

Questions

CLOSING OF RURAL POST OFFICES

Question No. 1,661—**Mr. Southam:**

1. Is it the government's intention, for economic reasons, to phase out or close 3,500 post offices in rural areas of Canada?

2. Has a study been made to analyze the economic hardship on the people and small businesses concerned if such a plan is carried out?

3. What alternative employment or compensations would be provided for the postmasters so affected in any such move on the government's part?

Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Minister of Communications): In so far as the Post Office Department is concerned: 1. Under a program inaugurated in February 1967, 553 Post Offices have been closed, 217 will be closed shortly, 404 are being retained and 2,851 have yet to be examined to determine whether they should be closed because of their limited usefulness. With improved population mobility, limited shopping facilities in the smaller communities, the movement of people from rural areas to large urban centres and a widespread centralized school system, it became apparent that a re-examination of the usefulness of these small Post Offices was imperative. The situation with respect to each individual Post Office is examined separately.

2. Consideration is given to the effect of the closing on individuals and on the community. Basically, the policy is that if equivalent service can be provided—and often improved service—through rural mail delivery to individual or group mail boxes, a post office that has outlived its useful purpose will be closed. If rural mail delivery is not practicable, service should be available through an adjacent post office. Failing an adequate alternative service, the post office in question will be kept in operation.

3. No alternative employment is offered by the Government but those postmasters under superannuation would receive benefits in accordance with the Public Service Superannuation Act.

P.E.I. CAUSEWAY—FEDERAL CONTRIBUTION

Question No. 1,760—**Mr. Mather:**

What was the estimated federal contribution to the projected Prince Edward Island Causeway on a per capita basis re the people of Prince Edward Island?

[Mr. Groos.]

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of Transport): On an estimated capital cost of \$180 million \$1,627 per capita.

LACHUTE, QUE., INDIAN RELOCATION

Question No. 1,809—**Mr. Simpson:**

1. Did the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development undertake a program of relocation and retraining for Indian students from the James Bay region in Lachute, Quebec?

2. When did the program begin?

3. How many students enrolled at the beginning?

4. How many students are now enrolled?

5. If any students left, who were they, and what were the reasons given?

6. What screening procedure was followed in selecting the students?

7. What special steps were taken in Lachute (a) with local citizen groups to provide accommodation or hospitality (b) with the manpower training courses to modify courses of instruction?

8. Was this a pilot project?

9. If so, will there be a full report prepared and released to the public?

10. Is it the intention of the government to bring more Indian students to this training centre at Lachute?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): 1. In November 1968, a departmental counsellor made a survey of Indian people in the James Bay area who were interested in upgrading. This information was relayed to the Department of Manpower. We have been informed by the Department of Manpower that several English speaking upgrading classes at the Grade 8 to 10 level at Lachute were organized. Since this was the nearest location where English speaking courses were available in the province of Quebec in relation to the James Bay area, the Department of Manpower approved admission for those Indian people from the James Bay area who met entrance requirements.

2. The Indian students arrived at Lachute on Friday, January 24 and commenced training on Monday, January 27. They were several days late due to weather conditions.

3. Fourteen students enrolled at the beginning.

4. Two students were enrolled as of March 31, 1969.