

any consultation whatsoever with the communities involved and with no explanation.

As a result of the postal plan, a substantial number of people from rural Canada are living in perpetual fear that their post offices will be the next to get the axe. Unfortunately, some of my constituents have felt this axe. Indeed, the little Village of Bloomfield is such a community. Bloomfield's service was taken away and has been replaced to date with supermailboxes. Up until this time at least, the residents have had to travel some 30 kilometres round-trip to receive even the most basic of postal services.

I do not think any reasonable person could object to Canada Post's plan when a postal facility should be closed for economical reasons or other circumstances like a post office being taken away from Canada Post by the landlord. There should be no disagreement with this or major concerns on the part of the community when Canada Post agrees to provide alternate services such as counter services. Unfortunately, this has not always taken place.

Although Canada Post has often promised to provide better service, the fact is that many people in rural communities where post offices have been taken away feel as though they have been victimized by Canada Post. Better service has been promised but in fact this has not taken place. We feel that there is an obligation on the part of Canada Post to ensure that before the promised new services are implemented, the opportunities and agencies for implementing the services should indeed exist.

We find that Canada Post often refers to meaningful consultation, and this has taken on two meanings. Canada Post apparently believes that meaningful consultation is something that takes place when Canada Post officials explain to the residents of a community what services will be taken away from them. The residents believe that meaningful consultation means that they will have an opportunity to say no to the removal of those services. Clearly, meaningful consultation has not been defined, and that is something that Canada Post should undertake to do.

We feel that better service should be the criteria when postal facilities are taken away. When I say we, I mean Members from rural Canada. Many of us believe that the availability of retail services should be ensured when Canada Post takes existing services away. If alternate services cannot be assured, then indeed plans should be shelved and postponed until alternate services are indeed in place.

● (1815)

In summation, I would suggest that the Crown corporation and all rural Members of this House should ensure that rural Canada is treated fairly in all aspects and not left behind in

our changing society. I would encourage Canada Post to undertake that very seriously.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Lise Bourgault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to take this opportunity to underline the many representations the Hon. Member for Fundy—Royal (Mr. Corbett) has made to the Canada Post Corporation.

My colleague referred to the service alternatives. Mr. Speaker, the Canada Post Corporation has assured all Canadians, and the Minister responsible for Canada Post can guarantee that this will continue to be the case, that the postal service is a guaranteed service and that every Canadian must be able to receive and post his mail.

I should remind the Hon. Member that we have made a commitment and that there can be no change in service before there has been consultation with the community, the citizens involved and the Members of Parliament.

Naturally, we are all somewhat reluctant to accept changes. However, the Canadian society is changing, and when we analyse what is going on in the Canada Post Corporation, we find that the way of life of many people has changed and the postal service no longer meets their needs.

When a post office must close, it is because the person who provides the service has informed Canada Post that he or she is resigning, retiring or wants to get out of the business.

This is what happened in Bloomfield Station, Mr. Speaker. There was an announcement that Canada Post was planning to look at alternative methods to serve the 50 families who had been deprived of the postal service for some time. Attempts have unfortunately been unsuccessful because, I think, quite a tight campaign led by the union prevented that type of service from being offered. Superboxes were installed. Naturally, they provide ideal service, twenty four hours a day. You can go and pick up or send your mail any time it pleases you.

Of course, not long ago, as my colleague is no doubt aware, the Corporation concluded an agreement with Bloomfield Varieties store to install a retail sales counter. I point out that there is a significant improvement of the service in Bloomfield Station.

I want my colleague to know that according to what I have been told there are only 9.1 kilometres between Bloomfield Station and Norton and 12 kilometres between Bloomfield and Hampton. I was surprised to hear him say the distance was about 30 kilometres. I would like him to tell me if it is so.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure all Hon. Members that the Minister responsible for Canada Post Corporation is doing everything he can to have acceptable and profitable postal services maintained for all Canadians.