

The Prince George
Public Library
www.pgpl.ca

2021 STRATEGIC PLAN REPORT

A Library for Everyone



MESSAGE FROM LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Over the past several months, the staff and board members of the Prince George Public Library have taken the opportunity to review our past goals and accomplishments, and to think about the future of our organization. As part of the strategic planning process, we've engaged directly with community members and partner organizations and taken time to listen. We know that our community members value the Prince George Public Library, and we want to understand how we can do a better job of providing the collections, programs, spaces, and services they want and need from the library. We thank all of those who helped shape our new strategic plan by sharing their ideas and feedback on surveys and in personal interviews.

As the community's representative in a governance capacity, the library's Board of Trustees plays a vital role in shaping the library's strategic direction. Library Trustees volunteer their time to represent their community and provide oversight and guidance for the organization. The Prince George Public Library has been very fortunate to have a committed and dynamic team of trustees who have selflessly contributed their time and passion to help create the new strategic plan. We appreciate their dedication and effort throughout this process, and thank them for their support as we move forward.

Paul Burry
Library Director, Prince George Public Library



BOARD CHAIR SUMMARY

The board of trustees and senior staff gathered in June to review information provided by community members, non-library users, and staff and board members regarding their opinions about the library. The many comments focused on the library's current state and hoped-for enhancements. As a result of the review, the board and senior staff coalesced on the following shared areas of focus.

- **Enhancing patron experiences with and awareness of library services and programs.**
- **Reaching a wider community of patrons (such as those living outside the city, as well as members of underrepresented groups).**
- **Ensuring PGPL physical spaces are pleasant, welcoming, and safe.**
- **Partnering with similar organizations (cross promotion and joint offerings) and enhancing advocacy on behalf of the library.**
- **Communicating with and having regular in-person contact with staff.**

The board and senior staff feel these areas of focus over the next five years will reinforce the library's role as a vital component of our community's social fabric, that it is a great place to work, and it is the premier place to read, connect, and share.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike P. Gagel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike Gagel

Board Chair, Prince George Public Library



OUR VISION

To foster a vibrant, inclusive, thriving community.

OUR MISSION

PGPL builds community resilience by creating welcoming and inclusive spaces for every person to read, connect, and share.

OUR VALUES

Creativity

PGPL prides itself on adapting quickly to the changing needs of our community, supporting library staff to bring creativity to the development of innovative library facilities, resources, programs, and services.

Diversity

PGPL strives to create safe and welcoming environments for all members of our community, recognizing the need to focus on building inclusive and respectful spaces for members of marginalized or underrepresented groups.

Learning

PGPL supports the right of every person to seek out and make use of information and ideas, promoting access to the widest possible variety of expressive content for community members of all ages.

Accessibility

PGPL works to remove and reduce all kinds of barriers to access so that everyone in our community is able to fully enjoy and benefit from what the library offers.



The Prince George Public Library.

A Library for Everyone.

The Prince George Public Library (PGPL) is a cornerstone of the community. It connects people and ideas, inspiring the community to read, connect and share. It's a place where the library aspires to make patrons from every part of the community feel welcome, supported and encouraged to participate.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With enthusiastic participation by the Prince George Public Library board, the library's strategic planning workshops and direction-setting included research, public participation and organizational restructuring. The strategic framework was completed by August 2021, with the final report developed in December to help guide the team into 2022. There is an invigorated commitment to the new direction, matching the collective excitement around the library's exterior investments and an internal focus on diversity and inclusion.

This plan engaged directly with both the community of Prince George, and those involved and impacted by the work of PGPL: youth, families, employees, volunteers, board members, community partners, donors, and community champions.

Library staff identified six key stakeholder groups (including board and staff member representatives) to undergo in-depth interviews. Resulting from that research came the recommendation to pay special attention to listening to those who use the library less often.

Following the interviews, a month-long community engagement survey resulted in extensive public participation. Questions regarding location, programming, in-person and digital delivery, safety, diversity, atmosphere, and customer service made up the themes within the survey.

This research was conducted over the course of the strategic planning process, and gave rich insights into the strengths of the organization and areas of great opportunity, such as working directly with the City of Prince George and community organizations to support those more vulnerable, attracting and accommodating an emerging audience of post-secondary youth living in new downtown housing, promoting the incredible variety of online programs and services which are heavily overlooked and unknown, and maintaining the strong programming and service levels expected by their core audience.

PGPL brought on Alyson Gourley-Cramer from Monogram Communications: an experienced facilitator and strategic thinker to guide the strategic plan, resulting in a road map for the next 3-5 years.

The strategic plan is called 'A library for Everyone', with a capital E denoting the importance of every patron. The final strategic plan is a living document, fluid and flexible, and most importantly, actionable, with the opportunity to pivot and prioritize based on needs, but grounded in a direction that is both practical yet ambitious and aspirational. It is relevant, achievable and has the commitment of a motivated and talented staff and board to ensure its success.

PGPL BOARD SURVEY SUMMARY

The board of the PGPL completed the first of three audience research surveys, sharing their opinions and ideas with an internal perspective. They identified that the strengths of the library include its role in the community as a center for people to gather in, and its purpose as an inclusive space for everyone. The board scored that they are the most proud of the staff and volunteers.

Safety around the downtown branch was seen as a challenge that should be prioritised and monitored. The new student housing unit near the downtown location is seen as an opportunity to increase the amount of students and young adults using the library's facilities, and advertisement of programs should be done in the student housing.

The board had similar suggestions to increase awareness of library programs and services by creating a short video series introducing the library's offerings. The videos could be used digitally as part of a strategic communications plan for promotion. Public outreach and engagement was strongly recommended as a key initiative after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Internal communication was also highlighted as an area for opportunity. Both employees and board show keen interest in being involved in key announcements and public releases.

Top 3 things you're most proud of?



“The public library’s role is incredibly important in the community. It’s a place to share and provide unlimited access to information (print, web-based, verbal), and to provide a safe place for people to gather and strengthen social bonds during library-led events, drop-ins, and out of necessity. The library should also advocate for relevant causes, when needed.”

BOARD MEMBER

PGPL COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY

PGPL conducted a public community survey to uncover how library users feel about the current state of the library and its collections. The survey had 321 participants, and the feedback received was very rich and detailed. Participants identified that the PGPL's strengths include its extensive collections, friendly and knowledgeable staff, and the overall atmosphere in the library. However, it was mentioned that the collections could be more diverse and BIPOC authors could be highlighted more.

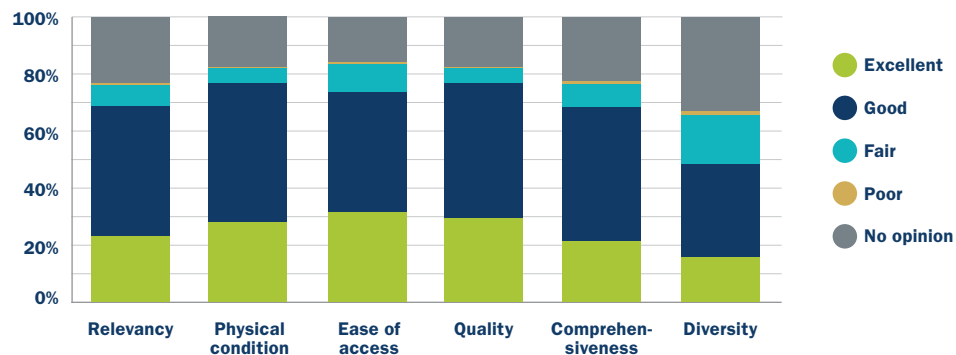
A surprising discovery came regarding the community's lack of awareness regarding the library's online resources and databases. Similarly low rates of awareness were highlighted about the library's program offerings, and recommendations were made to increase promotion by using a diverse

range of platforms. Also, because of the global pandemic, the use of online collections has increased drastically and comments were made about how the library should get more material and online copies to lend, to decrease patron waiting times.

Security has been a concern around the building and some community members noted that this has been preventing them from using the library. However, the sense of security in the library scored 75/100, which indicates that people feel secure inside the building.

Highlights of the website feedback included how it should increase user experience and be more regularly updated. Another request was that staff-recommended book lists be included on the website as well.

How would you rate the library's print and online collections on the characteristics listed below?



“The library is a valuable community space that enables lifelong learning, regardless of age, income, or any other measure.”
 COMMUNITY MEMBER

PGPL STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

PGPL employees participated in the final survey, and gave extensive feedback on the library's communications and operations, and what kind of improvements should be made inside the library from an employee perspective. 40 per cent of employees completed the survey, which highlighted core strengths of PGPL: great staff, quality of collections and programming, and high-quality customer service. Employees identified internal communications as the biggest challenge between different departments and from management to frontline workers, and hoped that it would improve. After the global pandemic is over, employees noted that community outreach through partnerships and events will be necessary to increase the awareness of the services and programs.

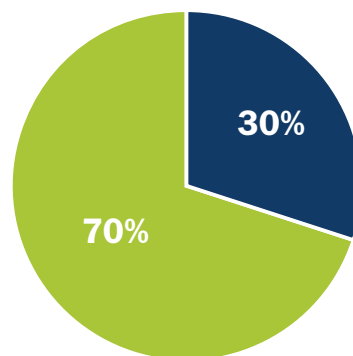
Other improvement ideas included having more extensive reference training, portable technology for support, and involving staff more in daily operations where they can give feedback and ideas on a regular basis.

Another idea for increasing awareness of programs for younger users included developing a short video series for social media, such as TikTok and Instagram reels. Also, a few suggested that the old "movie poster" with programming information behind the service desk be put back out, as it provided easy access to information for interested library users.

The survey also asked if the employees have had enough training to complete their tasks, and 30 per cent answered no. More training and support were requested in the following areas:

- **SOGI, equity, inclusion & diversity training, anti-racism training, building anti-racist collections**
- **Support for digital literacy**
- **Reference training, knowing sections and popular Dewey decimal numbers**

Have you had enough training to complete your work tasks?



● Yes ● No, I need more support

“Staff are integral to the success of the library. If we work and live the library values into every interaction with the public, they’ll know what we stand for.”

STAFF MEMBER

PGPL 2021 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & GOALS

PRIORITY 1

Improving the User Experience

Plan, deliver, and build awareness of library services and programs that respond to the needs of our community.

GOALS

- 1 Address and improve on service shortcomings
- 2 Increase/Improve promotional efforts to highlight the library's extensive collection and service delivery options
- 3 Communicate the library's impact to our diverse community
- 4 Continue to address security and safety concerns inside and outside library facilities

PRIORITY 2

Expanding Our Reach

Create opportunities for reaching community groups and individuals who are not regular users of the library.

GOALS

- 1 Raise awareness of current and diverse offerings
- 2 Identify and build relationships with new audiences to attract new visitors
- 3 Look for new opportunities to promote the impact of the library in the lives of community members
- 4 Solicit input from patrons and community members to ensure that their needs are being met
- 5 Maintain the core purpose of the library; avoid diverting from the library's core mission

PRIORITY 3

Designing Welcoming Spaces

Create safe, attractive, inclusive library spaces that the community can take pride in.

GOALS

- 1 Identify and budget for on-going improvements to the interior and exterior of both library branches
- 2 Continue to pursue environmental design enhancements to improve the safety of library facilities
- 3 Look for opportunities to expand the library's presence in the Hart community
- 4 Maintain and update computer and internet technologies for patrons and staff
- 5 Incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion best practices into collection development processes

PGPL 2021 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & GOALS

PRIORITY 4

Developing Partnerships & Advocacy

Make connections and build relationships with community partners and library stakeholders representing the diversity of our region.

GOALS

- 1 Focus on developing relationships with decision-makers at municipal, regional district, and provincial government levels, advocating for sustainable and robust investment in the Library
- 2 Connect and consult with representatives of local agencies who advocate for or represent community members from traditionally marginalized or underserved groups, including BIPOC and those experiencing accessibility barriers
- 3 Play an active role in important civic committees and social organizations to ensure needs of the broader community are being met

PRIORITY 5

Strengthening Staff Communications & Relationships

Promote and support collaborative relationships among library staff, encouraging a culture of cooperation and innovation.

GOALS

- 1 Build better outreach from Board to staff through regular social and work interactions
- 2 Ensure that support systems are in place for staff and volunteers, especially following challenging events
- 3 Develop effective communications strategies to ensure that necessary information is shared with staff in a timely and effective manner
- 4 Develop creative approaches to recognizing staff efforts and achievements
- 5 Invest time and energy into strengthening existing internal relationships and building trust within the organization.
- 6 Establish effective communication among CUPE representatives, staff, library management team, and board members.



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