



## REPORT TO THE LIBRARY BOARD

MEETING DATE: JUNE 22, 2017

Session:	Public Session
Subject:	Service Report: Lending Services for Children and Teens
Prepared By:	Lending Services Advisory Group: Nancy Collister, Mary McEwen (Lending Services Coordinator) , Kathryn Baldock (Central Library Circulation Supervisor), Jennifer Ball, Sean Barrett, Dan Cressman, Sherry Graham, Jessica Holton, Jodi Lewis, Lisa Manax Skikos, Eeva Stierwalt
Presented By:	Nancy Collister
Purpose of Report:	For Receipt

### RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Library Board receive this report.

### ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY

The purpose of this report is to inform the London Public Library (LPL) Board of the ongoing work of the Lending Services Advisory Group (LSAG) in creating and aligning Lending Services to support London Public Library's *User First Service Philosophy* and community values. Specifically, it is to provide information about how LPL will manage lending services to children and teens and, specifically, in regards to fines.

Based on the recommendation made by Nancy Collister, Manager Customer Services & Branch Operations and Mary McEwen, Coordinator, Lending Services, along with the members of LSAG, the CEO & Chief Librarian (CEO) has approved a change to how LPL will manage children's and teen memberships and accounts. LPL will no longer charge children fines and will reduce the fines for teens.

Under the authority of the LPL *Lending Services Policy*, the CEO establishes loan periods, fines and fee schedules, and guidelines and procedures for lending services. To change how accounts are managed, changes will be made to the LPL *Monetary Charges Policy* "Schedule of Monetary Charges" which is Appendix A of the Policy. The establishment and maintenance of this Schedule is delegated to the CEO in that policy. The changes will be effective September 1, 2017. The CEO will bring the revised "Schedule of Monetary Charges" to the Library Board meeting of September 28th, 2017

for formal Board receipt. There will need to be language changes to the *Lending Services Policy* and this policy will also be brought forward at that time.

## **BACKGROUND & REVIEW**

### **Objectives of the Review**

LPL's purpose is to "Strengthen people and neighbourhoods by creating connections that enrich lives, inspire discovery, foster creativity and expand possibilities". One of the most significant connections we make is through library collections. The Library makes a comprehensive collection of materials across multiple formats and audio-visual and electronic platforms available to the public. Library collections meet the literacy, learning, information, culture, leisure and recreation needs and interests of children and teens.

As part of its work on the LPL User First Service Philosophy, LSAG has been reviewing LPL Lending Services to specific groups of users, in this case to children and teens, in order to improve access and reduce barriers to borrowing collections materials and accessing technology and programs.

### **Background**

Members of the LSAG team did a best practices review of other public library systems and consulted with LPL staff system-wide regarding children and teen memberships. Julie Brandl, LPL Coordinator, Children's and Youth Services provided input and support.

To date, only a few public libraries in Canada, such as Vancouver Public Library, Fraser Valley Regional Library and Surrey Public Library in British Columbia, and Prince Edward Island, for example, are providing fine-free memberships for children. Based on the benefits to children and teens (and the community in general) and positive experiences of these libraries, several other Canadian libraries across the country are now considering moving in this direction. In the United States, a number of large public libraries have also recently announced that they have moved in this direction and others, such as the New York Public Library System, are giving consideration to making this change.

The *City of London Strategic Plan, 2015-2019* identified poverty under the *Strengthening our Community* initiative and in 2016 the Mayor's Poverty Task Force published their report, *London for All, a Roadmap to End Poverty*. Other significant reports on poverty in London have come from the Child and Youth Network, London Community Foundation Vitality Report and the United Way London & Middlesex.

Many organizations such as the YMCA of Western Ontario and the City of London's Spectrum recreational programs provide customers with fee assistance for those unable to pay the full fee for programs.

It is important to note that traditionally, the threat of accumulating fines for overdue materials and the fees associated with damaged or lost books has kept low-income families away from libraries, or from checking out items to take home. LPL can play an important part of the work to end poverty by supporting literacy and learning through the improved access and elimination of barriers to collections and other library resources. A fine free children's card and reducing the fine amounts for teens is a key strategy.

Recently, LSAG's work resulted in the introduction of a *Connect Card*, a low barrier Library membership that is fine free and has limited borrowing. The *Connect Card* was created as a way to help adults with no identification access our collections and services. Importantly, since its inception children and teens have also registered as *Connect Card* users. LPL currently has 473 children registered for this card.

Based on the best practices review, our community context, the positive impact of the LPL *Connect Card*, and LPL's User First Philosophy, the LSAG team further recommended that LPL no longer charge children fines and reduce the fines for teens.

## **Benefits**

To summarize, some of the key benefits of the changes are:

- Barriers to library use will be reduced for children and families, especially low-income families;
- Children and teens currently having a *Connect Card* will be able to move to full borrowing privileges;
- Library use by children and families will likely increase;
- Number of children and teens registering for library cards will likely increase;
- LPL will further align with the City of London's Poverty strategy and the Child and Youth Network strategy on increasing literacy in our community; and
- LPL's fine free children's card and lower teen fine rates will provide the Library with the means to assist individuals and families experiencing financial need.

## **Financial Impact**

For the past several years LPL has offered a *Read Away Your Fines* program to children and teens. This has had a positive impact on the participants and encouraged their ongoing use of the Library. The financial impact has been minimal. In 2016, \$743.10 was read away, with the highest number of participants coming from the Pond Mills, Sherwood and Stoney Creek branch locations.

As reported to the Library Board previously, library fines revenue has decreased year over year. This is a national trend and results from a combination of factors. The impact

of the elimination of fines for children and reduction of fines for teens will further reduce this revenue. The Library will adjust the Operating Budget to reflect the change.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The Library will launch this initiative in September 2017 for the back to school time period. Staff are currently reviewing and will update the associated guidelines and procedures for lending services. The September launch will provide the time to develop a marketing and communication plan; develop a Q&A for the public and inform key strategic partners.

As indicated above, the CEO will bring the revised LPL *Monetary Charges Policy* "Schedule of Monetary Charges" to the Library Board meeting of September 28th, 2017 for formal receipt. There will need to be language changes to the *Lending Services Policy* and these will also be brought forward at that time.