

Private Members' Business

As a result, the decision was squashed by the Federal Court after careful consideration. The court based this decision entirely on section 13.5 of the Canada Post Corporation Act and that is why we are here today.

Obviously the only course of action that can be taken now is to introduce legislation that recognizes the employee's status of these hard-working and dedicated public servants. Make no mistake, these men and women are public servants. They do serve the public exactly in the same way as letter carriers do in urban centres. Without a doubt, the delivery of mail is still considered a public service in this country. It certainly makes no differentiation between unionized mail carriers and the rural mail carrier. Unfortunately there are some fundamental differences.

For example the contract awarded to a rural carrier averages \$16,000 a year. This figure is rarely negotiable. In many cases the rural carrier receives no extra payment for routes that have become amalgamated. Moreover, the rural mail carrier receives no pay increase for increased households, CODs, registered mail, parcels, special deliveries or electronic mail.

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Finally, increases that we all face in Canada today such as gas price increases, insurance premium increases, the hiring of labour to deal with extra workloads, have lowered the real income of rural carriers. Canada Post does not recognize that rural route carriers are essentially going through the same difficulties that all Canadians are going through. That is the cost of putting together a business and trying to run a business in a business-like manner.

To understand Canada Post's attitude about the problems faced by the rural carrier is to understand the corporation's fiscally responsible manner of operation that it seems to have come to. I know that the minister has spoken in the House about this on numerous occasions claiming that Canada Post is becoming fiscally responsible. It is becoming a money-maker and as a

result, as we pointed out on this side of the House, it has lost in many areas in terms of service to Canadians.

Canada Post, to be fair to the corporation and to outline for the Canadian public its position, takes the position that in order to "organize and manage its service requirements in a cost-effective and business-like manner, a formal tender evaluation process best ensures both fair competition among suppliers, and the best value for the corporation and its customers".

Thus, according to Canada Post, and I will quote again, "in every competition all technical, commercial and financial elements of the tenders are taken into consideration. The final decision on a tender is based on the ability to obtain maximum value for each purchasing dollar". In other words money, money and more money is the bottom line. The result is that we in rural Canada, who so depend on that mail lifeline and that service, are being adversely affected by this attitude of Canada Post.

Ideally the formal tender process takes more into account than the bottom line of a dollar. In the end the winning bid reflects expertise. Expertise combined with commercial and financial elements, I believe, should all be involved in the decision on who delivers the mail. However rural route carriers have found that within Canada Post Corporation the process can be less than ideal. The many letters that I have received from rural carriers across this country portray a public corporation that puts money before people and is ultimately exploitive.

I would like to take this opportunity now to read from some of these letters. I believe it is the best way really to reflect the injustices that are out there within our rural communities.

One woman from southwestern Ontario writes, and I quote:

I am still a rural route contractor for route 1 and have been so for nearly 16 years. I have just renewed my contract for another five years in May of 1981. However one year after receiving this contract, our postmaster retired and we have just become another one of the corporation's rural postal outlets.