

*Post Office*

difficulties in the business world. We are striving very eagerly and aggressively, in co-operation with the business concerns using the post office to a large extent, to find solutions designed to improve that service.

● (1440)

Assuredly it is not possible to bring about overnight substantial changes to the whole postal organization, which comprises more than 50,000 employees in Canada and which spreads out in all parts and all villages of the country.

Naturally it is more difficult still to bring about changes while an adequate level of service has to be maintained day in and day out. I have admitted quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that there have been problems; problems still exist, but I must add that I am extremely proud of the way both the administration and the employees of the department have responded to the challenge and are working eagerly to solve those problems.

I would like to mention briefly what is probably the most important part of our program to improve the postal service, namely the mechanization of our operations and the implementation of the postal code.

I think that all Canadians will agree that the introduction of the postal code was probably one of the most important decisions ever taken by the Post Office Department. I am convinced that this code will do much to improve mail service. In fact, the code has already been put into service in many regions of Canada. It is already being used in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario and most of Quebec. It will be introduced in metropolitan Montreal in September, in the Atlantic provinces in early October and finally, in British Columbia towards the end of the year so that by the end of the year, all Canada will have been coded. Several persons have asked us why we need a postal code. I think that the code is one of the first steps, probably the most important, towards the implementation of our automation program.

The new code is in a way a new language that will be read by machines, which will help improve and speed up the handling of mail.

The volume of mail has increased so much during the last few years that it is now almost impossible to sort it by hand. Canada being one of the last industrialised countries to resort to the postal code system, we should be in a position to have an excellent code.

We will of course profit by the experience of other countries—such as Germany, the United States, Japan—which already use this code and we will be able to improve it as well as the system that these countries have implemented, so that our code will enable us to meet not only our present demands but our needs until the end of the century.

When we started the implementation of this postal code, we tried to get the opinion of hundreds of Canadian senders, the most important users of the postal service, in order to ensure that the code would not go against the smooth running of business in Canada. Thus, most customers' accounts are logically distributed according to the geographical situation. Therefore, we took care to introduce these data in our code.

[Mr. Ouellet.]

We also tried to keep the position of figures and letters in order to facilitate computer processing and checking of mailing lists. When we developed our code, we felt that it should meet our long term needs.

By a combination of these elements, we can obtain over 10 million codes. This is a hundred times more than the 100,000 possibilities offered by the United States ZIP Code. In this regard, Canadians are ahead of Americans since our system is more flexible than theirs.

And, precisely, our objective in establishing the Canadian code was to facilitate mechanical sorting for the smallest sections of residential streets, large mail boxes, residential buildings, commercial enterprises and government departments.

Therefore, we largely provided for growth in order to be able to keep pace with the unparalleled expansion of cities and the exodus of people from the country to the cities.

Mr. Speaker, I can assert that our mechanization program is now entering its stage of intensive realization. Last year, we installed mechanical sorting equipment in Ottawa; we will now proceed to the installation of an identical system in 14 other important post offices in Canada, in such a way that we will be able to provide all the large cities of this country with modern facilities to accelerate substantially mail sorting, and that with one precise goal in mind, namely to improve the quality of the postal service.

The motion before us states that the postal service has experienced a drastic deterioration, but the author forgets that the Post Office Department is taking extremely important steps to improve the quality of the postal service.

Mr. Speaker, we must not forget that this program of coding, modifying, up-dating and mechanizing involves even more sizeable investments to build new establishments for handling mail. The new techniques and equipment used for handling, transporting and sorting mail require spacious and modern premises. The new centres we will build will meet these criteria. It is on these premises that the mail will be handled in bulk as well as the parcel posts addressed to metropolitan areas or mailed from these, and that the mail will be sorted out by the latest techniques and that we will insure quick delivery to our clients.

Large postal centres are to post offices what factories are to a retail store. Toronto and Montreal already have what is commonly known as a large postal centre. In Mississauga, we are now building what may be the largest centralized mail processing centre.

Another centre is also under construction on Eastern Avenue in Toronto. These two centres will be in operation by the middle of 1974 and, with the new centre in Scarborough, they will be able to process all the domestic mail from and to Toronto.

We also intend to build similar centres in Montreal. And I may mention that another large centre of this type is under construction in Calgary where we intend to provide western Canada with a service comparable to what is provided in Toronto and Montreal.