

Late fines were originally introduced as an incentive for patrons to return their items on time. Unfortunately, an unintended consequence is that late fines disproportionately impact lower income, marginalized and minority families. What is a small inconvenience for those with the ability to pay, becomes a huge barrier for those with the greatest need and additionally becomes the difference between whether or not they use the Library at all. Having to self-identify as someone who is struggling financially is a barrier all by itself.

Parkland Regional Library suspended fines in March 2020 due to the closure of libraries during the COVID-19 pandemic. As of the end of August 2020, they have not yet reinstated late fines as many of the libraries in their catchment area are still not open. Many libraries in Alberta are now exploring the benefits of going fine free as it is difficult to re-instate charging late fines after 5 ½ months.

When preparing the draft budget for 2021-2022, we will not be including income from fines. This is the perfect time and opportunity to permanently remove this particular barrier and eliminate late fines as many people in our community are already facing economic struggles and require our services more than ever.