

*Routine Proceedings*

I go back not too long ago when even cabinet ministers were fighting to save post offices in rural Canada. In early April 1989 the minister of health was calling for the maintenance of a post office in his own constituency, a post office which I believe has not had the support of this government.

Countless retailers have been telling us about the problems that they have had. One franchise owner in Wilno, Ontario had to go to the community asking for donations because the funds that were provided for the sale of stamps from his post office by Canada Post were not enough to meet the operating needs of his store.

Canada Post must remain a Crown corporation and not be privatized as suggested this week by the second report of the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs. There is no justification for a privatized post office which would never ensure that service to rural Canada is met adequately. The Crown corporation exists to meet certain communication needs of Canadians and only a Crown corporation accountable to Canadians through Parliament will meet those needs.

Rural Canada has been fighting the Canada Post conversion program from day one and I know that they will continue to fight the corporation and the government, if it continues to close rural post offices. To lose a post office in rural Canada so that the government can earn a profit is scandalous and any process which moves us further in that direction must be opposed.

Canadians, rural and urban, depend on their post office and this government has a responsibility to see to it that this service is provided in an affordable and dependable manner for Canadians from coast to coast.

When Parliament created the Crown corporation in 1981, MPs expected it to grow with the needs of Canadians. Instead, Canada Post has grown away from the service needs of Canadians, particularly rural Canadians, and because it is virtually unaccountable for its actions nothing has been done to correct the damage which has resulted.

Privatizing the post office will not correct any problems that we see in the present day delivery of post office service. Only an accountable public corporation with a renewed mandate for service will correct those problems.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Under Standing Order 43, the hon. member does have 10 minutes for questions and comments. I will now recognize the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley on questions or comments.

**Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the comments made by my colleague on the report on Canada Post. I know that he has done a great deal of work in this House, in committee, and in his own riding on how important Canada Post is, especially its rural outlets, to many of us who represent those parts of this country that this government is ignoring.

I have two questions that I would like to ask the member. The first has to do with what direction do we offer the people in rural communities who are concerned about the potential closing of post offices? What advice can he offer to these communities and groups in terms of keeping the pressure on to ensure that whether it is privatized, as members opposite seem to want, or if it stays as a public Crown corporation, we continue to improve the service that we get?

My second question has to do with commitments from Canada Post. Like many members in this House—I am not sure that Conservative members are concerned about post offices in their ridings—we write to the president of Canada Post and express our concerns. We want to keep monitoring the activities of Canada Post in our ridings. I am wondering what experiences he has had with commitments that the post office has given to members and communities about maintaining post offices, keeping them open, or have we had examples across the country where perhaps a little more rigorous watching of Canada Post is needed to ensure that our communities are served well?

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley for his question.

I know from our work in caucus that the hon. member who asked the question is very concerned about post offices in his community and has provided me with many opportunities to discuss postal matters with people in his riding and has made many representations to me and to government on this very issue.