

Customers are consulted about alternative delivery options, which could include: lock boxes in an RPO, community mail boxes (supermailboxes) spread throughout the community, rural route lot-line delivery, clustered community mailboxes and kiosks*. In every case, local mail delivery is guaranteed.

Usually, the sale of postal products and services also remains in the community, although delivery and retail services are often not at the same location. In the first customer letter which the Corporation sends out, retail firms in the community are invited to apply to become an RPO. Canada Post also canvasses the community to measure the extent of business interest in providing postal products at the counter.

Sizeable program benefits have been cited by the Corporation for RPOs, apart from the continuation of a postal presence in rural communities; for example, it is claimed that accessibility is enhanced through an increase in the number of hours of service; the business base of rural communities is improved through an increase in the business opportunities for retailers; and that service to customers is made better through an upgrading or changing of delivery service — access to outdoor mailboxes is possible on a 24-hour basis.

Independent public opinion polls carried out for the Corporation in 1989 indicate an extremely high rate of satisfaction with the new retail postal services. Over 80% of the individuals interviewed were “very satisfied”, especially with the increased number of hours of access to postal products and services.

The Corporation hopes to realize considerable long-term savings from its conversion program. It is, however, somewhat early to assess what these might be. As of the end of February 1990, there had been only 542 conversions, and these largely involved smaller-scale facilities and operations. While savings may not have been substantial to date, they can be expected to increase rapidly as the rationalization program advances.

Those opposed to the conversion program argue that corporate outlets should remain in place and, if anything, they should have their services expanded to include such items as the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, greeting cards, parcel wrapping, and acceptance of payment of utility bills. Post office employees could perhaps distribute information for federal government departments and act as economic development officers for rural communities. Banking services could also be provided in the over 2,000 communities where the banks do not have branches.

* Weather-protected and heated structure providing for parcel and mail delivery, stamp vending and out-going mail.