PRAIRIE THEATRE EXCHANGE

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Strategic Plan

2026–2030

October 26, 2026

Prepared in partnership with Blueprint

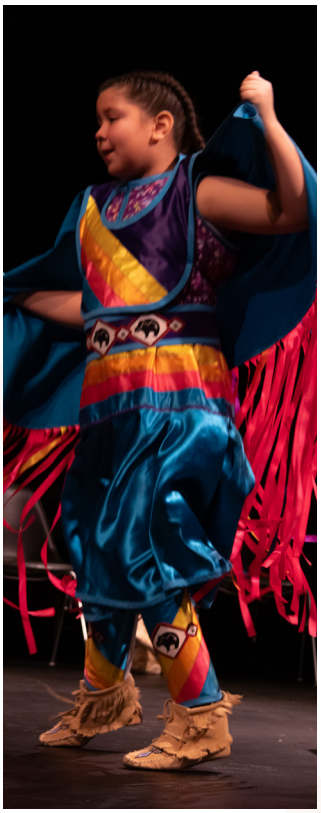
PRAIRIE THEATRE EXCHANGE

WHO WE ARE

Theatre is essential to the health and growth of communities, offering insights into the human spirit. Theatre informs, educates, entertains, challenges, shocks, questions, and illuminates. Prairie Theatre Exchange (PTE) was born with these ideals in 1972, and has become a centre of excellence for contemporary theatre and drama education.

While nationally recognized, Prairie Theatre Exchange is deeply rooted in our community and has touched hundreds of thousands of lives in Winnipeg, throughout Manitoba and Canada. Manitobans trust PTE to ensure that full voice is given to the finest artistic talent our region and country have to offer.






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PTE TODAY

Prairie Theatre Exchange stands at a defining moment.

In the last decade, Prairie Theatre Exchange changed significantly, due to external changes in the environment in which we operate, as well as internal changes and impactful decisions.

Externally, downtown Winnipeg continued to transform, and the after-effects of the pandemic continued to shape how people gather and what they seek from cultural experiences. Internally, shifts in programming greatly impacted audience habits, financial stability, and staffing structures.

Despite financial pressure and organizational change, PTE remained resilient and is now well-positioned for what comes next.

Momentum is returning.

With the realignment of programming, ticket sales, subscriptions, and individual donations have begun to grow again, leading PTE back towards financial and operational stability. As the Portage Place Mall redevelopment unfolds around us, PTE is recognized as an integral part of a revitalized downtown. There is renewed belief in PTE once again, and in the essential role we play in the cultural and civic life of this city. PTE is here to stay, serving as a gathering place for all Winnipeggers.

As PTE navigates these recent challenges, there is a shared momentum across the organization towards clarity and alignment: a clear articulation of who we are — our past, present, and future; what we value; and how we will thrive in the future.

This moment offers opportunity.

This moment offers an opportunity to continue to strengthen trust with audiences, artists, craftspeople, staff, and the broader community. It offers an opportunity to define and deliver a clear, unique, welcoming, and memorable PTE experience, from first interaction to final curtain. It offers an opportunity to rebuild attendance and earned revenue, setting the stage for a sustainable future of artistic excellence and operational strength.

Building toward sustainability.

Sustainability for PTE means cultivating the next generation of patrons, donors, and theatre professionals, and bolstering our internal capacity to support them. It means developing future leaders, preserving institutional knowledge, and building a confident, resilient organization ready to thrive into the future.

Now is the time to move forward with clarity, purpose, confidence, and creativity.

This strategic plan sets that direction.

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PRAIRIE THEATRE EXCHANGE:
OUR COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

What's in a name?

The name **Prairie Theatre Exchange** has three parts:

The first, **Prairie**, reflects a commitment to our place and community.

The second, **Theatre**, is what we do.

The third, **Exchange**, reflects our belief that:

- Theatre at PTE enables conversations – exchanges – between people and communities.
- Theatre at PTE is an intersection – an exchange – where diverse paths meet.
- Theatre at PTE is an act of giving and receiving – exchanging – between people.

These three elements – the importance of place and community, the art of theatre, and the act of exchanging with others – are the essence of Prairie Theatre Exchange, informing everything we do, onstage and off.

A unique theatre space that resonates beyond the stage

PTE's mainstage theatre is an intimate, 323-seat, three-sided thrust stage in Portage Place Mall in downtown Winnipeg.

At PTE, the audience is never isolated or oblivious to others; audiences watch each other watch a story. Audiences and actors are acutely aware of their neighbours.

At PTE, audiences view a play from many different perspectives, but have an equal experience. At PTE, we believe that everyone has a right to equally experience theatre no matter their background or perspective.

PTE is a company that is acutely aware of the people around us – our community – and that multiple perspectives make theatre, and everyone, richer.

Land Acknowledgement

We create and gather on Treaty 1 Territory, the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, Ininewuk, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, and the homeland of the Red River Metis. As we gather to tell stories, we are grateful to the original storytellers and stewards of this land, and commit to walking the path of reconciliation.

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LEGAL MANDATE, MISSION, AND VISION

Legal Mandate

The permanent and foundational mandate of PTE is:

Prairie Theatre Exchange is a professional theatre with the following mandate:

- To operate a professional theatre of high calibre for the cultural enrichment of the community
- To support the development of theatre artists and new plays
- To foster theatre arts-related endeavours of others through sharing our facilities and expertise
- To encourage the appreciation of theatre and to provide accessible, high-quality, innovative educational opportunities.

Mission

The mission statement for why PTE exists is:

Prairie Theatre Exchange is a Winnipeg-based professional theatre that creates and presents contemporary theatre that resonates specifically with our community, with a priority on Canadian stories. We foster connection and understanding for everyone through the shared experience of live theatre onstage, in the community, and through educational programming.

Vision

The vision we have for the future, on which this strategic plan is based, is:

Prairie Theatre Exchange is **stable, strong,** and **sustainable.** We embrace opportunities, withstand challenges, are relevant today and poised to thrive into the future.

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VALUES

PTE is guided by the following values that shape how we work, how we lead, and how we serve our community.

1. Artistic Excellence

We create ambitious, compelling theatre of the highest artistic quality, made with care.

2. Community Connection

We build meaningful, reciprocal relationships and strive to be an essential part of our community.

3. Relevance

Our programming speaks to our time, our place, and the people around us.

4. Belonging & Generosity

We create a welcoming, inclusive space where people and ideas come together, and generously share our space and resources.

5. Learning & Growth

We grow through learning, experimentation, and discovery.

6. Care & Responsibility

We act with care, respect, and accountability toward our people and our community, and steward our resources for future generations.

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KEY THEMES INFLUENCING THE PLAN

These themes represent the areas of focus for PTE's strategic plan. They reflect strong alignment across stakeholders and were reinforced through board discussion and the broader assessment process.

1. Audience Growth and Renewal

PTE is rebuilding after a significant disruption to audience confidence, attendance, and financial stability. Rebuilding trust with patrons, artists, funders, and staff is essential. Audiences need a clear reason to choose live theatre, and PTE specifically. PTE must restore attendance towards pre-pandemic levels by welcoming returning audiences, maintaining current audiences, and attracting new audiences.

2. Long-Term Organizational Stability and Financial Sustainability

PTE is operating in an environment of flat government funding, and recently experienced a period of smaller audiences and rising costs, creating ongoing financial pressure and risk. Fortunately, PTE benefits from important sources of stability, including the PTE Foundation Trust and an affordable rent agreement. While deeply valuable, these two factors alone will not safeguard PTE's long-term financial sustainability. Long-term financial stability requires disciplined financial management and multi-year planning.

Organizational sustainability requires the development of future leaders, transferring skills and institutional knowledge, and ensuring that critical knowledge and systems are documented and retained.

3. Reaffirm Identity and Mandate

PTE is rooted in Canadian and Manitoban stories told on our intimate thrust stage. Today PTE reaffirms the mandate, identity, purpose, and values that have long defined PTE and provide a foundation for the future. Reaffirming our identity sharpens programming and builds confidence among staff, audiences, artists, donors, and funders.

4. Embrace Downtown and Portage Place Mall

The redevelopment of Portage Place represents both risk and opportunity. Construction potentially creates short-term disruption and access confusion. Long-term, the influx of thousands of new residents and downtown workers represents significant potential. PTE is positioned to be an anchor institution in a revitalized downtown. Building relationships with neighbours, partnering with community organizations, and optimizing the facility as a hub of artistic and community activity will strengthen our role.

5. Invest in PTE's People: Now and for the Future

Long-standing staff bring institutional memory, audience relationships, and deep commitment. Staff morale has improved, but workload, compensation, and burnout risks remain. Succession planning, mentorship, and development of emerging artists and technicians are urgent priorities. Investment in local talent strengthens both PTE and the broader Winnipeg theatre community. Strategic growth must be matched with staffing levels, professional development, and systems that position people to succeed.

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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: 2026–2030

The outcomes to be achieved by PTE in the next four years:



Strategic Priority: Deliver the PTE Experience

A theatre experience that welcomes, inspires, and builds community.

- Define, articulate and deliver the PTE experience throughout the full patron journey so people choose, trust, and regularly return to PTE. Create a clear, consistent and unique experience that builds loyalty and growth.

Strategic Priority: Ensure Organizational Sustainability

A foundation that we can rely on.

- Ensure PTE's organizational sustainability by strengthening financial capacity, maintaining long-term planning, developing future leadership (production, administrative staff and board), preserving institutional memory, and fostering a rewarding workplace culture for all.

Strategic Priority: Grow and Diversify Our Audience

Full houses that reflect our community.

- Ensure our theatre welcomes and deepens audience loyalty with long-standing, current, and new patrons from all generations, cultural backgrounds, gender identities, and socio-economic circumstances.

Strategic Priority: Strengthen Community Connections

A vital ingredient for a thriving city.

- Strengthen PTE's role as a downtown hub for community connection through theatre arts. By sharing our building, programs, resources, and artistic expertise, we will deepen relationships and generate opportunities for all to gather, learn, and create in Winnipeg's downtown.

Strategic Priority:

DELIVER THE PTE EXPERIENCE

Enhancing the PTE experience underpins every other strategic priority by strengthening audience trust, loyalty, and long-term sustainability. In an environment where people have endless options for their time and money, and where audiences are increasingly value-conscious and risk-averse, PTE must be clear about what makes us distinct and why we are worth choosing.

While we cannot control every aspect of the broader downtown experience, we can control what happens inside our building and across the full patron journey. By defining and consistently delivering the PTE experience across every touchpoint, and embedding it across programming, service, communication, and in-building experience, we improve retention, increase word of mouth, and support growth in ticket sales, renewals, and audience development.

"We want audiences to trust the experience they are going to have when they come to PTE."

-PTE Leadership

DELIVER THE PTE EXPERIENCE

A theatre experience that welcomes, inspires, and builds community.

Define, articulate, and deliver the PTE experience throughout the full patron journey so people choose, trust, and regularly return to PTE. Create a clear, consistent, and unique experience that builds loyalty and growth. We will bring this priority to life by:

- Offering programming that is contemporary and fresh, while honouring the artistic legacy that has shaped PTE.
- Delighting new and returning audiences to discover new experiences, ideas, and a theatre that welcomes, inspires, and connects.
- Establishing organizational alignment around the PTE on-site patron experience by equipping staff and front-of-house volunteers with the training, tools, and shared practices needed to deliver a consistent and meaningful patron experience and ease of experience before, during, and after each visit.
- Building meaningful relationships with patrons through personalized communication, engagement, and opportunities that deepen connection, loyalty, and inspire repeat attendance and donations.
- Evaluating and refining the patron experience by gathering feedback, measuring satisfaction, and using insights to inform ongoing improvement.

Strategic Priority:

ENSURE ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

To remain resilient through economic uncertainty and increasing competition for attention and funding, PTE must strengthen its financial stability and long-term organizational capacity. Sustainability ensures that PTE can consistently deliver its artistic mandate and patron experience, even during periods of disruption or change.

This requires reliable revenue streams, secure operational funding, and multi-year forecasting that supports responsible decision-making. Sustainability is also about people: retaining skilled staff, building future leaders, strengthening board capacity, and ensuring institutional knowledge is transferred rather than lost through turnover.

By investing in strong systems, shared priorities, and intentional long-term staffing and financial planning, PTE will be positioned to manage risk, adapt to change, and pursue growth opportunities with confidence.

ENSURE ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

A foundation that we can rely on.

Ensure PTE's organizational sustainability by strengthening financial capacity, maintaining long-term planning, developing future leadership and staff (production, administrative staff and board), preserving institutional memory, and fostering a rewarding workplace culture for all.

We will bring this priority to life by:

- Establishing a multi-year financial planning practice that provides a clear picture to guide priorities, initiatives, and commitments.
- Growing reliable revenue by deepening relationships with patrons through intentional communications and engagement strategies that convert first-time ticket buyers into repeat attendees, subscribers, donors, and lifelong supporters.
- Developing future leaders through intentional mentorship, staff, and board succession-planning, and the transfer of institutional knowledge.
- Developing future artists, staff, and production workers through intentional mentorship, training, succession-planning, and the transfer of institutional knowledge.
- Retaining and investing in skilled people by supporting staff well-being, professional growth, fair compensation, and strong organizational culture.
- Defining and maintaining a sustainable organizational model by identifying the scale at which PTE can best deliver on its mission and thrive.

Strategic Priority:

GROW AND DIVERSIFY OUR AUDIENCE

Long-term sustainability requires retaining and expanding a diverse pool of theatre attendees. Continued growth in ticket sales, subscriptions, and donor support is essential to maintaining a strong and thriving organization.

Winnipeg's population is becoming increasingly diverse. To remain relevant and connected, PTE must broaden who sees themselves reflected in our programming, artists, and stories, and ensure more communities feel welcomed into the theatre.

This goal focuses on intentional growth without losing what makes PTE strong today. By deepening relationships with existing patrons, expanding representation of diverse communities, and evolving how we connect with audiences, PTE will build full houses that better reflect the community we serve.

GROW AND DIVERSIFY OUR AUDIENCE

Full houses that reflect our community.

Ensure our theatre welcomes and deepens audience loyalty with long-standing, current, and new patrons from all generations, cultural backgrounds, gender identities, and socio-economic circumstances.

We will bring this priority to life by:

- Strengthening our understanding of current and potential audiences through research and data, using those insights to improve how we reach, engage, and retain audiences.
- Growing our younger audience by better understanding the needs, interests, and experiences of emerging generations, and adapting how we connect, engage, and build relationships with them.
- Increasing diversity onstage and off, ensuring our artists, stories, and creative voices reflect the diversity of Winnipeg and the communities we serve.
- Strengthening relationships with communities that have been under-represented at PTE through ongoing engagement, dialogue, and meaningful partnerships.

Strategic Priority:

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

As Winnipeg evolves, PTE must play an active part in the broader community. Community connections will stem from not only our theatrical performances, but through PTE's role as a trusted cultural partner and gathering place within the city. In a downtown environment that is shifting socially and economically, there is both opportunity and responsibility in how PTE engages with its immediate neighbours and broader community.

By building partnerships, sharing resources, and creating programming that supports our community, PTE will ensure it is an essential part of a connected and vibrant Winnipeg.

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

A vital ingredient for a thriving city.

Strengthen PTE's role as a downtown hub for community connection through theatre arts. By sharing our building, programs, resources and artistic expertise, we will deepen relationships and generate opportunities for all to gather, learn, and create in Winnipeg's downtown.

We will bring this priority to life by:

- Building and deepening reciprocal partnerships with cultural organizations, neighbourhood groups, Indigenous communities, and community leaders who share PTE's commitment to belonging, access, and connection.
- Activating PTE's space as a true community hub by creating welcoming opportunities for events, gatherings, rehearsals, and community-driven activities beyond our own productions.
- Creating pathways into PTE for artists, youth and community groups who have not historically seen themselves reflected in or connected to our organization.
- Being a catalyst in the theatre community by creatively addressing our diminishing backstage talent pool and long-standing barriers to access for under-represented communities through education and training opportunities.









SUMMARY

In 2026, Prairie Theatre Exchange is still on the journey of navigating out of a difficult period in its 54-year history. We are moving steadily back into a position of stability, strength, clarity, and sustainability, with the strong support of returning audiences, donors, and the theatre community providing wind under our wings. However, with the redevelopment of Portage Place Mall taking place around us, the next three years will present both known and unknown challenges.

But, the prospect of what lies at the end of these three years is exhilarating. For the first time in many years, PTE's strategic plan does not consider re-location. Today's PTE is deeply committed to our home on Portage Avenue and our role as a fully-engaged member of the downtown neighbourhood. We are invigorated by the role PTE can play in this exciting revitalization of Winnipeg's downtown, and we are thrilled to play our part.

The next three years will require determination, clarity, creativity, courage, and the ability to change on a dime while simultaneously thinking 10 years into the future. But, by keeping an eye on the goals set out in this strategic plan, we are confident that in 2030, **PTE will be stable, strong, and sustainable, poised to embrace its full potential on Portage Avenue, in downtown Winnipeg.**

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PHOTO CREDITS

Page 2:

- Vinnie Alberto and Charlene Van Buekenhout in THE UNDENIABLE ACCUSATIONS OF RED CADMIUM LIGHT by Drew Hayden Taylor (2026). Set & props design by Adam Parboosingh. Costume design by Amy McPherson. Lighting design by Anika Binding. Photo by Dylan Hewlett
- Gwendolyn Collins in MUNSCH UPON A TIME, adapted by Debbie Patterson from the stories of Robert Munsch (2025). Set & props design by Joyce Licup. Costume design by Brenda McLean. Lighting design by Larry Isacoff. Photo by Joey Senft.
- A young dancer performs at the Opening Ceremony of Echo Theatre's KIYANAAN INDIGENOUS THEATRE FESTIVAL (2025) produced by Echo Theatre (PTE's Company in Residence). Photo by Vincent Wolfgang.
- PTE Audience members on opening night of LIARS AT A FUNERAL (2025). Photo by Joey Senft.

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- Lighting demonstation by Ksenia Broa-Milian and Cari Simpson at PTE's Backstage Theatre Career Discovery Day (2026). Photo by Stephen McGregor.
- Keith Barker in RAISED BY WOMEN (2025). Set design by Daina Leitold. Costume design by Brenda McLean. Lighting design by jaymez. Photo by Joey Senft.
- Reena Jolly & Bola Aiyeola-Owens in SERVING ELIZABETH by Marcia Johnson (2025). Set, props and costume design by Rachel Forbes. Lighting design by Scott Henderson. Photo by Joey Senft
- Laura Olafson in TINY BEAUTIFUL THINGS by Nia Vardalos, adapted from the book by Cheryl Strayed (2026). Set, props, and costume design by Anahita Dehbonehie. Lighting Design by Siobhán Sleath. Photo by Joey Senft.


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