strategic plan for the *Island on the Prairies* tourism brand for Portage la Prairie and District, has been conducted to establish the guiding principles, mission, vision, mandate, and overall strategy for longevity for our regional tourism development.

Strategies

This strategic plan will encourage the Portage Regional Tourism Committee (PRTC), and our stakeholders, collaborators, and community to reflect on the importance of tourism, and act as a resource for strengthening our operational goals and potential for growth. This strategic plan will be examined semi-annually by members of the RPTC to measure objectives and projected outcomes, and to develop achievable short-term and long-term goals for tourism development moving forward.

Development of Plan

Committee Input - Gathered during meetings and email correspondence through member testimonials and consultation. Reviewed with all committee members to ensure a collective approach to tourism.

SWOT Analysis - Conducted by the entire PRTC to determine perceived Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

Approval & Publishing - Shared contributions of ideas accumulated and approved of and published by the PRTC.

Island on the Prairies



Portage Regional Tourism Committee Strategic Plan 2021-2026

Organizational Structure

The Portage Regional Tourism Committee (PRTC) was formally re-established in 2020 to assist with managing the *Island on the Prairies* regional tourism brand for Portage la Prairie and District. The PRTC consists of representatives from the major tourism stakeholders in the region, each with distinct specializations in different tourism categories:

- **Heritage and Historic Destinations** (Museums, Interpretive Centres)
- **Outdoor Recreation** (Camping, Golfing, Outdoor Exercise)
- **Indoor Recreation** (Central Plains RecPlex, Stride Place, Large Sports Tournaments)
- **Community-Wide Events and Festivals** (Manitoba Air Show, Potato Festival, Portage Ex)
- **Amenities and Businesses** (Portage la Prairie Chamber of Commerce & PRED)
- **Local Government Bodies** (City of Portage la Prairie, and the RM of Portage la Prairie)
- **Hospitality** (Hotels, Restaurants, Entertainment)
- **Indigenous Tourism**

The PRTC meets monthly, with facilitation from the Executive Director of Portage Regional Economic Development (PRED). The budget for tourism is managed by the Executive Director of PRED, with smaller projects and marketing initiatives delegated to members of the Portage Tourism Committee. Activities performed by the PRTC, and advice for tourism development are reported to the City of Portage la Prairie Council & RM of Portage la Prairie.

Mandate

The Portage Regional Tourism Committee exists to enhance, grow and promote the entire region as a destination, enticing visitors and residents to explore, stay and experience the Island on the Prairies.

Mission

Our mission is to increase the economic benefits that flow from tourism and market the region of Portage la Prairie as one of Manitoba's premier destinations.

Vision

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

Island on the Prairies



Portage Regional Tourism Committee Strategic Plan 2021-2026

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- The Portage Regional Tourism Committee is comprised of a group of local professionals who bring with them a wealth of knowledge regarding tourism development, marketing, community outreach, etc.
- *Island on the Prairies* is a well defined brand, and gives us a distinguished identity.
- Our region has excellent tourism resources established that we can enhance.
- Our regional tourism brand has community support and is recognized by Travel Manitoba and other regional tourism entities.
- The Portage region houses excellent facilities and has the capacity to host large events to promote regional tourism.
- The Region of Portage la Prairie has amenities available for tourists such as hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues, and recreation.

WEAKNESSES

- The Portage Regional Tourism Committee operates with a limited and inconsistent budget that fluctuates each year. This compromises our ability to market our tourism brand, host large scale events and programs, and operate sustainably.
- The Portage Regional Tourism Committee is missing representation from key stakeholders.
- There is a general misconception that the “Island on the Prairies” brand pertains only to the Island within the City limits.
- Staff resources are limited which limits our ability to be consistent in messaging and function as an official tourism brand. We do not have one dedicated person responsible for tourism.
- Though we have some larger facilities in our area, we do not have the infrastructure to attract major events.
- We currently have marketing inconsistencies, ie Social Media and Website updates.

Island on the Prairies



Portage Regional Tourism Committee Strategic Plan 2021-2026

OPPORTUNITIES

- *Island on the Prairies* is growing and is a recognized regional tourism brand in the eyes of Travel Manitoba. Beneficial partnerships between our tourism brand and Travel Manitoba will help our organization flourish.
- We have the ability to promote under utilized rural destinations in our region, such as Delta Beach and St. Ambrose.
- We are located in an ideal tourism area, in between Winnipeg and Brandon, off of the Trans Canada Highway. Additionally, we are close to Lake Manitoba, the Assiniboine River, excellent recreational trails, and other attractive outdoor recreational spots for hunting and fishing.
- We have enough local amenities and facilities to promote local tourism exploration.
- Our region includes many First Nations communities that may be interested in pursuing the current trend in Indigenous Cultural Tourism. Additionally, by having an Indigenous Tourism representative on the committee, we have a strong foundation to build relationships with local First Nations communities.
- Current tourism trends such as Agricultural and Eco-Tourism can be supported and enhanced in our region.

THREATS

- Covid-19 has affected our regional tourism by discouraging inter-provincial and national travel.
- The sustainability of the Portage Regional Tourism Committee is dependent on funding from external governing bodies.
- The external and internal negative perceptions of our region in regards to crime and past experiences can have detrimental effects on our ability to promote tourism.
- Our location may be too close or too far away from Winnipeg.
- We must compete with other regional tourist destinations to attract visitors.
- Economic strains on the consumer may affect our ability to attract visitors.
- Tourism is not currently viewed as an essential economic priority in our area.

Island on the Prairies



Portage Regional Tourism Committee Strategic Plan 2021-2026

Goals and Strategies for Success

Goal #1: Grow local support for tourism

How to achieve:

- Become visible in the community
- Encourage economic impacts for tourism
- Educate the public on the PRTC and what is available for tourism opportunities
- Fill gaps as identified on the PRTC committee
- Prove to local governing bodies that tourism is an important economic driver
- Creating pride in the community and the tourism brand
- Recap of the big events in the past to encourage community investment
- Build relationships with local organizations to cultivate the importance of tourism and develop a Tourism First model.

Goal #2: Establish consistent digital media

How to achieve:

- Develop a Social Media Plan
- Review website and upgrade to best suit the needs of a recognizable tourism brand
- Increase video and digital campaigns

Goal #3: Ensure that tourism and tourism development is sustained in our region

How to achieve:

- Establish a sustainable funding model for tourism
- Sustain partnerships and stakeholders in our region
- Develop a Regional Indigenous Tourism strategy in consultation with local First Nation communities.