



# NIAGARA FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY

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**For Immediate Release:** December 22, 2021

## **Niagara Falls Public Library is Officially Fine-Free**

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

**Niagara Falls, Ont.** - Niagara Falls Public Library is saying hello to 2022 and goodbye to fines.

While the Library has been waiving fines for almost two years during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Library Board has voted to officially go Fine-Free meaning the Library will no longer charge customers fines on overdue materials. Niagara Falls Public Library joins hundreds of other Libraries who are part of a movement to make Library Services accessible to all members of the community, especially those who may be marginalized or struggling as a result of the pandemic. The new Fine-Free Policy will go into effect on January 1, 2022.

“The Library wanted to eliminate the stress of overdue items during the pandemic as many people lost their jobs or homes, or were struggling in some other way,” says Library CEO Alicia Subnaik Kilgour. “Permanently waiving fines is one way we can help our community recover.”

Many Libraries across Canada and the United States successfully changed to a Fine-Free model well before the pandemic as Libraries have recognized in recent years that fines create barriers to access for many customers. The removal of fines allows the community greater access to the Library and its collections. The Libraries that have been Fine-Free for some time have seen a significant increase in circulation and library card renewals after eliminating fines.

The Niagara Falls Public Library ran a pilot project through 2021 to track fines and overdue items in order to gather information before making the final decision to go Fine-Free. The project found an astounding 97% of Library items were returned on time and the remaining 3% were returned to the Library after customers were sent overdue notifications.

Although customers who don't return items by the due date won't be charged a fine, they are still accountable for the items they borrow on their cards. Materials will continue to have a three week loan period and will be automatically renewed up to two times if needed, if the item is not on hold. Anyone who has not returned an item after 28 days past the final due date will be charged a replacement fee for that item and their account will be blocked from borrowing any further materials.

Overdue fines had been decreasing in pre-pandemic years due, in part, to increased digital use as fines are not charged for e-books and e-audiobooks. If customers wish to support the Library they are encouraged to make a monetary donation, as the Library is a registered charity. [Donations can be made on the Library's website](#) and any donation over \$10 will receive a tax receipt.

“Fines can discourage marginalized communities from using the Library and we wanted to continue to make our Library more accessible and inclusive for all,” says Kilgour. “Our hope is anyone who felt uncomfortable coming into the Library because of an outstanding fine will now feel welcome to visit us once again.”

**About the Niagara Falls Public Library:**

*The Niagara Falls Public Library is a free, inclusive community space open to all. Residents of the City of Niagara Falls are invited to register for a free library card to access all of our resources, both physical and digital. The Niagara Falls Public Library dates back to 1878, and today has four library locations serving the City of Niagara Falls - Victoria Avenue Library, Community Centre Library, Chippawa Library, NovelBranch library kiosk at the Gale Centre as well as the Stamford Centre Library which is currently closed for construction. Please visit our website at [my.nflibrary.ca](http://my.nflibrary.ca) for more information.*

**For more information, please contact:**

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