

# epic

OPPORTUNITIES

annual report

2021-22

CELEBRATING

50  
years



epic  
opportunities

empowering  
people in  
community

## Vision

All people are valued members of the community, have significant personal networks, have equal access to opportunities and contribute to a better society.

## Mission

Epic Opportunities empowers people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to thrive in everyday life by providing holistic support and building inclusive communities.



## Values

Epic Opportunities believes that everyone has inherent value and a purpose to fulfill. Everyone is deserving of unconditional acceptance. Our core values are:

### RESPECT

All people have a voice, deserve to be heard and treated with dignity.

### PERSONAL GROWTH

Every person has the potential to live a rich and full life. We grow and achieve our highest potential when supports are available.

### ADVOCACY

We are equally valuable in society and deserving of basic human rights and freedoms.

### RELATIONSHIPS

Quality of life is improved when people have genuine connections with others.

### INTEGRITY

We are honest, accountable and follow through on our commitments.

### INCLUSION

Diversity, opportunity and value for all people contribute to stronger communities, enrich people's lives and are the foundation for a better world.

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empowering People  
in community



# President's Report

For half a century, Epic Opportunities has been empowering people living with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the community.

From the Hope Centre's beginnings in the North End of Winnipeg in 1972, to Epic Opportunities current home in St. James' Madison Square, many things have changed, and yet the vision, mission and values that lie at the heart of the organization remain the same. 50 years ago, the priority was building caring communities where people are treated with dignity and respect and supported to live a full life. These remain priorities today.

In addition to celebrating the past 50 years, we have much to commemorate from this past year. One exciting milestone was the success of the online My Epic Home campaign. For the first time ever, the Foundation Board exceeded its fundraising goal within a fiscal year and raised more than \$100,000 for the My Epic Home campaign. Generous contributions from our sponsors and donors have enabled us to secure the needed funds to purchase our eighth home for the people we serve, moving us one step closer to our overall campaign goal of purchasing 10 homes.

Another highlight was the completion of Epic Opportunities' new three-year strategic plan. Guided by the Strategic Planning Committee, as well as input from stakeholder surveys and a strategic planning session with staff and directors from the Epic Opportunities Board and the Foundation Board, we had the opportunity to gather and reflect on the organization's mission, goals and priorities. The Strategic Plan is a result of these efforts, and together with the operational plan,

will ensure enhanced focus on organizational health, innovation and capacity-building to support the goal of Epic Opportunities in having far-reaching community impact.

It is also important to honour the various people and connections that make Epic Opportunities an exceptional community. On behalf of the Board of Directors, we want to extend a very special thank you to the people that we serve and their loved ones – we are privileged to be a part of your lives. To the front-line staff and the leadership team – your tireless efforts and resourcefulness ensure our community is a better place for everyone. Last but certainly not least, I want to thank my colleagues on the Board of Directors for the dedication and insights they bring to our discussions. I also wish to recognize the sudden and recent passing of our Foundation Board colleague, Ron Wasylycia-Leis, and to extend our condolences to his family and loved ones. We will fondly remember Ron and his invaluable contribution to the Epic Opportunities community. As President, it has been an honour to serve alongside you all.

Various cultures have non-linear ways of understanding time and recognize the important connection between the past, present and future. In the African Kalenjin tribe there is a saying: "It is the past that lies before us and the future that lies behind us." This ancient wisdom captures that we are shaped and influenced by our past, and it has the capacity to shape and inform the lessons we carry

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Christina Reinke, Board President

into our future. For Epic Opportunities, the past that lies before us translates into a meaningful legacy – one of lessons learned and growth achieved. These are the ingredients that will accompany us on the next steps of our collective journey. I look forward to continuing that journey with you all.

Warm regards,

**Christina Reinke**





# Executive Director's Message

50 years, five decades, more than 26 million minutes and billions of epic moments! Our 50th anniversary year brings so many priceless memories to mind. I am struck by how far we have come in the process of empowering people and building inclusive communities alongside those we serve.

The organization formally began 50 years ago and was incorporated on Nov. 27, 1972. Founded by the Christian Reformed Churches of Winnipeg, we operated under the name Hope Centre Inc for the first 38 years. Our name changed to Epic Opportunities in 2010 to better reflect our goal of empowering people in community. Today, the organization operates and provides supports in 49 different Winnipeg locations and serves 132 individuals who live with intellectual disabilities. We also employ up to 396 employees who fulfill the equivalent of 250 full-time roles in the organization.

Fast forward to 2022 and our focus shifts to the change process that was propelled by the pandemic. We face labour shortages, inflation, supply chain disruptions, environmental pressures, mental health challenges, cyber insecurities and political tensions around the globe. Our landscape is clearly different than it was 50 years ago, but our passion and commitment remain.

We are constantly reminded of how blessed we are. We are grateful for the skilled leaders that govern our work by serving on our Epic Opportunities and Foundation Board of Directors. Our leadership team, admin staff and Direct Support Professionals are a dedicated and skilled group of people working hard to support people to thrive and live out their best possible life each and every day.

I also want to thank the people we serve. You continue to inspire us, teach us and push us to do better. We know you have been through the isolation of pandemic restrictions and the turbulence of turnover and staffing shortages. Despite this, you accomplished professional and personal goals, focused on health, spent time with friends and family – even when only virtual options were available. You have been incredibly positive and resilient in response to the difficulties faced.

At an organizational level, we were able to complete the development of a new strategic plan. Our last one was implemented in 2015 and spanned the course of five years. The pandemic delayed our renewal process, but it also shaped our planning in many ways. Five key strategic priorities were confirmed as our areas of focus for the next three years:

1. Develop and implement a COVID recovery strategy.
2. Strengthen organizational health, capacity and effectiveness to support recruitment and retention.
3. Enhance service excellence and innovation.
4. Identify strategies for board development and governance to support the strategic priorities.
5. Ensure the Foundation effectively supports the Epic Opportunities mission and strategic priorities.

In 2016, the Epic Opportunities Foundation announced their goal to raise funds to support Epic to purchase ten new homes over the course of the next five years. Since then, we purchased our seventh new home early in the summer of 2022 with funds raised by the My Epic Home campaign in 2020 and we anticipate our eighth purchase in the coming months with funds raised in 2021. The Foundation is well positioned to fund the remaining two homes to reach the goal of 10 the upcoming fiscal year. This is an amazing milestone reached right on time to celebrate our 50th anniversary.

Another exciting new endeavor started back in 2019 when Epic Opportunities was selected to participate in a quality framework project. At the time Abilities Manitoba partnered with our funder Community Living disABILITY Services to trial the use of Personal Outcome Measures.

This tool is used to assess whether or not outcomes are present in the lives of people served by Epic, but it also has the added effect of influencing and shaping attitudes. Once we started, we knew we could not stop here. This led to our decision to hire a Service Development and Outcomes Specialist to further our work on the quality enhancements that this work was meant to inspire.

More good news came towards the end of our fiscal year. For decades our sector advocated for funding to allow organizations to pay a living wage. Although turnover, retention and the recruitment of qualified employees is not only about money, it is a significant factor in the sector's labour force stability. On March 29 we received notice of a \$72,000 grant from the province to support the recruitment and retention of front-line service-delivery staff. Shortly after this they also announced funding increases to allow for an average direct support wage of \$15.11 per hour. This is an increase from the previous, and unsustainable rate of \$13.75 per hour. Although this funding will not address wage-related compression issues or the narrowing gap between the minimum wage in Manitoba, it is welcome news and a good first step from the province.

As we look to the future, we are excited and hopeful. We still have much to do to remove barriers, build inclusive communities and provide the necessary support to help all people thrive on a

day-to-day basis. We are privileged to walk alongside all the individuals who rely on us for support. We believe the next 50 years will be filled with many more beautiful and epic moments. Let's celebrate all that is – and all that will be – as we remain focused on empowering people in community!

**Ruby Reimer**

*Executive Director, Epic Opportunities*



# Epic Opportunities Board of Directors

The Board of Directors oversees the operations and management of Epic Opportunities, which exists to empower people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to thrive in everyday life by providing holistic support and building inclusive communities.

The eight-member board is comprised of people who represent the community we serve as well as the community at large. For more information on the Epic Opportunities Board of Directors or on how to become involved contact Epic Opportunities at [info@epicmb.ca](mailto:info@epicmb.ca) or call **(204) 560-2804**.

## 2021 – 22 BOARD MEMBERS



**Christina Reinke**  
President



**Greg Bryant**  
Vice-President



**Michael Ramondi**  
Treasurer



**Nkiruka Eze**  
Director



**Katelyn Mackenzie**  
Director



**Mark Mercier**  
Director



**Nellie Redekopp**  
Director



**Cathy Skene**  
Director

# Epic Opportunities Foundation Board of Directors

The Epic Opportunities Foundation was officially established in 2011 as the primary fundraising body for Epic Opportunities. It is governed by a volunteer board of directors who represent the community we serve as well as the community at large.

For more information on the Epic Opportunities Foundation Board of Directors or on how to become involved contact Epic Opportunities at [info@epicmb.ca](mailto:info@epicmb.ca) or call **(204) 560-2804**.

## 2021 – 22 BOARD MEMBERS



**Ralph Guy**  
President



**Ron Wasylycia-Leis**  
Vice-President



**Mark Mercier**  
Treasurer



**Elizabeth Bryngelson**  
Director



**Christina Reinke**  
Director



**Cathy Skene**  
Director



**Amy Tung**  
Director





# Thank You to Our Supporters

We would like to acknowledge and thank all of our capital campaign and corporate donors for their ongoing support of our work. This assistance has been critical to our efforts to support individuals with intellectual disabilities to live, learn and work in the community.

## OUR 2021 DONORS INCLUDE

### MAKE A HOUSE A HOME – CAPITAL CAMPAIGN DONORS

#### PLATINUM SPONSOR

Garth Manness & Family

#### SILVER SPONSOR

Highroad

#### PLATINUM SPONSORS

Assiniboine Credit Union

Gary & Brenda Leis

#### GOLD SPONSORS

Gerry & Barb Price

Mercer & Associates

Northway Pharmacy

Taylor McCaffrey Lawyers

#### SILVER SPONSORS

Coughlin

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#### BRONZE SPONSORS

Carlyle Printers

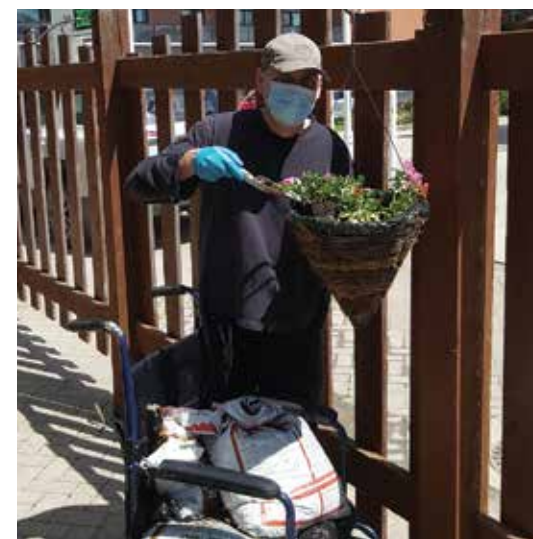
The Standard

To-Le-Do Food Service



We would like to offer our sincere thanks to all of the groups, individuals, families and community partners who contributed to our fundraising initiatives through the past year. Thanks to donors like you, we have created EPIC homes for the people we serve.

Our current goal is to raise funds and purchase 10 houses and we're more than halfway there! With seven homes purchased and funds raised for one more, our goal is so close to becoming a reality. We believe that everyone deserves a home – a place to feel safe and secure, to make choices, and enjoy the lasting comfort of living in a neighbourhood where they belong. Your donation will help towards the purchase of another house and move us closer to the goal of turning more houses into EPIC homes.





# Epic Opportunities Foundation

The Foundation is proud to say we have reached new milestones in empowering people in community by supporting the work of Epic Opportunities throughout the past year.

As always, the main goal of the Foundation is to serve as the primary fundraising body for Epic Opportunities. The following key areas of work represent the three objectives of the Foundation:

- To provide funding for capital expenditures such as long-term, community-based homes for individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- To provide funding for special projects or initiatives that might not otherwise be available for persons with intellectual disabilities.
- To raise the profile of Epic Opportunities and its work in the community.

In 2021-22 the sense of uncertainty remained evident as the pandemic continued to impact Epic Opportunities and the local community. For this reason, fundraising efforts remained focused on the online engagement of donors. We are profoundly grateful to our supporters for the generosity demonstrated in our second online My Epic Home Campaign. We are pleased to share that we reached a new milestone with \$100,423 raised this year. This sets a new record for the Foundation. With this support the Foundation was able to provide Epic Opportunities with another down payment for a new home that will be purchased in 2022.

With the Foundation being 11 years old, the incredible progress made throughout the past decade is inspiring. In the early days, our café fundraisers brought in approximately \$20,000 each year.

We grew from that point and started the annual “An Evening with Epic” event in 2014. Today we can see that our network of supporters continues to grow. We are humbled by the loyalty demonstrated especially at a time when charitable organizations and businesses are experiencing the strain of labour shortages and economic pressures. We know that individual donors are facing these pressures as well. Yet they continue to share our vision and offer support for a more inclusive community where people with disabilities are given every opportunity to thrive and experience the comforts and securities of a forever home.

With the proceeds from this past year’s fundraising the Foundation was able to provide another disbursement of \$80,000 to cover the down payment of new home. Our current goal is to raise funds and support Epic Opportunities to purchase 10 homes and we’re more than halfway there. With seven homes already purchased and funds raised for one more, our goal is so close to becoming a reality.

As we look to the future, we realize that we can’t necessarily predict what 2022-2023 will bring to our experience. Despite this uncertainty, we see a bright horizon. With current assets sitting at just under \$160,000 the Foundation is in a very good position to fully realize the goal to support Epic Opportunities to purchase their ninth and tenth home in the very near future. We anticipate an exciting year ahead and look forward to sharing plans with all of our stakeholders in the months to come.

With our current goal nearly realized, The Foundation will begin to set sights on planning for the next three to five years. Epic Opportunities recently completed their three-year strategic plan which will span from 2022 to 2025. The Foundation’s work is designed to support the work of Epic and it is important to align priorities with their desired long-term impact. We look forward to finalizing and communicating our key priorities in the very near future.

We cannot conclude our report without noting a very sad loss to Epic Opportunities and the Foundation Board of Directors. On May 21, 2022 Ron Wasylycia-Leis passed away after suffering a heart attack. He was appointed to the Board in 2014 and most recently served as the Vice-President. He had also served on the Epic Opportunities Board of Directors since 2008, thereby fulfilling nearly 15 consecutive years of service. Ron’s legacy will live on for years to come. He has inspired so many people. He will be missed immensely!

In conclusion, we believe that everyone deserves a home – a place to feel safe and secure, to make choices and enjoy the lasting comfort of living in a neighbourhood where they belong. Each of you can also help us further our work by talking to your friends, family members and neighbours about the work we do. Ask them to remember us when making annual charitable donations. By raising awareness you can also help us increase attendance or involvement at our fundraising events or initiatives. We look forward to seeing all of you at our events in the years to come.

Respectfully submitted,

**The Foundation Board**

## ALWAYS REMEMBERED



*Ron Wasylycia-Leis*

# Looking Back, Looking Ahead

Pam Munnik and Sarah Wake have each been part of Epic Opportunities for nearly 30 years. During that span, the two longtime employees have witnessed some of the most pivotal moments in the organization's five decades of serving people living with intellectual disabilities.

Wake, who joined Epic Opportunities in 1994 as a summer volunteer before accepting a full-time position later that year, says one of the most momentous moments of her tenure with the organization was when it moved from its original location at 240 Powers St. to 1745 Portage Ave. in 2000.

Not only did the new location provide the organization more room to operate and expand the services it offered, she says, but it also helped to raise its visibility in the community.

"For so long people we serve have been undervalued in society, so it was important for people to have an active community presence, where people can be seen as contributing members of society. This is achieved by volunteering, employment and building community relationships," recalls Wake, who is now a Coordinator with the organization."

Wake points to the introduction of employment services for the people it serves in the 1990s as another key moment in the evolution of Epic Opportunities. One of the first initiatives of the new service was a pillow-making business that provided an opportunity to have a positive presence and a meaningful role in their community. Today these employment services are offered within all areas of support as part of a part of person-centred thinking and planning process.

"I think employment services was the starting point for how we change that image and provide people an opportunity to give back to the community," she says.

Munnik joined Epic Opportunities in 1994 as a practicum student while enrolled in the Disability and Community Support program at Red River College. She was hired soon after as a disability support worker at one of the organization's residential homes and has filled a variety of roles since, including her current one as an HR generalist.

For Munnik, one of the most memorable moments of her time with the organization was when it was renamed Epic Opportunities in June 2010 after operating under the name Hope Centre from the time it was established in 1972. She says the new name was a fitting reflection of how the organization had transformed and evolved from its early days.

Another important part of the organization's evolution, Munnik says, has been its increased focus on providing high-level training to all staff. It's become more closely tied to the organization's value base and incorporates important elements such as the Vulnerable Persons Act. Having a dedicated training space at Epic Opportunities' current head office at 1600 Ness Ave. was another breakthrough.

I feel like we're always on the verge of something great.



Pam Munnik at  
historical Powers site

"In the last 10 to 12 years, we've really made training a focus," Munnik says. "I feel those training sessions are our opportunity to get the teams those a-ha moments when they may be struggling and we're able to provide examples from some of us who have worked through things in the past and how we were able to deal with them."

Munnik feels one of the reasons why Epic Opportunities has not only survived but thrived over the past 50 years has been its ability to adapt to the changing times. A critical factor in that adaptability, she says, has been the support provided by the organization's leadership team.

"There have been some really key leaders in my experience who came from other organizations and brought information with them or people like Sarah and I who started in direct support and worked our way up through the years and sometimes learned from our mistakes or each other and brought that information back to staff," she explains.

While the future remains unknown, Munnik and Wake are both optimistic about where Epic Opportunities and the people it serves are headed.

Munnik says one of the most encouraging signs is how younger people served by the organization have developed a stronger voice and are eager to share their thoughts with staff on the kind of supports they want and need.

And despite the challenges it has had to deal with during the pandemic, Wake is confident Epic Opportunities will emerge stronger from the experience.

"It's really tough right now. It's an unprecedented time and people feel that. But I can look back and think this is actually kind of normal for us," she says, laughing. "We go through these ebbs and flows where we experience an ebb but then end up in a better place than before. I feel like we're always on the verge of something great."



# Foundation Enjoys Momentous Achievement

May 31, 2022 started out much like any other day for Dorothy, Corinne and Barbara. By the time it ended, it proved to be one of those life-changing moments that none of them are likely to ever forget.

The three roommates learned that afternoon they will be moving into a new house that they will soon be able to call their own. This realization of the roommates' long-held dream was made possible thanks to the efforts of the Epic Opportunities Foundation, which raised more than \$100,000 in 2021-22 through the My Epic Home fundraising campaign to help fund the purchase of the house the roommates will share.

It was a celebratory moment for everyone involved, especially Dorothy, Corinne and Barbara.

"There was a party happening that evening. The ladies were so excited. There were screams, laughs, bounces, claps and all things joyous," recalls Coordinator Sandy Weiten, who shared the news with the three women that day.

"It was an absolute delight to share the information with Dorothy, Corinne and Barbara about their new home. I could not have asked for a better gift than being able to tell them personally and share in their happiness."

The new home Dorothy, Corinne and Barbara will be moving into is the seventh house Epic Opportunities has been able to purchase

since 2016 thanks to the fundraising efforts of the foundation, which has set a goal of purchasing 10 new homes for people served by the organization. The eighth home will likely be purchased later this summer.

The \$100,000 raised by the Epic Opportunities Foundation in 2021-22 represents a milestone. It is the most money the foundation has raised in a single year since it was officially established in 2011. What makes it even more remarkable is that it happened in the middle of the pandemic when most large-scale, in-person events were not permitted.

Amy Tung, a director on the Epic Opportunities Foundation's board of directors and a key member of the board's fundraising committee, says that fundraising success is an indication of how much public support there is for the work Epic Opportunities does in the community.

"I think we've been able to cultivate confidence in the value of the work we do for the community in providing holistic supports and building inclusive communities and showing that the work that Epic does really enriches people's lives," she explains.

"That really helps to establish a credibility with the public. Through the message we deliver and how transparent we are as an organization, it really showcases the transformative change we can make in people's lives and our donors really believe they too have the power to transform lives."

Executive Director Ruby Reimer says the past year's fundraising success speaks to how both the organization and the foundation have been able to establish a network with members of the community over the years.

"The organization has created a network of people that has grown exponentially over the years and those people are now loyally supporting our work," she says. "It's been a lot of relationship-building with businesses and growing the messaging around the fact that this is a need and the impact these homes have on the people we serve. I think that messaging has resonated with a lot of people."

As successful as this past year's fundraising efforts were, the work of the Epic Opportunities Foundation is far from over. It is still looking to raise the final funds required to purchase two more homes within the next year.

Tung says one of the foundation's first orders of business is to look at all of the fundraising tools available to it and determine which ones will best allow it to be the most successful in the years to come.

"I think there's a lot more opportunities now in terms of how we fundraise. The door has definitely been opened and it's now about exploring what kind of options we have, how far are we willing to go and what does that look like," she says.

"Somehow, someday, I think COVID has allowed us to fundraise through a variety of digital media. It's become very tech-driven. I think it would be beneficial to start developing a plan to build unforgettable fundraising experiences that can benefit us using that technology."

Reimer says the timing couldn't be better for the organization and its foundation to examine how best to move forward when it comes to fundraising. Epic Opportunities recently adopted a new strategic plan, she adds, so it only makes sense for the foundation to analyze how it can best support and enrich the services that the organization provides to people living with intellectual disabilities. That includes determining what kind of role in-person events that foster human connection can play, Reimer says.



# Pandemic Memories

Although life has slowly started to return to normal, memories of the COVID-19 pandemic remain indelibly etched in Ruth's memory.

"I didn't like the pandemic. It was frustrating," she says.

Perhaps no aspect of the pandemic was more frustrating for Ruth than the resulting health restrictions that limited in-person gatherings.

Those restrictions meant the outgoing senior often had to forego meeting up with friends and family and couldn't participate in activities like bowling or camping that were staples of her social calendar. They also meant she couldn't attend regular Sunday services at her church.

"I was really disappointed. I love going to my church. I missed all the people I see there," she says.

An avid traveler, pandemic restrictions also meant Ruth had to postpone a couple of scheduled trips.

Despite the limitations on in-person gatherings, Ruth says she was grateful to still be able to connect with others virtually. That included taking part in a weekly, online bingo session with other people served by Epic Opportunities. She was also thankful for the companionship of her feline friend Smokey with whom she shares an apartment.

In spite of some of the challenges she faced during the pandemic, there were also moments of joy for Ruth. One of the most joyful

moments was when she learned this past January that the Manitoba Developmental Centre in Portage la Prairie will close and people living at the residence for adults with intellectual disabilities will move into community residences over the next three years. It was something Ruth fought for as a member of People First of Manitoba.

"I think it's good. Now those people can go for coffee or out to eat or go to a show. They weren't having a life in MDC," she says.

With many pandemic restrictions being lifted, Ruth has been able to resume many of the activities she had so dearly missed. She is attending church once more and is eager to start bowling when the league she plays in returns to action in September.

Still, there is nothing she's enjoyed more than being able to spend time with friends in person again. She and a group of friends rented a cottage in Kenora in early June. On June 12, she celebrated her 80th birthday with a group of two dozen people at a popular local restaurant which included a performance by an Elvis Presley impersonator. It was a moment Ruth savoured.

"I'd been waiting a long, long time," she says of the celebration.

Like Ruth, Robert also had to forego many of the everyday activities

he normally enjoyed because of the pandemic. That included camping with friends, spending time with his mom and the rest of his family, exercising, music therapy and playing cards.

"Yes, it was frustrating. It was frustrating to have to stay back," he recalls.

Thankfully, he was able to remain connected with those close to him even when he couldn't literally be close to them. He received an iPad during the pandemic that allowed him to speak online with his mom and others he's close to. The tablet also allowed him to listen to his favourite audiobooks and continue to perform musically.

"It was good to talk to mom and my friends and people I work with," he says.

The pandemic pushed Robert to find other creative ways to continue with the activities that were important to him. For example, he used to invite friends over for holidays dinners. When that wasn't possible due to pandemic restrictions, he opted to cook meals at home and have them delivered to his friends. He also decided to purchase a treadmill so that he could remain active even when he couldn't go anywhere to exercise.

Still, he admits that it's a huge relief to be able to be able to return to many of the in-person activities he had to forego during the early days of the pandemic. He recently returned to the daytime recreation program he previously attended and the talented singer and keyboardist (Help by The Beatles is his favourite song) has resumed attending music therapy class. He's also looking forward to spending time at his friend's cottage near Twins Lake Beach this summer.





# Planning for the Future

Planning for the future is never easy but planning for the future in the midst of a global pandemic can be far more daunting.

That was the challenge the Board of Directors for Epic Opportunities recently faced with when it came to developing a new three-year strategic plan for the organization.

Strategic Plan 2022-2025 chronicles the key issues facing Epic Opportunities, sets out what its priorities will be during the next three years, and provides direction on how the agency will achieve its goals and objectives during that timeline.

The plan was facilitated and documented by Health in Common, a Winnipeg-based non-profit. It followed a strategic planning process that included a survey of Epic Opportunities frontline staff, its leadership team and a number of external stakeholders. A strategic planning session was subsequently held to discuss the data that was gathered as part of the survey.

Epic Opportunities Board Chair Christina Reinke says one of the biggest challenges with developing the plan during the pandemic was the fact that in-person meetings were limited due to public health restrictions and most meetings had to be conducted virtually. Still, Reinke says everyone involved in the Strategic Planning Committee was pleased with the end result.



“It’s really an exciting time for Epic Opportunities,” she says. “We’re really excited about this new strategic plan that will help guide us and shape us going forward.”

Based on survey responses, the Strategic Planning Committee considered three key issues when it came to developing the agency’s goals and priorities for the next three years. They included:

- ensuring operational capacity to sustain and innovate service delivery
- the recruitment and retention of qualified staff
- and the enhancement of organizational effectiveness

One of the strategic priorities the plan identifies is the development and implementation of a COVID-19 recovery strategy. That strategy will include a renewed emphasis on role-based training, identifying ways of addressing mental health challenges faced by people served by the agency, their families and employees, and the use of virtual tools to build and improve team culture.

Another key goal identified in the plan is strengthening organizational health, capacity and effectiveness to support the recruitment and retention of qualified staff. This will include developing an anti-oppression and inclusion framework, a staff wellbeing and organizational effectiveness assessment process, and a consistent orientation process.

Reinke says that while attracting and retaining staff has always been a priority for Epic Opportunities, the events of the pandemic have really brought its importance into focus.

“I think what COVID has highlighted is the real importance of having that sustained workforce and really addressing adequate staffing levels and making sure that staff feel they are appreciated,” she explains.

Enhancing service excellence is another objective identified in the plan including accreditation with the Canadian Council for Quality and Leadership (CQL). The plan also notes that strategies will be identified for board development and government to support the agency’s strategic priorities and the Epic Opportunities Foundation will ensure its work effectively supports the organization’s mission and long-term priorities.

The next step in the planning process, Reinke says, will be finalizing an operational plan to more precisely determine how all of the goals in the organizational blueprint will be achieved.

Vice-president Greg Bryant says one of the key considerations during the strategic planning process was ensuring that any goals that were set were realistic and achievable.

“Everything in this plan is realistic and actionable. It wasn’t about setting ridiculously lofty goals. That’s never a recipe for success,” he says.

One major difference between this strategic plan and previous ones is that it’s for a three-year term instead of five. Reinke says the board determined a three-year plan was more realistic at this stage considering many things are still in a state of flux as life gradually begins to return to normal.

“COVID really highlighted that you can have the best laid plan, but things can crop up operationally and there needs to be some pivoting,” she explains.

Reinke praised all of the frontline staff who participated in the planning process and says their input was critical in shaping the three-year strategic plan.

“I think we would have done that regardless of COVID, but the pandemic really highlighted the importance of frontline staff and having them guide our strategy. We felt they could make a lot of valuable contributions in terms of what do we need to be looking at... and some of the pressures, challenges and opportunities facing the sector in general,” she says.

While acknowledging that the strategic plan is a living document and may be subject to change, Reinke emphasizes it’s ultimate goal will remain the same: ensuring positive, long-term impacts for the people Epic Opportunities serves. That includes ensuring people have natural supports, are valued in their roles, feel in control of their life and communities embrace diversity.

# Committee to Inform People About Their Rights

Since its inception, one of the primary goals of Epic Opportunities has been to empower the people it serves, whether it's at home, at work or in the community.

Empowerment is one of the key components of a new undertaking Epic Opportunities is launching this summer. The organization recently began developing the framework for a rights committee that will help to educate people it serves about what their individual rights are and how they can ensure that those rights are being upheld.

A series of meetings was held in mid-June to inform families served by Epic Opportunities about plans for the committee and to answer any questions family members had. The committee is expected to begin meeting sometime later this summer.

Executive Director Ruby Reimer says the key reason the committee is being developed is to make sure the people Epic Opportunities serves are fully informed when it comes to knowing what their rights area.

"People who lives with intellectual disabilities are often underserved when it comes to knowing their rights. Historically, as a community, we've not ensured people are well educated in this area," she explains.

"The people we serve are now more empowered and are asking questions and speaking up about the services they receive. We hope this committee will help raise those voices and empower people even

further. It's about giving people the tools and resources to take this even further."

Service Development and Outcomes Specialist Stacey Forest and other staff have already approached a number of people served by the organization to serve on the proposed committee. The initial reaction to the idea was largely positive.

"The people we've spoken with about it have been very receptive to it and we've heard from people that they are excited to be part of it," Reimer says.

One of those people is Katie, a wife and mother of two who has been served by Epic Opportunities for more than a decade. A staunch supporter of self-advocacy, Katie says the committee has the potential to do a lot of good for people living with intellectual disabilities.

"I like the idea they are going to try and do more in this area. Hopefully we can achieve something really good and help a lot of people learn what their rights are and speak up for their rights and ask for help when they need it," she says.

"It's something we want to do because it's the right thing to do and to improve the quality of the services we provide to people."

Ruby Reimer, Executive Director, Epic Opportunities

Katie says she hopes that the committee's work will help educate people about what their rights are so they can avoid some of the struggles she's had to deal with over the years as a result of being born with fetal alcohol syndrome disorder (FASD). She says there were times she lost out on opportunities because her individual rights were not observed.

One of the unique aspects of the committee will be the fact that it will be self-directed. That means that even though Epic Opportunities will provide the committee with any necessary resources and help members to connect with external resources they may require, it will be members who determine the committee's priorities. That includes coming up with a name for the committee and setting its agenda.

"We want this to be a self-driven program. We want the people on the committee to determine what's important and what they are passionate about," Reimer says. "We basically want to stay out of their way so they can do what they think is important."

Reimer says it's hoped that the committee will be able to utilize some of the information that's already been compiled on people's rights by organizations such as Abilities Manitoba and People First of Manitoba, an organization that represents people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and is focused on self-advocacy.

In addition to developing the rights committee, Epic Opportunities is in the process of seeking accreditation through the Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL). CQL is an independent organization that provides accreditation, training, certification, research and consultation to human service organizations with a focus on person-centred discovery through personal outcome measures. Accreditation would formally acknowledge Epic Opportunities' commitment to honouring people's rights and empowering them to be the drivers of change in their own lives.

"It's something we want to do because it's the right thing to do and to improve the quality of the services we provide to people," Reimer says.







Tel: 204-956-7200  
Fax: 204-926-7201  
Toll-free: 800-268-3337  
www.bdo.ca

BDO Canada LLP  
201 Portage Avenue - 26th Floor  
Winnipeg MB R3B 3K6 Canada

Report of the Independent Auditor on the Summary Financial Statements

To the Members of Epic Opportunities Inc.

Opinion

The summary financial statements, which comprise the summary statement of financial position as at March 31, 2022, and the summary statement of operations for the year then ended are derived from the audited financial statements of Epic Opportunities Inc. (the “Organization”) for the year ended March 31, 2022.

In our opinion, the accompanying summary financial statements are a fair summary of the audited financial statements, in accordance with the criteria disclosed in the Note to Summary Financial Statements.

Summary Financial Statements

The summary financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations. Reading the summary financial statements and the auditor’s report thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the Organization’s audited financial statements and the auditor’s report thereon.

The Audited Financial Statements and Our Report Thereon

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the audited financial statements in our report dated June 24, 2022.

Management’s Responsibility for the Summary Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation of the summary financial statements in accordance with the criteria disclosed in the Note to Summary Financial Statements.

Auditor’s Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the summary financial statements are a fair summary of the audited financial statements based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with Canadian Auditing Standard (CAS) 810, *Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements*.

BDO Canada LLP

Chartered Professional Accountants  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
June 24, 2022

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Summary Statement of Financial Position

March 31 2022 2021

Assets

Current Assets

Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,899,354	\$ 1,640,452
Accounts receivable	354,818	254,863
Benefit plan receivable	153,081	121,868
Prepaid expenses and supplies	55,330	35,804
	<u>2,462,583</u>	<u>2,052,987</u>

Capital assets

5,604,655	5,857,295
<u>\$ 8,067,238</u>	<u>\$ 7,910,282</u>

Liabilities and Net Assets

Current Liabilities

Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 873,588	\$ 821,790
Advance - Province of Manitoba	556,346	556,346
Required cash repayments for callable debt	194,238	186,229
Current portion of long-term debt	10,833	13,346
	<u>1,635,005</u>	<u>1,577,711</u>

Callable debt	3,176,939	3,387,529
	<u>4,811,944</u>	<u>4,965,240</u>

Deferred contributions

1,105,619	1,028,634
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Long-term debt

623	16,902
<u>5,918,186</u>	<u>6,010,776</u>

Net Assets

Internally restricted reserve funds	60,000	60,000
Unrestricted	972,649	614,851
Investments in capital assets	1,116,403	1,224,655
	<u>2,149,052</u>	<u>1,899,506</u>
	<u>\$ 8,067,238</u>	<u>\$ 7,910,282</u>

The accompanying note is an integral part of these summary financial statements.

# Summary Statement of Operations

For the year ended March 31	2022	2021
<b>Revenue</b>		
Province of Manitoba	\$ 11,994,083	\$ 12,160,324
Winnipeg Regional Health Authority	2,117	-
Program revenue	79,160	103,888
Amortization of deferred contributions	42,314	34,726
Rental revenue	46,096	46,404
Donations and fundraising	20,490	68,459
Interest	4,462	3,871
	<b>12,188,722</b>	12,417,672
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Advertising and promotion	12,189	6,516
Amortization	361,107	362,065
Bank charges	2,395	3,278
Information technology	95,817	86,543
Insurance	66,836	71,428
Interest on callable debt and long-term debt	101,384	107,158
Licenses, membership and dues	8,789	13,513
Office supplies, postage and copies	22,936	26,200
Professional fees	63,219	251,023
Program cost	499,207	518,050
Rent	620,695	634,584
Repairs and maintenance	288,709	274,741
Salaries and benefits	9,141,335	9,469,177
Start-up costs	-	9,644
Taxes	66,639	58,841
Training	14,126	30,907
Transportation	127,254	134,487
Utilities	212,543	197,910
	<b>11,705,180</b>	12,256,065
<b>Excess of revenue over expenditures before other items</b>	<b>483,542</b>	161,607
<b>Other Items</b>		
Transfer to Epic Opportunities Foundation Inc.	(14,218)	(56,630)
Gain on sale of capital assets	-	152,963
Health and dental premiums received from employees	250,988	212,423
Health and dental claims paid	(393,390)	(256,732)
Health and dental claims administration	(77,376)	(46,245)
	<b>(233,996)</b>	5,779
<b>Excess of revenue over expenditures for the year</b>	<b>\$ 249,546</b>	\$ 167,386

The accompanying note is an integral part of these summary financial statements.

<b>EPIC OPPORTUNITIES INC.</b>	
Note to Summary Financial Statements	
<b>For the year ended March 31, 2022</b>	
Management is responsible for the preparation of summary financial statements. The summary presented includes only the summary statement of financial position and the summary statement of operations. It does not include any other schedules, the significant accounting policies and notes to the financial statements. The summary statements of financial position and operations are presented in the same detail as the audited financial statements, except the note referencing has been removed.	
Copies of the audited March 31, 2022 financial statements are available at the organization’s office at 200-1600 Ness Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba.	





**epic**  
opportunities

empowering  
people in  
community

200-1600 Ness Ave.  
Winnipeg, MB R3J 3W7

Phone: 204-560-2804

Fax: 204-560-2829

INFO@EPICMB.CA

**WWW.EPICMB.CA**

