



MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

To / Destinataire OPLB Trustees

cc: Sonia Bebbington, Chief Librarian and CEO

From / Expéditeur Anna Basile, Deputy CEO and Division Manager, Corporate Services, and Sarah Macintyre, Division Manager, Client Services

Subject / Objet Potential impact of tariffs and counter-tariffs on collections **Date:** April 1, 2025

Trustees,

As you are aware, for several months now the Government of Canada (GoC) and the US Government have been engaged in exchanges related to tariffs, currently set to take effect April 2, 2025. The Government of Canada issued a [notice of intent](#) to impose countermeasures in response to United States tariffs on Canadian goods.

As alluded to at the March meeting as part of the year-end financials, tariffs are expected to have both a direct and indirect impact on OPL in a number of ways. Many of OPL's capital purchases (e.g. vehicles, technology, building materials) and operating purchases (e.g. collections, printer paper, office supplies) have elements that are manufactured in, or sourced via, the United States.

The total potential impact of tariffs in all areas of activity is estimated at \$2M including the impact of currency exchange. In our commitment to fiscal prudence, staff will make efforts to avoid the purchase of goods coming from US sources where possible. Estimates will be adjusted or refined as we learn more.

While OPL purchasing activity is broad, some of the items that will be tariffed have a sector-specific impact on the legislated mandate of public libraries.

Library-sector specific impacts

The list of goods identified in the GoC counter-tariffs that affect collection acquisition are:

- 4901 – Printed books
- 4902 – Newspapers, journals, periodicals

- 4903 – Children’s picture books
- 8523 – Magnetic media/Optical Media (DVDs and CDs)

After the GoC announcement, OPL heard from sector leaders, professional associations, and library wholesalers about the potential impact of these tariffs. The Canadian Urban Libraries Council drafted a [letter to the Department of Finance](#) on this matter, as did the [Canadian Federation of Library Associations](#). The Canadian Independent Booksellers Association and Indigo issued a [joint statement](#) as well. These statements provide good context and describe the potential impact of the tariffs on the book industry in Canada.

Currently, there remains some uncertainty. As we understand, a multi-national publisher having a Canadian division is not necessarily exempt. Moreover, overseas printing further complicates matters, as books may be published in one country, and then imported to Canada via the US, with tariffs potentially applied more than once.

OPL staff have completed an analysis of the Collections budget to estimate the potential impact these counter-tariffs could have, should the GoC proceed. In 2024, OPL budgeted \$3,819,600 for materials that could be impacted by the specific counter-tariffs noted above (print books, print periodicals, children’s picture books, and audio-visual materials). These tariffs could result in a financial impact to OPL of up to an additional \$954,900 annually for these purchases. In 2024, the average cost per item was \$29; we estimate that this impact would mean a reduction in purchasing power of 32,927 items. An impact like this would result in fewer acquisitions of new titles and replacement copies, and result in longer hold queues.

Next steps

At a time when the Canadian dollar is weakened, and there are signs of an economic downturn, historical trends suggest that demand for OPL’s services will increase as more people turn to the public library. Alongside our library colleagues, advocacy with the Province continues, and these increased pressures inform our positioning.

Staff are monitoring the situation and will keep trustees informed as more detailed information is available. Should the GoC proceed with the counter-tariffs related to collections items, staff will ensure that any impact is distributed amongst the collection such that no one collection or client group are disproportionately impacted (for example, children’s books vs. adult materials).

If you have any questions please don’t hesitate to reach out.

Anna & Sarah