

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS THAT MAY ARISE FROM THIS ANNOUNCEMENT:

The Town of Lincoln and the Town of Pelham have agreed to explore the possibility of merging their two library systems.

Public Libraries Act R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER P.44

Establishment of union public library

5 (1) The councils of two or more municipalities may make an agreement for the establishment of a union public library. R.S.O. 1990, c. P.44, s. 5 (1).

1. What is a union public library?

A union public library is formed when two or more municipal councils make an agreement to combine their individual public libraries into one organization.

2. Is a union public library still a public library?

Yes. Union libraries must follow the Ontario Public Libraries Act (i.e. free library memberships, free materials lending, etc.) and are governed by a community board made up of citizen volunteers and members of Council from both municipalities.

3. What are the advantages of joining two public libraries together to form one?

- i) Union public libraries benefit from a larger tax base and economies of scale.
- ii) Internal services such as acquisitions, processing, and database maintenance can be centralized, reducing duplication. This means that more staff will have the opportunity to be involved in programming and outreach and service delivery in general.
- iii) Only one chief executive officer is needed.

While forming a union public library does not necessarily lower costs, both communities would benefit by receiving more programs and services for their tax dollars. Bigger municipalities can offer their residents more library programs, services and materials. Combining two smaller public libraries would provide the opportunity to offer more of the services that bigger municipalities are able to provide.

4. What are the disadvantages of forming a union public library?

i) There would be an adjustment period while library staff and administration work to combine and develop services and policies, which may in turn temporarily affect services to the public.

The adjustment period will be a good opportunity to update all policies and bring them up to current library standards.

Although library staff may find their roles within the organization shifting, there will be more opportunities to specialize within a specific department and increase professional skills and knowledge.

ii) Representation for each community would be reduced and may result in some loss of autonomy.

While forming a union public library may mean less local representation (i.e. instead of a municipality having 100% representation on the board, it might be 50%), this is still a public library and library administration will consider both communities when planning future changes, improvements, and updates.

5. Will current library staff be able to keep their jobs?

Current library staff will have a job within the new system. As the two libraries combine into one, job titles and job descriptions will inevitably change. Staff will either be given the opportunity to continue in their current position or be offered a new role within the organization.

The organizational chart will change, and eventually, through attrition, some positions may be removed, but staff will also have more opportunities to move up within a larger organization.

Both libraries have temporarily filled a number of administrative positions. This unique opportunity provides more flexibility to keep permanent staff in key positions.

6. Will staff have to work at library branches in both municipalities?

Not necessarily. All library staff will have a “new” employer with locations in both municipalities who may require that staff work at any one or even multiple locations over time. The goal is to minimize

movement to what is necessary and deemed important to the functioning and efficiency of the new organization.

7. How will the decision on job titles and positions be made? Will staff have to reapply for their positions?

Job titles and positions will be determined after the agreement to form a union public library is finalized. This is an important part of the transition process and no decision has been made as to how this will be done and if staff will need to reapply for their positions.

8. Is my community library at risk of being closed?

When forming the agreement between the two municipalities, both Councils would have to state that they would commit to maintaining a specified number of service points in their respective municipalities.

The intent of this kind of an agreement is to improve community services as opposed to reduce them, so the risk of closure is low.

9. Are there minimum facility standards that must be maintained by each municipality?

Library buildings would be maintained in the same manner that all municipal buildings that serve the public are kept. Each municipality can choose to include minimum standards in the agreement.

10. If Pelham PL requires a major renovation or new build, would my taxes go toward that?

Renovations and new builds would be the responsibility of the Council for the municipality in question and would affect the taxpayers of that municipality only.

11. How many representatives from Lincoln will be on the library board?

When a union public library is formed, the existing library boards are dissolved and the proportion of representation from each municipality for the new library board will be based on what is in the agreement. This proportion is usually based on population size but is ultimately part of the bargaining process between municipalities.

12. Will current library board members be on the new union public library board? How will a new board be formed and who makes the decision on member composition?

The number of representatives from each municipality will be outlined in the agreement. Each municipality's Council will make their own decisions on who will represent their community on the union library board. Current library board members will work on the transition process for board succession, but the final decision as to whether they will be included in the union library board will be up to each Council.

13. Both public library boards and both municipalities have agreed to engage in a formal discussion to form a union public library. What are the next steps in the process to finalize an agreement and what is the projected timeline?

It is still very early in the process to have a specific timeline. Both library boards will need to work together with Town staff from both municipalities on a strategy to research, discuss, and negotiate a union public library agreement. At this time, we are aiming to have a draft proposal created by the 2nd quarter of this year. When a finalized proposed agreement has been reached, it will be presented to each Town Council for approval. After the agreement is approved by both municipalities, a copy must be sent to the Ontario Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism, and Culture Industries for their files. The agreement is just the first step of the process. The next step would be to work on how to combine the two organizations, and we anticipate this process to take one to two years.

14. Will the union public library have a new name? Who will decide what the name should be?

The union public library will have a new name. Whether it will be a combination of both municipality names or a totally new name has yet to be decided. The process for determining the new library's name has not been discussed and any proposed name will need to be approved by both municipal councils.