

## PRESS RELEASE

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# Perth County Libraries Are Going Fine Free

Removing fines allows the Library to be free and accessible to all

In March 2020, as the pandemic began, the five library systems in Perth County suspended late fees on all library materials. Now as things are returning to normal, the Perth County Information Network is happy to announce that all member libraries will continue to be Fine Free on the majority of library materials, indefinitely. Furthermore, existing late fees on borrower cards have been forgiven. This new procedure will go into effect on April 4, 2022.

“Late fines can discourage people from using the Library and we wanted to continue to make libraries in Perth County accessible and inclusive for all,” says Kendra Roth, Management Chair of PCIN. “Our hope is anyone who was not using their local Library because of an outstanding fine will feel welcome to visit once again.”

PCIN consists of the North Perth, Perth East, St. Marys, Stratford and West Perth Public Libraries. All five libraries are committed to providing equal access to every member of the community and eliminating fines offers cardholders a fresh start to rediscover all that their library has to offer. By eliminating most late fines, the libraries are removing barriers and making access easy, equitable and enjoyable for everyone. Existing fines for overdue items have been forgiven to ensure that everyone can start a new chapter at their now fine-free libraries. Fees for lost or damaged items will remain on users account.

Over 99% of the PCIN library collection will be Fine Free. Fine Free materials include print books, audio books, magazines, music cds, most DVDs, as well as video and board games. More specialized collections such as Xpress books and DVDs, book club kits, wireless hotspots, technology devices, maker kits, park passes, and overdue materials from other libraries will continue to have late fees applied.

Under this new policy, borrowers are still encouraged to return their materials on time. Materials will continue to have their regular loan period and will be automatically renewed up to three times, if the item is not on hold. Libraries will continue to send reminders to customers when items are past due. Long overdue items will be billed and starting May 2022, a material recovery service will assist in the retrieval of lost materials.

Moving Fine Free has been a trend across Canada that has seen hundreds of public libraries remove late fines. Overdue fines were originally introduced as a motivator for customers to return materials in a

timely manner. Libraries that have been Fine Free for some time have seen a significant increase in circulation and library card renewals after eliminating fines.

PCIN libraries have seen a decline in the revenue from overdue fines over the past decade, in part to the ability to renew materials easily online as well as the increased use of digital collections such e-books and e-audiobooks. If customers wish to support their library financially they are encouraged to make a monetary donation by contacting their local library.

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**About the Perth County Information Network:**

The Perth County Information Network (PCIN) is a computerized library network that enables the residents of Perth County to have access to the resources of all of the participating libraries. PCIN members include: North Perth Public Library, Perth East Public Library, St. Marys Public Library, Stratford Public Library, and West Perth Public Library.