

The Penticton Public Library goes fine free

(Penticton, BC – December 17, 2021) – The Penticton Public Library has gone fine-free, joining a growing number of libraries in North America in a trend that many consider to be long overdue.

It used to be the belief that fines were needed to make sure patrons returned items on time. But that's not the case for the library, which stopped charging late fines in October 2021 as part of its Food for Fines drive to benefit Keep the Cold Off Penticton. The Penticton Public Library Board decided to take the opportunity to make the change permanent, as a new policy to ensure equitable access to library service.

"While for some a \$2 overdue fine might not be a big deal, for others it may mean they stop using the library," said Heather Buzzell, Chief Librarian. "It's awful to hear about seniors or families who hesitate to use the library because of the threat of overdue fines. And when you have a big bag of items checked out, those fines can add up quickly."

Overdue fine revenues also have been declining for years. In 2022, the Library will have a new boost to its funding through the Library Legacy Fund managed by the Community Foundation of the South Okanagan Similkameen, and the Library Board decided this would be an excellent use of those funds.

Under the new policy, the Library will send email notifications reminding patrons to return their items. If the item is 30 days overdue, a replacement fee is levied on their account. This fee depends on the value of the item and will be refunded if the item is returned within six months. Fees will also be charged if an item is returned damaged. Replacement costs for lost or damaged items still apply.

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