

Private Members' Business

Currently Canada's booming paper recycling industry must now import used paper from the United States just to keep up with the demand for finished recycled paper products. There is no shortage of public support for this kind of activity.

In all fairness I must mention that Canada Post is often singled out as the sole distributor of junk mail. This is not a fact. According to Canada Post, the corporation only delivers 25 per cent of all unaddressed print advertising. The remaining 75 per cent must find its way to our doorstep through private distributors. It may seem unfair to Canada Post but an example must be set by one of the largest single distributors in Canada.

This motion represents an excellent opportunity for Canada Post to become a corporate leader, a good corporate citizen, in the field of sustainable development.

Some people say Canada Post should be told not to deliver any junk mail. In response, many environmental groups have launched anti-junk mail campaigns. These groups encourage households to refuse junk mail by placing stickers directly across their mail boxes. This is a practical solution because what is junk mail to one householder is precious information to a neighbouring household.

Unfortunately Canada Post will continue to deliver junk mail regardless of any stickers. The corporation maintains that its role is only to deliver the mail and not to scrutinize its contents.

My rebuttal to Canada Post is that I have made the choice whether I want junk mail or not and if I put that sticker on my mailbox I have made the choice. I do not want the third class or the junk mail. The postperson does not have to worry about making that decision. These facts only reinforce the need for this motion.

• (1710)

I must congratulate the corporation, however, for taking the initiative of establishing the multi-stakeholder print advertising committee in June 1992. This committee consists of industry representatives, corporation officials and municipal authorities. According to my research, consumer representation appears to be missing. The mandate of this committee is to examine the environmental impact of waste related to junk mail. This is a worthy effort but it is time for action.

With this motion let us send a clear message to all Canadians that it is the will of this House to take steps toward preserving our environment.

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent of the House to declare this motion a votable motion. I have given notice to the three House leaders that I intend to do this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is there unanimous consent?

An hon. member: No.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Nicole Roy-Arcelin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park for giving me this opportunity to confirm the government's commitment to public support for the distribution of Canadian publications.

As for the hon. member's motion concerning the advisability of removing the postal rate subsidy for all firms using direct mail advertising and not using recycled paper, however, the answer is quite simple: postal rate subsidies do not apply to direct mail advertising.

Perhaps I may explain the purpose of the postal subsidy program which was created over 100 years ago. Its latest official title is the Publications Distribution Assistance Program. The program is used to subsidize postal rates for newspapers, magazines and books.

Under an agreement, the Department of Communications pays subsidies to the Canada Post Corporation so it can offer rates below the commercial rates to certain Canadian publications.

In other words, the losses involved in offering preferential postal rates to Canadian publications are compensated by the government.

These subsidies go back to the beginning of our postal services, when the government introduced preferential rates for newspapers and, a little later, for magazines. At the time, these publications were among the few means of communication and education, and the government wanted printed matter to be affordable for all Canadians. In fact, preferential rates existed before Confederation. Over the years, classes and rates have become increasingly complex.