

*Routine Proceedings*

To make it perfectly clear, what we are debating is the report submitted to the House by the Consumer and Corporate Affairs committee that examined the state of the postal system of Canada. While the committee made a number of recommendations, I think it is fair to say that we, in the New Democratic Party, virtually dissociate ourselves from all of those recommendations.

I must say that my hon. friend, the hon. member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake has submitted a minority report. It is entitled *Report of the New Democratic Party and the Future of our National Postal System*. It is one of the best reports I have ever read in terms of describing what is being done to the postal system. I suspect that if people are interested in copies, they could simply contact the member of Parliament for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake and get a copy of this excellent report.

I have read a lot of reports on the post office and most of them are rather gobbledegook. They try to justify the dismantling of the postal system of Canada. This is an outstanding report, and examines every minute detail of the postal system. Again, I have to compliment the member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake for doing what has to be only described as an outstanding job, as a parliamentarian in his work, particularly serving the people of Canada through the providing of a report that describes our postal system so accurately.

More important, it points out not only the problems associated with it, but I could take some time, which I do not think I will today because it is all available here in writing, a number of very important recommendations, 34 recommendations to be exact as to what could be done to make our postal system one of the best postal systems in the world, and maintain its comprehensive nature across Canada.

I listened with interest to the minister responsible for the postal corporation where in a sense he confirmed that it is the government's support of the postal corporation to dismantle 5,221 rural post offices in Canada. This can only be described as being anti-rural Canada. This is the dismantling of important infrastructure in rural Canada.

This is part of an ongoing program of the federal government to abandon support for those living in small communities and rural areas of the country.

As the minister has indicated, they say the post office has to make a profit and be run like a business like General Motors or the Royal Bank of Canada. I do not know why we have to make that assumption. We want an efficient and effective postal system. Why does it have to be run like a business?

We do not run our Armed Forces like a business and we do not expect our navy to make a profit. We do not expect the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to make a profit. We do not expect our hospitals, our long-term care facilities, our universities, colleges or schools to make profits. We do not expect our army to make profits and we do not expect the ambulance service to make profits. There are a number of areas like these that the taxpayers of Canada expect as a service.

We expect to be protected and therefore we pay taxes to have one of the best police systems in the world, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. We pay taxes and we have a decent health care system across the country. Taxpayers say, not only do we pay taxes but we also pay for the postal service because it is, to a certain extent, user pay.

When I was first elected I think it cost 17 cents for a stamp to mail a letter across the country. Now, not too many years later, it costs 39 cents to mail a letter across the country. That is a tremendous increase in order to cover the cost. The same could be said of postal service for parcels and so on.

The corporation, with the support of the federal government, has denied the opportunity to enter into a whole variety of other services to help it raise money. The postal service in other countries includes many services, such as banking facilities. In very small communities they provide simple and straightforward banking services. They provide all sorts of retail and courier services and so on. In other words, there is a whole range of services that the post office could be providing in terms of revenue raising, but it has had that eliminated.

It seems to me that the government has tried to make it impossible for the postal corporation to succeed, except to dismantle it across the country. I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that those Canadians who are most adversely affected are those people living in rural Canada and small-town Canada.