

Adjournment Debate

In a meeting last week with senior officials of Canada Post the citizens of Mabou showed that they are willing to consider alternatives to achieve savings for Canada Post while providing quality service.

What they will not accept is to be patronized and marginalized by this corporation and by this government.

Mr. Lee Richardson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, like many other organizations that provide service to the public, Canada Post has had to adopt new methods of providing service to respond to the evolving needs of Canadians. Canada Post is committed to making postal products and services more accessible. In rural Canada, the corporation is achieving this goal by using the resources and expertise of local business to increase significantly the number of places that offer postal products and services.

Canada Post is therefore changing the way it provides postal service in many rural communities. In contrast to some other service oriented businesses which have adjusted to changing times by withdrawing services, Canada Post makes every effort to maintain its retail presence in the community through its century old partnership with local business.

In order to do this, Canada Post has implemented a program which has been the subject of many misconceptions, the conversion program: converting from a corporate operated outlet to one operated by local business in a rural community. These outlets provide all of the retail postal services currently available, such as the sale of money orders and posting or picking up parcels and signature items.

Mail delivery is maintained within the community through a variety of methods such as postal boxes in a retail postal outlet, postal boxes in a postal delivery centre, or community mail boxes at one central site or at individual sites. Canada Post ensures that the community maintains its unique postal identity. Customers continue to be able to send and receive mail locally.

The retirement of the former postmaster of the Mabou Post Office in March last year gave Canada Post

an opportunity to review postal service in this community. Customers were notified in writing on March 28 that changes would be made to postal service. A public meeting was held on April 30, where in addition to explaining the process and responding to local questions, Canada Post encouraged community input to assist it in determining the best type of mail delivery for the community. Canada Post is currently accepting applications from local businesses interested in the opportunity to operate a retail postal outlet.

In communities where changes have been deemed necessary but which are unable to support local retail operations, or where community efforts to retain the *status quo* affect the corporation's ability to maintain retail services, Canada Post has no other option but to offer these services from the nearest existing retail outlet. I can assure the hon. member that this option is clearly not one favoured by the corporation, and I urge residents to support local businesses should they apply to operate a retail postal outlet in Mabou.

Surveys conducted yearly since 1988 by independent research firms, the most recent being an October 1990 Decima survey, indicate that over 90 per cent of rural Canadians are satisfied with retail postal services offered through local businesses in their community.

Canada Post is a business and, like all businesses in any community, it must manage in an effective manner if it is to succeed. The conversion program achieves this and benefits the customer, the community's business base, and the corporation. When over 90 per cent of customers surveyed have expressed approval of postal services provided by retail postal outlets this government supports this program.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 6.24 p.m.