

Oral Questions

POSSIBLE REDIRECTION OF LAPSED FUNDS

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): My supplementary question is directed to the same Minister. When the Minister does report back, would he clearly indicate the process that he has in mind to redirect the lapsed funds for the Canadian Jobs Strategy in this fiscal year to those regions of Canada where the moneys can still be invested in a positive and proper way?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, what I can now say is that the funds allocated under the Canadian Jobs Strategy have been used in such a way that over 600,000 jobs have been created in Canada. I believe that these funds have been used in accordance with our national economic policies. It would be a mistake to believe that jobs in Canada are created exclusively under the Jobs Strategy.

Once more, I am convinced that the Hon. Member appreciates the results we have obtained under the Canadian Jobs Strategy.

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[English]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

FUTURE OF RURAL POST OFFICES

Mr. Ross Belsher (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for Canada Post. Canadians across our country are gravely concerned about the changes that are possibly happening in rural Canada with the Post Office. At a meeting of Rural Dignity in Agassiz, British Columbia, which was attended by some 600 people, it was reported that in the last two weeks new notices of closures had gone out in eastern Canada.

Will the Minister assure rural Canada that Canada Post has in fact been stopped, and will start to consult with rural Canada as to changes it is proposing for the post offices?

[Translation]

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I think I answered that question last week. You will recall that the House created a committee to examine Canada Post's corporate plan, and the committee made several recommendations.

In fact, recommendations 2, 3 and 4 were about closing rural post offices. Last week I gave the House the assurance that there would be no plan for closing rural post offices until the Corporation had provided the necessary information, as recommended by the committee.

● (1450)

[English]

OPERATION OF RURAL OFFICES ON FRANCHISE BASIS

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post is offering a free postcard for letter writing week from February 9 to February 14, and the slogan is: "Write a little love". Perhaps that is why the Minister in charge of Canada Post announced that there will be no closing of rural post offices. He is hoping to get a lot of those postcards of love. How does the Minister explain that Canada Post claims that over 3,000 post offices in rural Canada will close and the service will be passed over to local businessmen to operate on a franchise basis? If that is the case, for this Minister there will be no letters of love. It is one big shove.

[Translation]

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the Hon. Member I will again read committee recommendation No. 3. It says that before closing any post offices, the Canada Post Corporation should develop more specific guidelines to reflect regional differences and specific needs.

Our answer to that, Mr. Speaker, was that we agreed with this recommendation and with the point raised by the committee. We intend to ensure that Canada Post will act on the committee's recommendations, and last week I gave the House the assurance that we would personally see to it that this would be done.

[English]

WISHES OF RURAL CITIZENS

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, the Minister is saying that if rural Canadians have the program explained to them, they will agree with the closure of the post offices. Does the Minister expect that rural Canadians will agree with the closure of their post offices and having them replaced by part-time businessmen who will operate them on a franchise basis instead of having full-time postmasters and postmistresses? What if they do not agree to having the post offices closed? Will the Government shove it down their throats anyway?

[Translation]

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Hon. Member should look at the details of the corporate plan. Last week, I reassured the House with respect to Canada Post's new policy, and today I can give the Hon. Member the assurance that there will be no closures or service changes at the Canada Post Corporation and its rural post offices until the recommendations proposed by the committee are acted upon. Mr. Speaker, the recommendation referred to a period of consultation with the Canadian people on the post offices that might be affected. The Hon. Member referred to closures, but we, Mr. Speaker, call this a service change.