

*Postal Services Continuation Act, 1987*

Canada Post is trying to provide to the people of Canada. Because my immediate knowledge tends to be focused on my riding, I will deal with riding issues.

We have this new beast in Thunder Bay; it is not called a franchise outlet; it is not called a sub post office. In fact, we are not sure if it has a technical name, but it is commonly referred to as a parcel outlet. This is a place where one has to go in order to get a parcel or registered letter that was unable to be delivered to one's door. In the old days, the courier service, a contractor employed by Canada Post, would drive up to one's door, usually at speeds which were unsafe for neighbourhood children, but that is a different issue, and finding no one home—let us remember that the majority of families have two wage earners these days—the parcel or registered letter would go back to the station.

At the station a card would be prepared, matched with the parcel or registered letter, and shifted over to the letter carrier section for delivery the next day to the recipient's home so that when the recipient arrived home from work there would be a card in the mailbox saying that a parcel or registered letter could be picked up at Postal Station F or P, or whatever the letter of the branch of Canada Post.

The next day, unless the individual was on a shift that gets him or her home early, more than likely it would be picked up on the third day, but no later. Because of this new efficiency it takes three or four days to claim a parcel or registered letter from what is called a corner store, which is usually in the middle of a block, or a confectionery store that has place for two cars to park. These parcels or registered letters are stored in the livingroom of the owner. Usually these are confectionery stores that are at least an hour away from, for instance, a senior citizen who used to be able to walk to the post office. Now these people have to walk to the bus stop, which is about the same distance from the senior citizens' apartment building as the post office, take a 20 minute bus ride to the other end of the old City of Fort William, go to the confectionery store and hopefully get their parcels. There is no guarantee they will be there because every time you add another step to a process there is another chance of human error. These errors have already occurred. Then they go back and wait for the bus for anywhere from 10 minutes to 20 minutes, and sometimes for up to 40 minutes, and then back for another 20 minute bus ride. So this new, improved efficiency for those seniors takes them at least another hour to get a parcel that they used to be able to walk to the post office to get as part of their daily routine.

● (1130)

I use the seniors as an example because, as we know—and all of us have received calls, not during this particular labour-management dispute but in others—seniors rely on the mail. They rely on parcels. We like to call them care packages from the kids, or from a sister or brother. They tend to use the mails more than do a great many of us. So they have a situation in which they are being forced to go well out of their way to

obtain a service that was once available to them just around the corner.

In the other half of the City of Fort William they do not have to go that far. In fact, the parcel outlet is in a drugstore, which is in a small mall about 1,500 feet from the main post office. But it is in an area in which it is difficult to park. It is a busy shopping mall. So it is more difficult for people to gain access. What about that main post office? What is happening there? Well, as part of what I see as the over-all plan of Canada Post, management appears to be doing its best to anger the customers, to frustrate the customers, to make them angry at the staff.

Do you know what they do, Mr. Speaker? At the busiest time of the day they assign most of the staff to non-wicket duties. We have had situations in which there has been only one clerk on a counter that has room for six or eight on duty, and the line up is out the door. It is no wonder that the Government says people want this new improved service. Of course they want it, they are being turned off and turned away from the traditional outlets.

CUPW has not said that they do not want services provided in areas that do not have them. They would be more than happy to have them staffed by full-time Canada Post employees, not a drugstore clerk who will do the post office duties when they are not selling cosmetics or whatever. That is the other thing that we have seen happening.

Let me turn to the community of Atikokan at the other end of my riding. It has a central post office. It has no home delivery. Nor, quite frankly, is home delivery wanted in that community because, as my colleagues have said before me, in these smaller communities those post offices are a communications point. They play a focal point in the community. Politicians know that if they want to greet the whole town they show up at ten o'clock in the morning, or at eleven o'clock, and pretty well everybody comes to the post office to pick up their mail.

What does Canada Post want to do? It wants to develop one of these postal outlets somewhere else in that small community of 4,500 people. So there would be the frustrating situation of being sent, or going down, to the post office with a parcel and being told to go across town to pick it up instead of using the logical one-stop shopping service that is currently available.

They are talking about closing rural post offices on Saturdays. It is being said that there is not enough business on Saturdays. What does that do to the people of northwestern Ontario whose livelihood comes from the harvesting of trees and the digging of ore and have to live out of town Monday through Friday and only come into town on weekends? What does that do to them? It disenfranchises them.

The Post Office should be trying to develop a postal system that will attract new volumes of mail, that will ensure that the revenue is there to pay for the services that the people of Canada want, without having to charge an arm or a leg for a