

*Government Orders*

The National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation wants the government to reconsider its decision to close all rural post offices. It reminds the government that almost 30 per cent of the membership of their group lives in rural areas. The government decision to close rural post offices has had a negative impact on those seniors' lives.

The Alberta Council on Aging stated in its brief to the federal government in 1990 that "seniors we talk to tell us the new services are much less satisfactory than the ones we had before when we had a knowledgeable, helpful and friendly staff in a rural post office".

The United Seniors of Ontario, said: "The rural mail delivery is an excellent service which should neither be reduced nor abolished. The supermailboxes are for the most part inaccessible to many seniors and should never be allowed to replace rural mail delivery at the rural post office". I have to say that in Northumberland I have had several problems brought to my attention by seniors who have had a lot of difficulty accessing the superboxes that exist in their communities, not just in the rural areas but in the suburban areas of my riding as well.

According to Rural Dignity of Canada, over 3,000 of Canada's small towns have concentrations of seniors, over twice that of the national average. I have many small towns in my riding of Northumberland. One-third of all Canadians 65 years and older live in communities of less than 10,000. As many as one-third of those 65 years and older do not drive.

Certainly the latest problem that I have had in my riding has been in the community of Hope Township where a post office was closed because of the very fact that many of the seniors do not drive and have to rely on others to help them. It has been a burden for them.

There was an attempt to try and set that closure of a post office right, but it does cause a lot of concern and change in a community that is at times very difficult with long-term impacts.

National surveys by seniors' networks show postal service to be among the top five issues of concern to Canada's elderly population. I bring that to the attention of our government because certainly it ought to be very concerned about the needs and desires of our senior population. When this is one of the government's five-

most important priority issues, it should certainly be stopping to listen to them.

The impact on seniors has many aspects, one of them being higher risks of physical danger. Outdoor boxes are placed in unprotected roadside locations without proper lighting or regular snow removal and seniors are at higher risk of physical danger. They create a loss of independence for seniors. In rural areas public transportation is non-existent. I can say that is certainly the case in most of my rural constituency. The superboxes and retail postal outlets may be split into two locations.

Those seniors without transportation are now required to depend on others to send or receive their mail. There is a loss of social contact that arises out of the closure of so many of our rural post offices. This was a contact that was very important to our seniors and allowed them to know that there was somebody who on a regular daily basis was there to check up and to follow what was happening lest there be some illness or accident that had befallen a senior citizen.

There is also a loss of a support network and the general lack of communication not just between a postal courier and a constituent, but also a constituent and neighbour. Since this government has undertaken the measures it has in the past to make changes to the Canada Post Corporation, communication across this country has suffered greatly.

The proposals that come forward in Bill C-73 today appear to me to be just one further step toward the privatization of Canada Post. As that occurs we have problems of loss of employment, loss of service to seniors, as I have just outlined, and loss of service to citizens of all types.

Other members have raised the issue of just how students who are trying to make application to get into university are hampered by our failing Canada Post Corporation's services across this country.

This is a vast geographical nation. We cover a large, large territory and it is imperative that we try to increase and improve our postal service. However, with the new and improved technologies that we have in the world today and with which Canada in particular is blessed, we find that instead of improved service we are paying more today for less and less service. Any moves in that direction which are going to exacerbate an existing problem I cannot support.