

## Frequently Asked Questions – Interlibrary Loan

### 1. What is Interlibrary Loan?

Interlibrary Loan is a system that lets libraries across Ontario share books. If our library doesn't own a copy of the book you're looking for we can borrow it from another library for you. Our library also lends books to other libraries for their patrons.

### 2. Why is Interlibrary Loan important?

Interlibrary Loan gives people across the province access to a much wider range of books and resources. Interlibrary Loan also helps small and rural libraries offer their patrons the same access to resources that larger cities can offer. Interlibrary Loan saves libraries money by helping them provide the books and resources people want without having to buy every item themselves. With the Interlibrary Loan system you have access to every library in Ontario through your local library card!

### 3. What is the delivery service everyone is talking about?

The Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS) managed a delivery service that delivered Interlibrary Loan material to libraries across Southern Ontario. Most libraries in Southern Ontario didn't have to mail items to each other, as they would be picked up by a SOLS van, sorted, and delivered to the receiving library. This meant that libraries could lend many books at little to no cost.

It is important to note that although there have been some confusing messages in the media, libraries in Northern Ontario didn't take part in the van delivery service. With the large geographical distances between our libraries we have always relied on the postal system to deliver our books. Books that were sent from Southern Ontario libraries to Northern libraries were also shipped using Canada Post.

Ontario Library Service – North provided funding for postage reimbursement that was divided among lending libraries in Northern Ontario based on their lending practices. Libraries received the rebate annually based on the number of items shipped in the previous year – each library received a portion of the fund which matched their portion of total lending.

The SOLS delivery service and OLS - North postage rebates helped to offset postage costs, encouraged wide and generous lending across the province to create equitable access to materials in rural and Northern communities, and made the service affordable for libraries.

### 4. How does sending books by mail work?

Libraries in Canada are able to send books through Canada Post using a special rate called the Library Materials Rate, which provides low cost shipping and returns for library material. When libraries use the Library Material Rate they pay for the shipping and return postage at the same time – that means libraries only pay when they are lending an item to another library.

The Library Material Rate is a great service provided to libraries by Canada Post, however switching to using this method for all Interlibrary Loan deliveries will be a big adjustment for many libraries.

## **5. Why was Interlibrary Loan suspended?**

In the recent provincial budget SOLS and OLS-North learned that their operating budgets would be cut by around 50%. Due to the extent of the cuts and the fact that they are retroactive to April 1, SOLS and OLS-North had to act quickly to make important budget decisions. The Interlibrary Loan system in Ontario is provided jointly by the Southern Ontario Library Service and Ontario Library Service – North. Together those two agencies pay for the software we need to provide Interlibrary Loan, and the Southern Ontario Library Service also provides technical support for the program.

SOLS decided to discontinue their delivery service effective April 26, and Ontario Library Service – North informed libraries that their postage reimbursement program was also discontinued.

Libraries will now be assuming all postage costs for the Interlibrary Loan program out of their operating budgets. Many libraries will need time to evaluate their budgets, particularly libraries who lend a lot of material. Libraries will also need to evaluate their policies to decide whether they will place any restrictions on the number of items, specific formats or types of materials they can afford to lend.

Provincial Interlibrary Loan policies may also need to be reviewed to ensure that all libraries have fair access to Interlibrary Loan (ie: libraries are not borrowing without lending and leaving a higher financial burden on other lending libraries).

The suspension of Interlibrary Loan gives libraries time to make those decisions responsibly and consult with their library boards, while also provide ample time for the dissolution of the delivery service.

## **6. Will Interlibrary Loan be returning in Ontario?**

Yes – Interlibrary Loan should be available to libraries in early June.

## **7. How will these changes impact my library?**

Every library in Ontario will be impacted differently, depending on the size of their budget and the extent of their participation in Interlibrary Loan.

Some libraries in Ontario may chose not to participate in Interlibrary Loan, if they can't afford to add the increased cost of postage to their budgets. Other libraries might limit their participation in Interlibrary Loan to match their budget – meaning they could set a cap on how many books they can afford to lend per month or year and what types of material they are able to lend.

We don't know yet what the full impact of these changes will be and whether fewer items will be available for loan.

**8. Can't libraries just ask their patrons to pay for Interlibrary Loan books?**

No, due to restrictions in the Public Library Act, the law that governs libraries in Ontario, we cannot charge our patrons for the cost of borrowing books by Interlibrary Loan.

**9. Is Interlibrary Loan the only program impacted by provincial budget cuts?**

No, the Southern Ontario Library Service and Ontario Library Service – North will not be able to make up the full extent of their budget cuts through changes to the Interlibrary Loan program.

Ontario Library Service – North in particular, will be deeply impacted by these cuts. Already 5 positions from their staff of 11 are slated for layoff, and another position will be reduced to part-time. Our libraries are still waiting to hear what the impact will be on the programs and services they offer.

**10. What other services to the Southern Ontario Library Service and Ontario Library Service – North provide to libraries?**

SOLS and OLS-North provide a wide range of services to libraries including:

- Board and staff training opportunities
- Access to joint purchasing for things like eBooks/Overdrive/Libby and eResources and research databases, making the price more affordable for small libraries
- Consulting on topics like policy writing, planning, technology services and collections
- Website development for small Northern libraries
- Bulk purchasing agreements
- Administration of the Joint Automation Server Initiative (JASI), which provides essential library software to 133 library systems in rural and Northern Ontario.
- Access to shared collections (Large Print, Graphic Novels, DVDs, Book Club Kits)
- Support for First Nations Libraries

**11. What can I do if I am concerned about these cuts?**

If you are concerned about these cuts please consider calling, writing or emailing your MPP or the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Michael Tibollo. Please tell them that you are concerned about the impacts on your public library and urge them to restore funding to the Ontario Library Service.