

Welcoming Communities Profile: Portage la Prairie, Manitoba



Located in the province of Manitoba, Portage la Prairie sits near the geographical center of Canada. Incorporated as a city in 1907ⁱ, as of the 2021 census, it had a population of 12,944, slightly down from 13,013 in 2016ⁱⁱ. Situated approximately 70 kilometers west of Winnipeg, the city serves as a key regional hub, supporting the agricultural activities of the surrounding Portage Plains, an area known for its flat terrain and exceptionally fertile soil.

History

Prior to European settlement, the geographical area of present-day Portage la Prairie was occupied by various groups of indigenous peoples, including the Mandan, the Assiniboine, and the various tribes making up the Chippewa (Saulteaux) Nation: the Pottawattamie, the Erie, the Hurons, the Ojibway, and the Cree.ⁱⁱⁱ

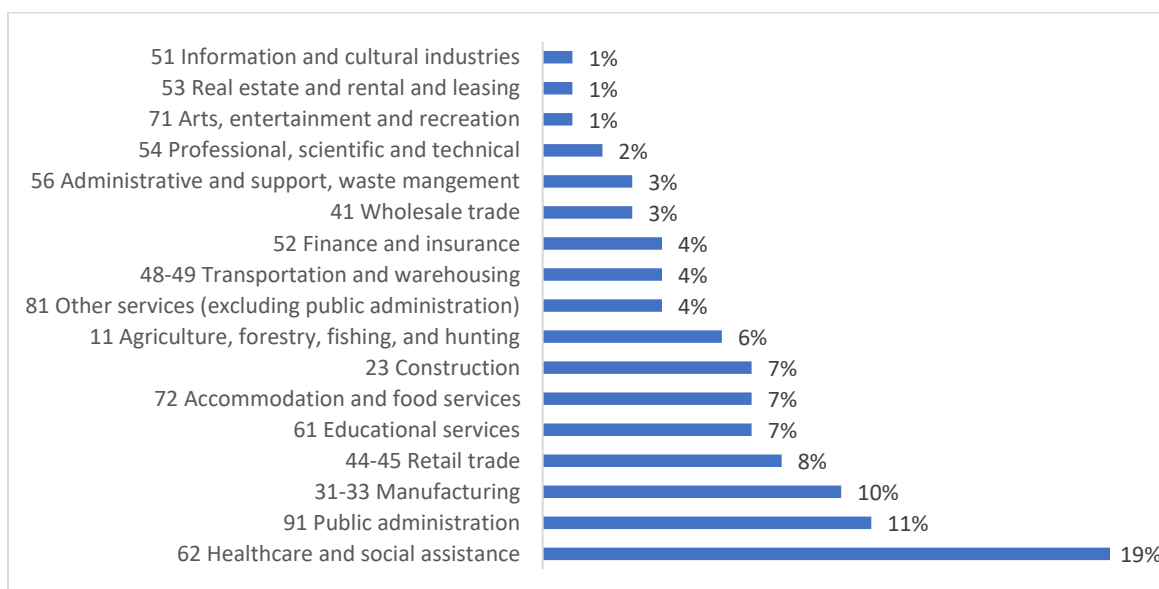
The modern history of Portage la Prairie begins with the establishment of Fort la Reine, built in the Portage la Prairie area by Pierre Gaultier de La Vérendrye in 1738^{iv}. After 1794, both the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company maintained trading posts at the "portage la prairie," or the place where canoes could be carried overland between the Assiniboine River and Lake Manitoba^v. Permanent European settlement began after 1851, when the Reverend William Cockrane and sixteen settlers established a mission there^{vi}.



Economy

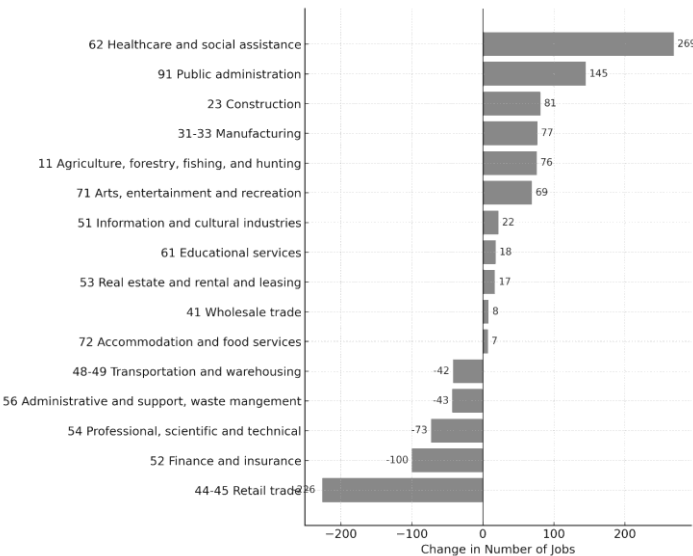
Portage la Prairie enjoys a mixed economy. The following chart shows Portage SLA's main industries.

Jobs by Industry Sector, 2019^{vii}



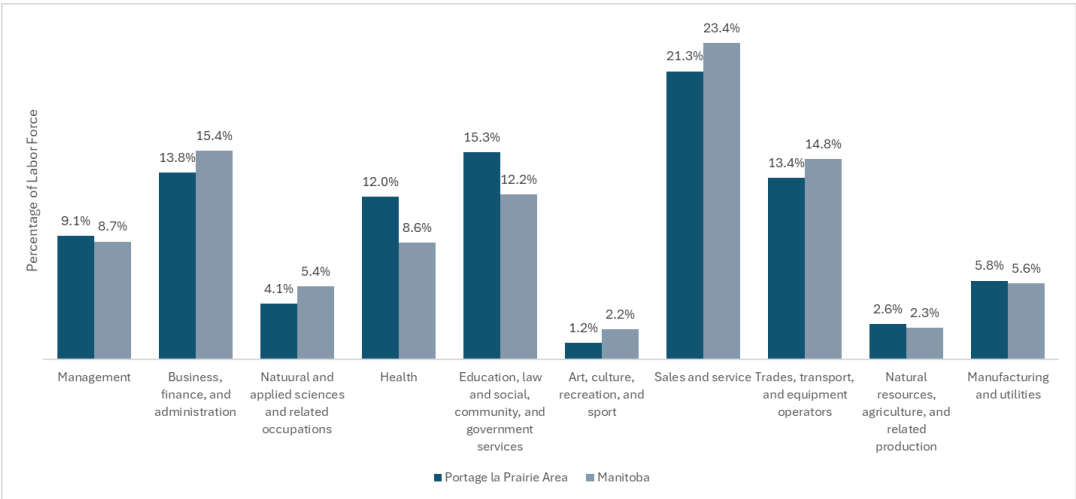
The chart shows the distribution of employment across various industry sectors, with Healthcare and social assistance being the dominant sector, accounting for 19% of employment. This is followed by Public administration (11%), Manufacturing (10%), and Retail trade (8%). Several sectors, including Educational services, Accommodation and food services, and Construction, each represent 7%. Smaller shares are seen in sectors such as Transportation and warehousing, Finance and insurance, and Other services (excluding public administration), all at 4%, while industries like Information and cultural industries, Real estate, and Arts and entertainment each comprise only 1% of employment. The data highlights a workforce concentrated in service-oriented fields, particularly healthcare.

Portage la Prairie SLA Job Change by Industry (2014 – 2019)^{viii}



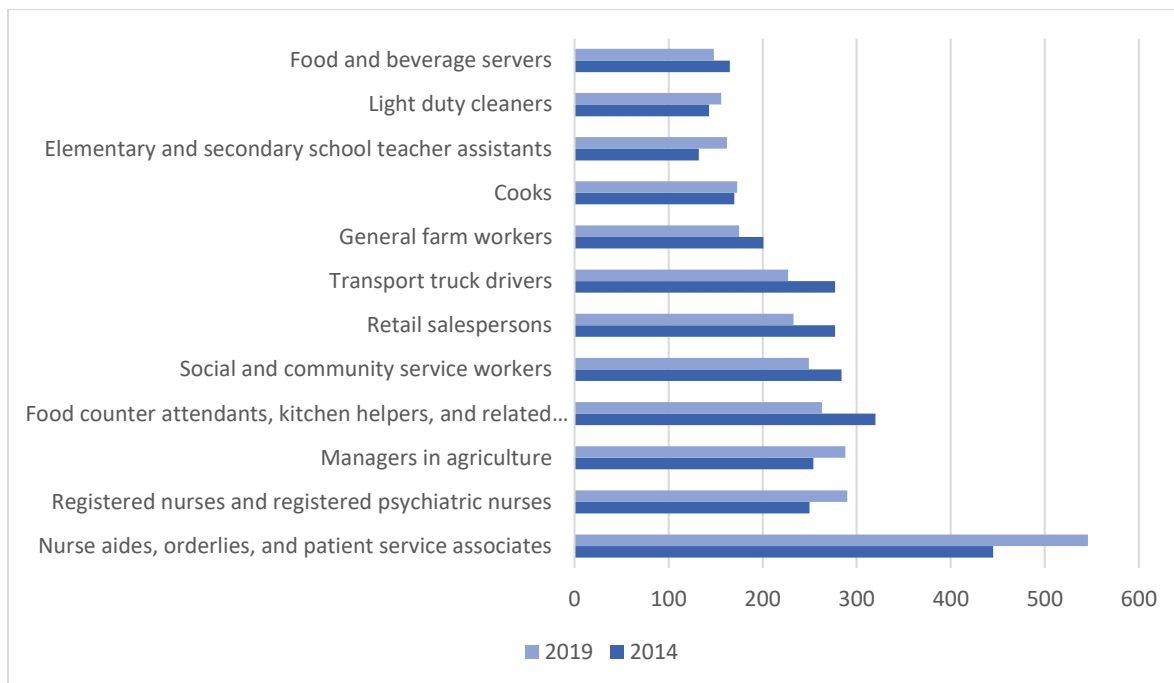
The chart illustrates changes in the number of jobs across various industry sectors. Healthcare and social assistance experienced the most significant growth, with an increase of 269 jobs, followed by Public administration (+145) and Construction (+81). Moderate gains were also seen in Manufacturing (+77), Agriculture (+76), and Arts and entertainment (+69). On the other hand, several sectors faced job losses, most notably Retail trade, which saw a decrease of 226 jobs, the largest decline overall. Other significant losses occurred in Finance and insurance (-100), Professional, scientific and technical services (-73), and Administrative and support services (-43). These trends highlight a clear shift in employment toward public and health-related sectors, while retail and financial services experienced marked declines.

Portage Area & Manitoba Jobs by Occupation, 2019^{ix}



According to a 2019 Government of Manitoba data set comparing occupational distributions between Portage la Prairie and Manitoba, Portage la Prairie has higher labor force participation in Education, law and social, community, and government services (15.3%) compared to Manitoba (12.2%), as well as in Health (12.0% vs. 8.6%) and Trades, transport, and equipment operators (14.8% vs. 13.4%). In contrast, Manitoba leads in Sales and service occupations (23.4% compared to 21.3% in Portage), and Business, finance, and administration (15.4% vs. 13.8%). Notable differences also appear in Natural and applied sciences, where Portage lags behind (4.1% vs. 5.4%), and Art, culture, recreation, and sport, where participation in Portage is about half that of Manitoba (1.2% vs. 2.2%). Overall, Portage la Prairie shows a stronger presence in public service and health-related roles, while Manitoba has higher proportions in sales, business, and cultural occupations.

Top Occupations in Portage la Prairie, 2014 and 2019^x



The bar chart displays the employment numbers for various occupations in 2014 and 2019. "Nurse aides, orderlies, and patient service associates" consistently had the highest employment in both years, showing a significant increase from 2014 to 2019. Many other occupations, such as "Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers, and related support occupations", "Retail salespersons", and "Transport truck drivers", also maintained high employment figures, generally experiencing slight increases or relatively stable numbers between 2014 and 2019. In contrast, "Food and beverage servers" and "Light duty cleaners" consistently showed the lowest employment figures among the listed occupations for both periods.

Business by Size of Employment (2019)^{xi}

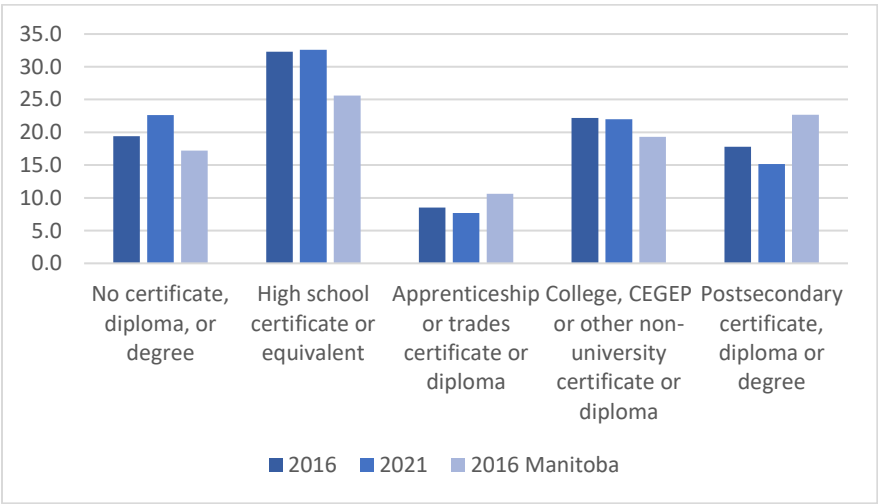
Number of Employees	Number of Employees
Indeterminate (self-employed)	1,214
1-4	345
5-9	143
10-19	99
20-49	66
50-99	22
100-199	13
200-499	5
500+	2
Total	1,909

The above table details the distribution of businesses by the number of employees, totaling 1,909 entities. The largest category by far is "Indeterminate (self-employed)" with 1,214, indicating a significant presence of solo ventures or small, unclassified businesses. Among businesses with employees, the vast majority are small-sized, with 345 businesses having 1-4 employees, followed by 143 businesses employing 5-9 people. As the number of employees increases, the count of businesses rapidly declines, with only 2 businesses having 500 or more employees, highlighting that large enterprises represent a very small fraction of the total business landscape presented.

Education & Household Income

In determining the attractiveness of a labor force to business and industry, the educational attainment of a region is connected with the growth prospects of its economy. The following chart outlines the education of PLP residents.

Education Attainment Ages 25 – 65 (2016)^{xii}

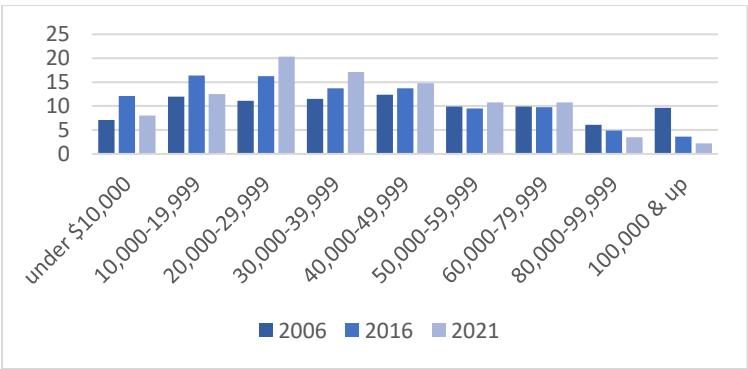


While PLP residents are more likely to have high school certificates and non-university-issued diplomas than the greater Manitoba population, they are also more likely to be unemployed and less likely to hold apprenticeship or trade certification.

Household Income

Located approximately seventy kilometers from Winnipeg, daily commuting from PLP to the provincial capital is minimal. Therefore, unlike bedroom communities closer to Winnipeg, income reported for the City of Portage is representative of household income generated from employment inside the community. The following graph indicates changes in household income across three data points.

Household Income of Private Households, Portage la Prairie City (2005, 2016, 2021)^{xiii}



Although household income between \$20,000-29,999 represents the fastest-growing category, income growth also occurred across the next four categories, corroborated by the rise in the median income from \$33,626 (2016) to \$39,200 (2021).

Demographics and Immigration

The following chart provides demographic information from the City of Portage la Prairie.

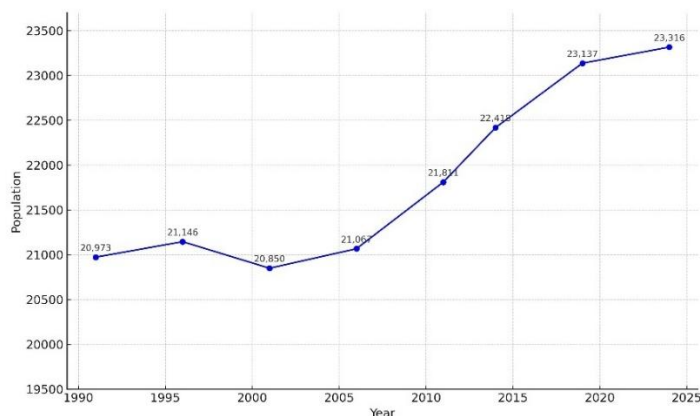
	2006	2011 ^{xiv}	2016 ^{xv}	2021 ^{xvi}
Total population (2021)	12,728	12,996	12, 613	12,944
0 – 14 (%)	n/a	18.9	19.6	18.8
15 – 64 (%)	n/a	63.9	61.8	61.3
65 + (%)	n/a	17.5	18.6	20.0
Average age of the population	n/a	n/a	40.5	41.1
Median total income among recipients (CDN\$)	n/a	n/a	\$33,626	\$39,200
Total couple families	n/a	2,680	2,570	2,580
Total married couples	n/a	2,210 (82%)	2,060 (80.2%)	2,110 (81%)
Total common-law couples	n/a	470 (17.5%)	510 (19.5%)	475 (18.4%)
Couples with children at home	n/a	1,435 (53.5%)	1,370 (53.3%)	1,190 (46.1%)
Lone-parent families	n/a	780	855	835
English spoken as mother tongue	n/a	11,025	12,205	12,340
French spoken as mother tongue	n/a	280	200	155
Indigenous languages	n/a	145	175	145
Other languages spoken as mother tongue	n/a	820	960	1310

Demographic information is also available for the Portage la Prairie Self-contained Labour Area (SLA), which consists of the Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie, the City of Portage la Prairie, Long Plain First Nation, Dakota Plains First Nation, and Dakota Tipi First Nation.

In line with trends nationwide, PLP has experienced a gradual aging of the population.

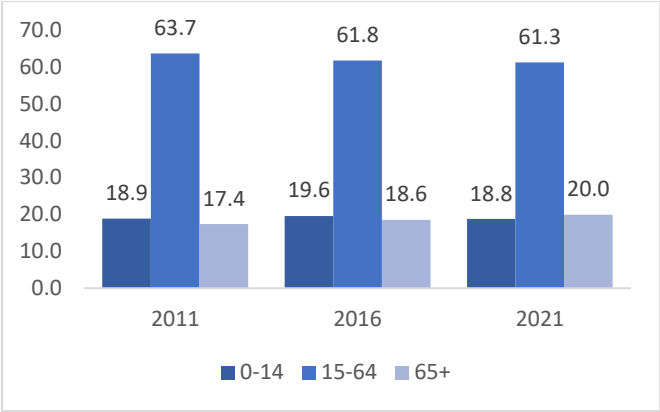
Although the PLP (SLA) experienced minimal growth between 1991 and 2006, the population grew modestly between 2006 and 2024. In 2024, the population of Portage la Prairie (SLA) reached 23,316 residents.^{xvii} This represents a modest growth of 9.83% over 18 years, or .52% a year. However, this growth rate is below the Province of Manitoba growth rate of 22.65% (1.14% a year) for the same period (2006-2024), as well as that of other faster-growing rural communities.^{xviii}

Population Growth 1991 – 2024^{xix}



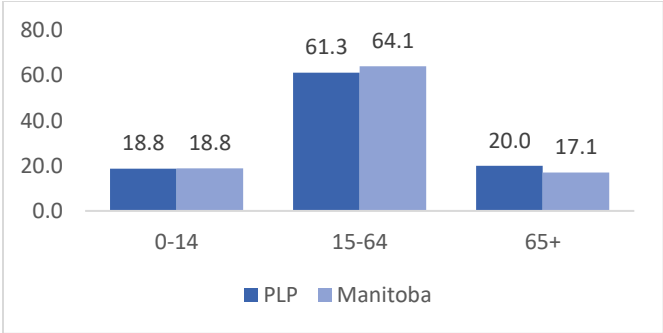
In line with national trends, PLP has experienced a gradual aging of its population.

Aging Trends in Portage la Prairie (2011, 2016, 2021)^{xx}



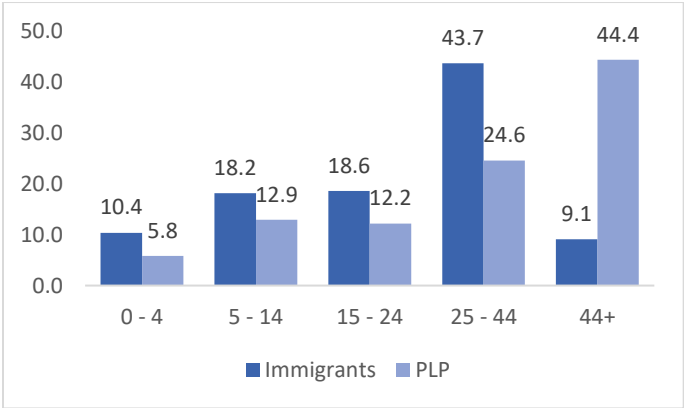
As the above graph shows, the population of residents sixty-five and older has gradually increased over the ten-year period. This corresponded with a gradual increase in residents aged zero to fourteen. Compared with the greater population of Manitoba, PLP has fewer working-age residents and more over the age of sixty-five. As a result, the average age of the overall Manitoba population in 2021 was slightly younger (39.7) compared with PLP (41.1).

Demographic Situation of Portage la Prairie and Manitoba, 2021^{xxi}



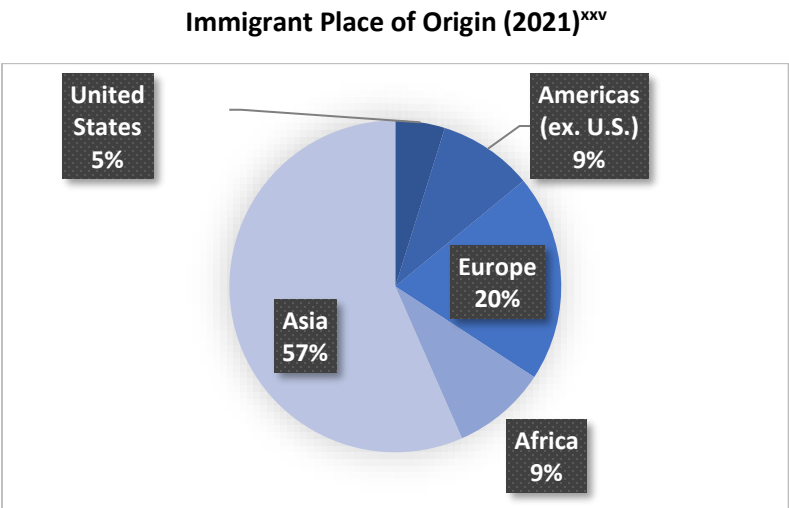
There is evidence that immigration is functioning to partially mitigate the above trends. In 2024, the immigrant population reached 10.13% in the greater SLA region.^{xxii} This corresponds with data from the city proper, where, in 2021, 10.12% of census respondents reported not speaking an official or indigenous language as their first language, an increase from 6.32% in 2011.^{xxiii}

Age at the Time of Immigration (2021)^{xxiv}



Immigrants to Portage la Prairie are significantly younger than the general population. Unfortunately, demographic data for immigrants over 44 years of age is unavailable; however, it is possible that a majority were still of working age at the time of immigration.

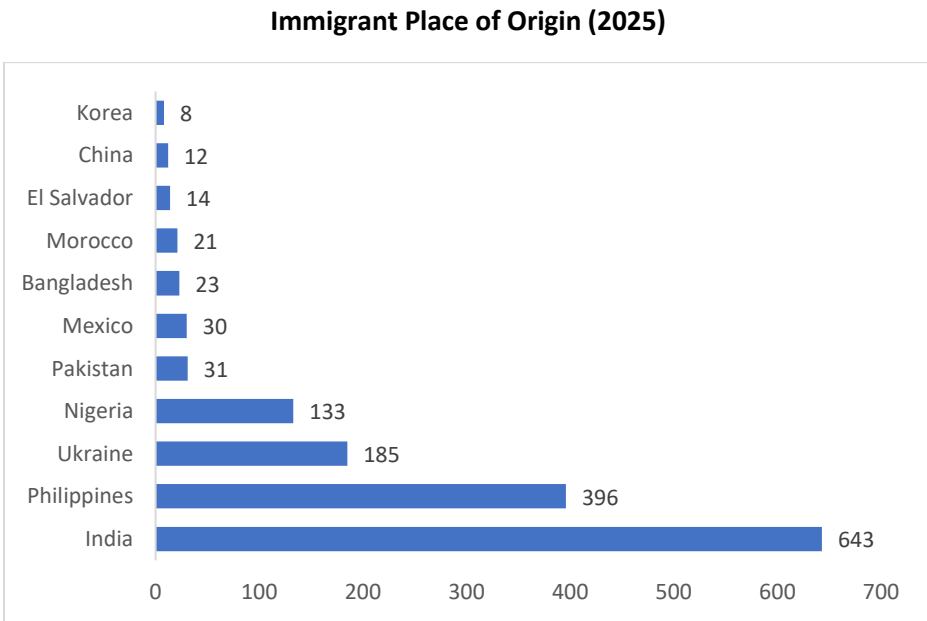
The following graph shows the regions of origin for PLP’s first-generation immigrant population.



Like other rural communities in Manitoba, a majority of immigrants come from Asia, primarily from the Philippines (31.6%), India (19.7%), and Pakistan (3.5%).

Non-official Data

The City and the Economic Development Office (PRED) do not keep statistics on the immigrants in their community. However, the principal settlement service provider, the Portage Learning and Literacy Centre (PLLC), maintains a database of users that offers some insight into immigration in Portage la Prairie^{xxvi}. As of May 2025, the PLLC had records for 1934 immigrants in the community. This suggests that first-generation immigrants comprise approximately 8% of the population in the PLP area. It should also be noted that immigrants who do not use PLLC services are not included, and that data on children is sometimes not entered when newcomers register at the PLLC.



PLLC records offer further insight into the ethnic origin of immigrants to PLP. As with 2021 data, newcomers to PLP come primarily from Asia. However, the largest single group is now Indians, followed by the newcomers from the Philippines.

African newcomers are dominated by a single group (Nigerians), and European immigration is also primarily from a single country (Ukraine).

Data exists for individuals entering PLP with Permanent Resident status. The PLLC believes that the number of temporary foreign workers (TFW) entering the community in a given year is roughly double the number of PR arrivals.

PR and TFW Arrivals in Portage la Prairie by Year^{xxvii}

	PR	TFW	Total
2021	133	266	399
2022	312	624	936
2023	388	776	1164
2024	390	780	1170

The above indicates that significant immigration is occurring year on year. However, it is unclear how many newcomers leave the community after arrival.

Long-term newcomer retention

Accurately estimating the five-year immigrant retention rate in Portage la Prairie is difficult due to the lack of records tracking who enters and leaves the community. Unlike several other Manitoba municipalities—such as Morden (Community Driven Immigration Initiative), Winkler-Stanley (Economic Development Corporation Pilot Immigration Initiative), and Altona/Rhineland (Rural Community Immigration Pilot)—PLP does not currently implement a community-specific immigration strategy.^{xxviii}

In communities with such initiatives, municipal representatives are typically engaged in identifying local labor needs, promoting job opportunities, and selecting candidates. These efforts are often in conjunction with (or as a function of) the economic development office, and in partnership with local employers. By contrast, Portage la Prairie’s involvement in immigration is limited. The city lacks a structured approach to selecting newcomers,^{xxix} and the local settlement service provider (PLLC) only receives federal data regarding permanent residents and refugees entering the community. Temporary foreign workers may be unaccounted for unless they independently approach the PLLC for services. Without selection criteria tailored to local conditions or a stakeholder committee to vet candidates, little attention is afforded to whether prospective immigrants are well-suited to life in a rural setting like PLP.

This lack of oversight and planning has consequences. Some newcomers arrive with education, work experience, or personal expectations that do not align with rural life, leading them to view PLP as a temporary stop. Many stay only until they are able to move elsewhere. PLP’s close proximity to Winnipeg exacerbates this issue by offering newcomers easy access to a larger job market and more extensive educational options.

Community-specific immigration strategies also foster early relationship-building between municipal staff and newcomers. Immigration coordinators in such programs often support selected candidates through the pre-arrival and arrival phases. These personal connections can serve to ease the adjustment process. In contrast, many newcomers to PLP arrive without prior contact with community representatives and are sometimes unaware of available settlement services.

Given these factors, estimating PLP’s long-term newcomer retention is especially difficult. Discussions with PLLC staff and other local stakeholders suggest that long-term retention is significantly lower than the most recent five-year average for the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program (MPNP), which stands at 84.7%.^{xxx}

History of Immigration Policy in Portage la Prairie

The following timeline outlines the development of PLP's immigration strategy.^{xxxix}

1995	Portage Language and Literacy Centre incorporated. Began with programs for adult literacy and family literacy, later expanding with employment assistance programs. ^{xxxix}
2007	Neighborhoods Alive (Manitoba Governmental Affairs), originally designed for three communities (Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson), expands to five Manitoba communities (Portage la Prairie, Flin Flon, The Pas, Dauphin, Selkirk). The Interim Advisory Committee (IAC) was established in PLP.
2008	Interim Advisory Committee formulates 5-Year Community Plan. Core operating funds allocated for the Portage Community Revitalization Corporation (PCRC).
2008	Portage Learning and Literacy Centre introduces settlement services, including English as a Second Language (ESL).
2008	Portage Community Revitalization Corporation (PCRC) established.
2013	Portage Regional Economic Development (PRED) established. PRED is a member organization involved in the priorities outlined in the Portage Local Immigration Partnership's 2020-2025 Action Plan. ^{xxxix}
2017	PCRC announces the Portage Local Immigration Partnership Program (PLIP), receiving a contract from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). PLIP is one of five local LIPs in Manitoba (Portage la Prairie, Brandon, Dauphin Region, East Manitoba, Pembina Valley). LIPs are initiatives designed to "support the settlement and integration of newcomers to Canada by fostering welcoming and inclusive spaces, organizations, businesses, and communities through collective actions." ^{xxxix}
2019	PLIP announces the 2020-2025 Action Plan. The plan outlines five priorities: 1) Improving Labour Market Outcomes, 2) Accommodating the Need for Childcare in the Community, 3) Increase Engagement Between the Indigenous Community, Newcomer Community, and the Public at Large, 4) Increase the Availability of Transportation, 5) Ensure all Newcomers have Access to Appropriate Housing Options. ^{xxxix}

Access to Immigrant-Serving Agencies – The Portage Learning and Literacy Centre

A variety of federal, provincial, and municipal services are available to residents of Portage la Prairie. Begun as a learning center for PLP residents in 1995, the Portage Learning and Literacy Centre (PLLC) has evolved to become the principal provider of settlement services in the community. The PLLC operates with provincial and federal funding, with minimal support from the municipality.^{xxxix} The following sections outline the PLLC's activities in addressing key areas indicated in the Welcoming Toolkit (Esses et al., 2023) as critical to establishing welcoming communities.

According to the PLLC website,^{xxxix} the center provides the following services to newcomers in the community.

1	We help newcomers with needs assessments and settlement plans to achieve their goals.
2	Informative sessions cover key topics like health, housing, employment, and government resources.
3	We assist with applications and important documents like health cards and SIN numbers.
4	Notary services are available for various documents.
5	Volunteers help newcomers with English practice, tutoring, and conversation circles.
6	ESL classes and online language training opportunities are offered.
7	Support is provided in finding affordable housing and securing employment.

8	Guidance is given for job applications and skills training.
9	We help with credential recognition in education or training fields.
10	Assistance is available for understanding immigration and citizenship processes.
11	Community integration is encouraged through social events, celebrations, and volunteering.
12	Specialized programs cater to youth, seniors, and women.
13	Our Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) Program supports students and families.
14	We help newcomers make friends and feel at home in the community.
15	Support is extended to immigrant and refugee students and their families in adapting to a new culture and understanding the education system.

Newcomer Intake

When a newcomer seeks assistance from the Portage Learning and Literacy Centre, an appointment is made with a settlement worker. Appointments are for a maximum of ninety minutes. In the first meeting, the settlement worker completes a Newcomer Intake Form with the client after receiving written consent to compile data. A Client Assessment Check List is employed to identify immediate and medium-term settlement needs.^{xxxviii} An excerpt of this section, provided by the PLLC, is included below:

YOUR FIRST FEW WEEKS IN CANADA			
Complete	N/A		Comment
		Search for a home to rent or buy	
		Apply for Social Insurance Number (SIN Card)	
		Apply for Manitoba Health Card	
		Health concerns (optional)	
		Open bank account/Any concern related to money	
		Find out information about driver's license	
		Provide IRCC with your Canadian address	
		Set up telephone and internet service	
		Appointment with Employment Assistance Services	
		Register your children in school	
		Apply for Child Benefit and/or GST credit	
		Register for Language Assess & English classes	
		Register for conversation circle or settlement partner	
		Find out information about local events	
		Find a family physician	
		Receive a welcome package	
		Register for Orientation Workshop	
TWO MONTHS IN CANADA			
Complete	N/A		Comment
		Learn about Canadian laws, your rights and civic responsibilities	
		Apply for Rent Assist (as soon as this is applicable)	
		Apply for Pharmacare Benefit (if applicable)	
		Accessing community resources	
		Getting your education credentials done in Canada	
		Connection to the community (friends, family, etc.)	
		Support services for PLLC activities (child care, transportation, etc.)	

The intake form allows the PLLC settlement worker to systematically access and address the immediate needs of newcomers to the community. While the PLLC provides direct assistance to gain access to some services, in other cases, the organization functions to connect clients with other local service providers or with the information necessary to complete procedures. Community volunteers are frequently called on to assist newcomers in obtaining access to services when they are unable to complete procedures on their own. A principal role of settlement workers involves ensuring that newcomers are able to complete essential procedures for life in Canada. These include obtaining health cards to use local healthcare services, social insurance (SIN) numbers to gain employment, driver's licenses to operate a vehicle, and telephone services. Each procedure can be daunting for newcomers, particularly those unfamiliar with Canadian society and whose first language is not English or French.

Once these initial needs are addressed, settlement workers begin the processes of finding permanent accommodation, gaining employment, enrolling children in local schools and adults in literacy or ESL programs, and finding a family physician.

Medium-term settlement goals involve connecting newcomers with local events, apprising them of Canadian rules and obligations, assisting in transferring credentials and continuing education for career advancement, and other activities. Community volunteers are commonly enlisted as Settlement Partners, meeting with newcomers to help them integrate into the community.

The following sections outline specific services available to newcomers.

Access to Affordable, Adequate, and Suitable Housing

According to the PLP Local Immigration Partnership website,^{xxxix} PLP does not directly offer temporary housing services. Rather, they provide a list of hotels and a link to the Airbnb website. However, PLLC staff stated in interviews that there are three transition apartments available, primarily for refugees, for clients with immediate housing needs. In non-emergency cases, the PLLC relies on relationships with local landlords and real estate companies to connect clients with initial housing. While the PLLC does not act as a guarantor, its relationships with both clients and housing providers result in its acting as a de facto go-between. Clients securing housing through the intermediation of the PLLC can also be protected from exploitation.

Access to Transportation

At present, no public transportation system exists in Portage la Prairie.^{xl} Additionally, the PLP Local Immigration Partnership website^{xli} informs newcomers that there are no public transportation options from Winnipeg to PLP, advising them to use the car rental counters accessible at the arrival terminal. Interviews with newcomers revealed that they had obtained transportation from Winnipeg to PLP, and PLLC staff indicated that, in certain circumstances, shuttle services are provided to newcomers traveling from Winnipeg airport to PLP.

Acquiring a car and a driver's license is essential for life in PLP, without which the only modes of transportation are taxi, bicycle, and traveling on foot. While the first option is expensive, the latter two options are often impractical in winter. PLLC staff frequently assist newcomers in obtaining driver's licenses following arrival. In cases where reciprocal agreements are not in place between Canada and the newcomers' country of origin, they must pass both a written exam and a practical driving test. The written test is available in official and non-official languages. In cases where the newcomer is unable to take the practical driving test in English, an interpreter is permitted to accompany them during the test.

Citizenship and Visa Support

Newcomers to Portage la Prairie frequently change visa status while in the community. Given the complexity of the application process, PLLC staff are able to provide support when necessary. In particular, an in-house notary service, provided free of charge, functions to expedite the notarization of documents and reduce costs to the applicant. The PLLC also assists newcomers in applying for citizenship,

Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities

Portage la Prairie residents have access to over one dozen organizations providing employment-related services.^{xlii} However, for newcomers to PLP, the PLLC serves as a gateway to a range of in-house services and programs designed to help individuals secure employment. Settlement workers direct newcomers seeking employment to meet with PLLC Employment Consultants, who assist clients in the following areas:

SERVICES PROVIDED BY EMPLOYMENT CONSULTANTS	
1	Resume development
2	Cover letter assistance
3	Career coaching/employment counseling
4	Employment skills identification
5	Job search assistance
6	Support with preparing for interviews
7	Help with filling out job applications

PLLC staff indicated the importance of tailoring job applications to meet employer expectations, particularly when clients have educational achievements or work experience beyond what would be expected for the positions they are seeking. Newcomers who enter Canada through the Federal Skilled Worker Program may be allotted points for their qualifications and employment history. However, these achievements are often in excess of what PLP employers require for low-to-medium skilled positions.

In addition to individualized support, PLLC Employment Consultants also conducts group workshops covering many of the same areas:

PLLC EMPLOYMENT-RELATED WORKSHOPS	
1	Resume development
2	Job search skills
3	Interview skills
4	Cover letter development
5	Career development

Employment Consultants at the PLLC may also direct clients to services provided by other organizations, particularly clients with foreign credentials seeking to work in specialized fields.

1. Manitoba Careers for Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs) Program: a program supporting newcomers already educated in 28 regulated professions.^{xliii} Financial assistance may be provided.

2. World Education Services (WES): a non-profit social enterprise dedicated to helping international students, immigrants, and refugees achieve their educational and career goals in the U.S. and Canada. WES evaluates international educational qualifications, supports the integration of immigrants into the workforce, and provides philanthropic funding to immigrant-serving organizations. Since 1974, WES has provided credential evaluations to nearly three million individuals from more than 200 countries. Applications are online and in English. Application fees start from CDN \$130. All documents must be translated into English or French.
3. Manitoba Jobs & Skills Development: a service providing Manitobans with career planning and job search supports, helping users get the skills, training, and work experience they require to reach career goals.^{xliv} According to the PLP LIP webpage, there is also support available for entrepreneurs. Two services are locally based (PLLC & Community Futures Heartland), with a third based in Winnipeg (SEED). According to the Community Futures Heartland website, it is a community-based economic renewal initiative funded by the Government of Canada and directed by local volunteer boards. Their main objectives are to help rural Canadians start or expand a business and to help sustain and improve communities and their local economies. Services include: Technical Services, Financial Services, Self-Employment Assistance (SEA) Program, Strategic Planning, and Facilitation.

Portage work experience program (PWEPP)

Funded by Employment and Social Development Canada, the Portage Work Experience Program is a youth employment program that provides paid pre-employment essential skills training and work experience to assist individuals between the ages of 15 and 30 to overcome barriers to employment. Participants develop a broad range of skills and knowledge in order to participate in the current and future labor market, with further education and skills being the key to labor market participation. Successful applicants undergo classroom training where they receive safety and first-aid training (with a certificate), as well as orientations regarding workplace culture in Canada. Upon completion, participants are matched with a local employer, who has the option to hire them following completion of the program. Classroom and workplace training typically lasts 12 – 16 weeks. Participants who do not receive employment offers at the conclusion of their workplace training may still use the time as work experience when applying for other positions. The program is available for all members of the community who meet the criteria for participation.

Money Management Training Workshops

Through a partnership with SEED Winnipeg, the Portage Learning and Literacy Centre has trained facilitators to offer a variety of Manage Your Money workshops to residents of Portage la Prairie and the Central Plains region. Employing a curriculum provided by SEED, at least seven of the workshops are provided annually at the PLLC center. Newcomers to PLP are often unprepared for differences in the prices of various goods, as well as differences in the financial system. Money management workshops serve to educate newcomers with the aim of promoting their prosperity and forestalling economic difficulties that can negatively impact individuals and the greater community. Workshops are aimed at newcomers, but are open to all members of the community.

Community Volunteer Income Tax Program - The Portage Learning and Literacy Centre has trained volunteers to be able to file your tax return for free for eligible members of the community. Starting in March of each year and running until the end of tax season, the PLLC provides tax clinics where volunteers assist with the preparation of tax documents. This service is made available in recognition that tax filing can be especially difficult for newcomers. The service is available to all members of the community.

Access to Suitable Health Care

In addition to assisting newcomers in obtaining health cards and family physicians, the PLLC also serves as a go-between for newcomers unable to access health care services alone. On occasion, PLLC staff may physically accompany newcomers to hospitals in certain situations. More often, they assist in arranging volunteers, often who share the native language of the newcomer, to act as interpreters when necessary. Although exact numbers were unavailable at the time of this report, interviews with PLLC staff and a registered nurse indicated that a sizeable portion of health care workers in PLP are foreign-born, speaking English as a non-native language. Resultingly, newcomers with low English levels can often find language support at the facilities they visit. Interviewees also indicated that translation applications (i.e., Google Translate) are frequently employed. For online consultations (e.g., with specialists located in Winnipeg), online translation tools are utilized when clients indicate that they are unable to communicate in an official language.

Educational Opportunities

The following sections outline educational opportunities available to newcomers to PLP. The PLLC plays a principal—but not exclusive—role in assisting adult newcomers and their children access education inside and outside the community.

ESL, Conversation Circles, & Continuing Education

Following meetings with Settlement Workers, newcomers are directed to PLLC Literacy Instructors for language assessment. The PLLC offers Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) for eligible adult learners at no charge to registered users. Classes correspond to the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) 1 – 8. Classes assist learners to attain proficiency in English required for basic social interaction and also help newcomers find employment and pursue educational goals.

ESL Literacy courses are offered for three hours in the evening twice a week. PLLC indicated that this schedule is often not optimal for working newcomers or newcomers with small children. The center would like to expand literacy services but faces budget constraints. The ESL Literacy program is conducted by PLLC staff trained in the field.

Conversation circles are also available at regular times throughout the week, often facilitated by community volunteers at the PLLC. Child-minding services are sometimes available for newcomers with small children. Volunteers also work individually with newcomers outside the center. In such cases, volunteers report the date and duration of interactions with newcomers on a weekly or monthly basis. In such cases, both volunteers and newcomers sign a contract agreeing to meet for three-month periods.

While language needs are often the principal impediment to reaching career goals, newcomers sometimes arrive in the community without high school diplomas or with high school credentials that are not recognized in Canada. According to the PLLC website, support for the following courses is offered:

Grade 10	
20F Science	1 credit
20S Introduction to Applied and Pre-Calculus Math	1 credit
25S Life/Work Planning	0.5 credit
25S Essential Mathematics I	0.5 credit
25S Essential Mathematics II	0.5 credit
Grade 11	
30S Biology	1 credit
30S Chemistry	1 credit
30S Physics	1 credit
Grade 12	
40G Credit for Employment (CFE)	1 credit
40S Applied Mathematics	1 credit
40S Biology	1 credit
40S Chemistry	1 credit
40S English (Comprehensive or Transactional Focus)	1 credit
40S Family Studies with option for applied stream	1 credit
40S First Nation, Metis and Inuit Studies	1 credit
40S Geography: World Human	1 credit
40S Psychology	1 credit
41G Community Service Credit	0.5 or 1 credit
45S Essential Mathematics V	0.5 credit
45S Essential Mathematics VI	0.5 credit

PLLC staff work with newcomers across a range of subjects, often individually, to complete Canadian high school courses. Staff will also work with newcomers who require specific courses to enter post-secondary programs.

Settlement Workers in Schools Program (SWIS)

Settlement workers assist newcomers with children with enrollment in local K-12 schools. Once enrolled, school-based settlement workers from the Settlement Workers in Schools program assist newcomer children and teachers in addressing concerns related to adjustment, as well as facilitating activities to help local children understand the cultures of the newcomers in their schools.

Post-secondary Educational Opportunities

PLLC staff are available to offer advice for newcomers seeking opportunities for post-secondary education. PLP has two satellite campuses for Red River Collegiate, which is based in Winnipeg. The Portage Campus offers the following full-time and part-time course selections:

Course	Full-time/Part-time	Certification
Administrative Assistant	Full-time, Part-time	Certificate
Business Administration	Full-time	Diploma
Business, Accounting, and Management	Full-time, Part-time	Certificate
Early Childhood Education	Full-time	Diploma
Early Childhood Education Workplace	Full-time	Diploma
Educational Assistant	Full-time, Part-time	Certificate
Health Care Aide	Full-time, Part-time	Certificate
Health Unit Clerk	Full-time	Certificate
Human Resources Management	Full-time, Part-time	Certificate
Introduction to Food Manufacturing	Full-time	Certificate
IT Operations	Full-time	Diploma
Nursing	Full-time	Degree
Licensed Practical Nurse to Bachelor of Nursing Pathway	Full-time	Degree

Some of the above courses (e.g., Educational Assistant, Introduction to Food Manufacturing, Nursing) provide credentials for in-demand jobs in the local community. It is unclear to what degree college courses reflect the labor needs of Portage la Prairie. A second Red River satellite campus (Stevenson), offers a variety of apprenticeship and technical courses for the aerospace industry. However, it is unclear how these courses fit PLP's economy and industrial base.

The PLLC will also assist newcomers with enrollment at Winnipeg-based educational centers, including the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology (MITT), Red River College (Winnipeg-based campuses), University of Winnipeg, and the University of Manitoba. Some options exist for online learning.

International students

According to the [Immigratetoportage website](#),^{xlv} it is possible for international students to study at Portage Collegiate. The cost is currently CDN \$10,000/year, with extra for accommodation. Homestays are arranged by the student, and it is unclear if there is any assistance from the PLP school division. Students are responsible for completing an application and, upon acceptance, for applying for a student visa from IRRC. It is unclear if there is any support for completing this

process. Post-arrival support is hinted at, but not explicitly. It is similarly unclear if this program is being utilized by the community to attract immigrants for long-term settlement in the community.

Positive Attitudes Toward Immigrants (of All Racial, Cultural, and Religious Backgrounds) (that Meet Immigrants' Needs)

Ongoing Commitment to Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression

Immigrant-Responsive Municipal Features and Services

Summary

ⁱ Selwood, J.H. (2022, March 31). *Portage la Prairie*. The Canadian Encyclopedia.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/portage-la-prairie>

ⁱⁱ Statistics Canada. (2022, August 5). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Portage la Prairie.

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp->

[pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Portage%20la%20Prairie&DGUIDlist=2021S05100669&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Portage%20la%20Prairie&DGUIDlist=2021S05100669&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0)

ⁱⁱⁱ Collier, A. M. (1970). A History of Portage la Prairie and surrounding district. D. W. Friesen & Sons Ltd., Altona.

^{iv} *Ibid.*

^v Manitoba Communities: Portage la Prairie. (2023, March 24). Manitoba Historical Society Archives.

<https://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/municipalities/portagelaprairie.shtml>

^{vi} Selwood, J.H. (2022, March 31). *Portage la Prairie*. The Canadian Encyclopedia.

^{vii} Data from Government of Manitoba, Portage la Prairie Region Economic Profile, 2019, Industries and jobs are classified according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) https://investinportage.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Region-of-Portage-la-Prairie-Government-Profiles_compressed.pdf Not all jobs are represented.

^{viii} Data from Government of Manitoba, Portage la Prairie Region Economic Profile, 2019, Industries and jobs are classified according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) https://investinportage.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Region-of-Portage-la-Prairie-Government-Profiles_compressed.pdf Not all jobs are represented.

^{ix} Data from Government of Manitoba, Portage la Prairie Region Economic Profile, 2019, Industries and jobs are classified according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) https://investinportage.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Region-of-Portage-la-Prairie-Government-Profiles_compressed.pdf

^x Data from Government of Manitoba, Portage la Prairie Region Economic Profile, 2019, Industries and jobs are classified according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) https://investinportage.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Region-of-Portage-la-Prairie-Government-Profiles_compressed.pdf

^{xi} Data from Government of Manitoba, Portage la Prairie Region Economic Profile, 2019, Industries and jobs are classified according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) https://investinportage.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Region-of-Portage-la-Prairie-Government-Profiles_compressed.pdf

^{xii} Data calculated from Census Profile, 1016 Census Portage la Prairie, Statistics Canada, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp->

[pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=POPC&Code1=0669&Geo2=PR&Code2=46&SearchText=Portage%20la%20Prairie&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=0669&TABID=1&type=0](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=POPC&Code1=0669&Geo2=PR&Code2=46&SearchText=Portage%20la%20Prairie&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=0669&TABID=1&type=0) and Statistics Canada 2021 Census Profile, Portage la Prairie, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp->

[pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Portage%20la%20Prairie&DGUIDlist=2021S05100669&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Portage%20la%20Prairie&DGUIDlist=2021S05100669&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0)

^{xiii} Data from 2006, 2016, 2021 Statistics Canada Census Profile, Portage la Prairie

^{xiv} Statistics Canada 2011 Census Profile, Portage la Prairie, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp->

[pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=4609029&Geo2=CD&Code2=4609&Data=Count&SearchText=Portage%20la%20Prairie&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=&TABID=1](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=4609029&Geo2=CD&Code2=4609&Data=Count&SearchText=Portage%20la%20Prairie&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=&TABID=1)

^{xv} Statistics Canada 2016 Census Profile, Portage la Prairie, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp->

[pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=POPC&Code1=0669&Geo2=PR&Code2=46&SearchText=Portage%20la%20Prairie&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=0669&TABID=1&type=0](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=POPC&Code1=0669&Geo2=PR&Code2=46&SearchText=Portage%20la%20Prairie&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=0669&TABID=1&type=0)

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- ^{xvi} Data from Statistics Canada 2021 Census Profile, Portage la Prairie, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Portage%20la%20Prairie&DGUIDlist=2021S05100669&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0>
- ^{xvii} Data provided by 2024 Portage Regional Economic Development report, <https://investinportage.ca/demographic-data/>
- ^{xviii} Calculated from Manitoba Bureau of Statistics Quarterly Population Statistics Report (October 1, 2024), [https://www.gov.mb.ca/mbs/publications/mbs304_pop_2024_m10.pdf#:~:text=According%20to%20Statistics%20Canada%2C%20Manitoba%27s%20total%20population,\(0.38%\)%20from%20the%20July%201%2C%202024%20estimate.&text=Combining%20the%20various%20forms%20of%20population%20movement%2C,in%20the%20first%20three%20quarters%20of%202024.,and Statistics Canada, Selected trend data for Manitoba, 1996, 2001 and 2006 censuses, https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/92-596/P1-2.cfm?Lang=eng&T=PR&PRCODE=46&GEOCODE=46&GEOLVL=PR&TID=0](https://www.gov.mb.ca/mbs/publications/mbs304_pop_2024_m10.pdf#:~:text=According%20to%20Statistics%20Canada%2C%20Manitoba%27s%20total%20population,(0.38%)%20from%20the%20July%201%2C%202024%20estimate.&text=Combining%20the%20various%20forms%20of%20population%20movement%2C,in%20the%20first%20three%20quarters%20of%202024.,and Statistics Canada, Selected trend data for Manitoba, 1996, 2001 and 2006 censuses, https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/92-596/P1-2.cfm?Lang=eng&T=PR&PRCODE=46&GEOCODE=46&GEOLVL=PR&TID=0)
- ^{xix} Data combined from two publications: Economic Profile, Portage la Prairie Region, issued by the Government of Manitoba, https://investinportage.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Region-of-Portage-la-Prairie-Government-Profiles_compressed.pdf, and 2024 Portage Regional Economic Development report, <https://investinportage.ca/demographic-data/>
- ^{xx} Statistics Canada, Census Profile, Portage la Prairie 2011, 2016, 2021
- ^{xxi} Statistics Canada, Census Profile, Portage la Prairie, 2021; Statistics Canada, Census Profile, Manitoba, 2021, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?LANG=E&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&DGUIDlist=2021A000246&HEADERlist=0&SearchText=Manitoba>
- ^{xxii} 2024 Portage Regional Economic Development report, <https://investinportage.ca/demographic-data/>
- ^{xxiii} Calculated using Statistics Canada census data from 2006 and 2021.
- ^{xxiv} Data from Statistics Canada 2021 Census Profile, Portage la Prairie, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Portage%20la%20Prairie&DGUIDlist=2021S05100669&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0>
- ^{xxv} Data from Statistics Canada 2021 Census Profile, Portage la Prairie, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Portage%20la%20Prairie&DGUIDlist=2021S05100669&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0>
- ^{xxvi} Through email correspondence, the PLLC shared unofficial organization records with the researcher. It should be noted that the City and the Economic Development Office (PRED) also rely on PLLC data to assess immigration in PLP.
- ^{xxvii} Data were supplied through email correspondence between the PLLC Immigration Manager and the researcher. Temporary Foreign Worker data are estimates. Beginning in 2022, Ukrainians coming into Canada through the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) are also counted as PRs, even though they entered PLP with Worker Visas.
- ^{xxviii} In an interview with the Portage Rural Economic Development (PRED), it was related that discussions are underway regarding the enrollment of PLP in a community-based immigration partnership with the Province of Manitoba. At the time of this report, this plan was not finalized.
- ^{xxix} To qualify for Morden's immigration initiative, candidates are assessed not only on their suitability for in-demand work positions, but also on their suitability for life in the community using a rubric. Multiple interviews are also conducted to ensure that selected candidates have a high probability of residing in the community long-term.
- ^{xxx} Picot, G., Crossman, E., & Hou, F. (2023). The provincial nominee program: Retention in the province of landing. *Statistics Canada*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2023011/article/00002-eng.htm>
- ^{xxxi} Information summarized from Action Plan 2020-2025, published by Portage la Prairie Local Immigration Partnership (LIP), 2019, August 27. file:///C:/Users/d_ost/Downloads/Action%20Plan%202020-2025.pdf
- ^{xxxii} More information on the development of the PLLC can be found in the 2017 presentation available at: <https://ciwa-online.com/uploads/Conference/pllc%20powerpoint%20presentation%20march%202017-ciwa.pdf>
- ^{xxxiii} Information on PRED available on the organization's website: <https://investinportage.ca/about-us/>
- ^{xxxiv} Definition supplied by Portage la Prairie Local Immigration Partnership website: <https://www.immigratetoportage.com/about-plip-1>
- ^{xxxv} Details of the 2020-2025 Action Plan are available at: file:///C:/Users/d_ost/Downloads/Action%20Plan%202020-2025.pdf
- ^{xxxvi} According to the PLLC Settlement Manager, The City of Portage la Prairie currently provides a \$1,000 subsidy (applied for annually) for the PLLC's participation in the DiverseCity Festival. At the time of this report, no other funding was provided by the city. The PLLC receives provincial and federal funding from the following sources: Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology, Manitoba Education and Training, Manitoba Training and Employment Services, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, United Way Central Plains, SEED Winnipeg.
- ^{xxxvii} <https://pllc.ca/programs/newcomer-settlement-services/>
- ^{xxxviii} The checklist includes space to comment on 3-year and 5-year goals. However, in an interview, a PLLC settlement service worker indicated that these areas are often left blank, and that the main concern of SWs is to address immediate needs.
- ^{xxxix} <https://www.immigratetoportage.com/temporary-accomodation>
- ^{xl} PRED indicated in 2025 that a bus service was under consideration.
- ^{xli} <https://www.immigratetoportage.com/transportation-from-arr>

^{xlii} The PLP Local Immigration Partnership website (<https://www.immigratetoportage.com/employment>), lists thirteen services to assist newcomers in finding employment.

^{xliii} https://www.gov.mb.ca/frpo/subject_to_the_act.html

^{xliiv} <https://www.gov.mb.ca/wd/ites/index.html>

^{xlv} <https://www.immigratetoportage.com/education>