

*Private Members' Business*

There are approximately 19,000 locations at which postal products and services are available across this country. Of those, only about 3,600 are corporate post offices. It is Canada Post Corporation's practice to display the Canadian flag at its corporate buildings and sites, but the vast majority of postal outlets are franchise operations that are primarily located in retail stores owned and operated by private individuals.

The hon. member will agree that we should continue to respect the independence of those individuals who run private outlets and rely on their good sense and judgment on this question.

Some of these franchise operations are in small quarters. I believe it is up to the individual retail store owner, whether they have a postal service or not, to decide whether they want to display the Canadian flag.

Canada Post is doing an excellent job of providing official postal service to all Canadians. When the former government presented legislation in 1981 to convert the old post office department into a self-sufficient Crown corporation it did so with the intention of removing the postal service from political interference. Even the CUPW president at the time, Jean-Claude Parrot, welcomed the move and encouraged Parliament to let the managers of Canada Post manage. All parties in this House agreed to the change because it was a very sensible solution to a nearly impossible situation.

• (1930)

In my view the results have been very positive. As many members want to speak, I do not want to use my full allotted time. I think the management of the new Canada Post is one of the most important elements in making this organization work to the benefit of all Canadians.

I cannot fault the hon. member wanting to encourage a display of the Canadian flag, and I doubt that any Canadian would find fault with his suggestion. However, I believe this bill misrepresents Canada Post's commitment to the promotion of Canada's distinct identity.

Every year Canada Post produces 250 million Canadian flag stamp definitives. Canada Post is proud to encourage Canadians to use it year after year. Since the introduction of these stamps many attractive designs of the Canadian flag have been featured. I am happy to say

that often I use these designed stamps on my own correspondence and I urge all fellow Canadians when they are buying stamps to request that particular stamp.

Canada Post's commitment to national heritage does not stop there. Canada Post is a contributor to a series of TV vignettes seeking to make Canadians aware of their special heritage. Each one-minute spot highlights a particular facet of Canadian history or an outstanding Canadian. I am sure many members have seen these on television.

I want to congratulate Canada Post for its continued contribution, not only in its commercial capacity but perhaps even more so as an agent of Canadian identity.

**Mr. Jack Whittaker (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merriitt):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today and put a few comments on the record on Bill C-241, presented by the member for Restigouche—Chaleur, with respect to the Canada Post Corporation and the national flag of Canada.

The member has made some very valid points in pointing out the reasoning behind putting this bill before Parliament to change the Canada Post Corporation Act to ensure that flags are flown over all Canada Post outlets.

If we think back to the establishment of not only Canada but the postal service we realize what it has meant to our various communities, as the member has pointed out and those of us from rural Canada understand perfectly, and how important our postal outlets were prior to privatization and, in some cases, still are to our small communities.

It is a gathering point. Back in the old days it was a place where the local people came in and congregated. That was a tradition that continues in some communities today. Unfortunately as we go across Canada more and more small postal offices in our small rural communities are being closed and so are some of the post offices in some of our larger communities.

In my own riding Penticton, with a population of 27,000, had its post office closed last year in spite of that community rallying behind its post office and the fact that I presented petitions with the names of well over half of the population of Penticton protesting the closure of the post office.