

*Supply*

from political interference in which Treasury Board Ministers would weigh the political costs versus taking the responsible action *vis-à-vis* management. There would not be as much opportunity for political interference by Members who wanted to assure their re-election or damage the opposition Party by using the postal service to do so.

The Crown corporation was created in June, 1985. A few years after its creation, one of my predecessors, as Minister responsible for Canada Post, announced the Marchment Committee to study the mandate and productivity of Canada Post Corporation, to see how the system was working after four years of operation as a Crown corporation, and to determine what changes would need to be implemented to ensure that the system would be there in the 20th century.

Members of that committee were drawn from the private sector. The committee travelled across the country and consulted extensively with all interested groups, especially postal users. Following the hearings, the Marchment committee made 43 recommendations to the Minister with respect to Canada's postal service. The Government passed these along to the board of directors of Canada Post Corporation. The recommendations of the Marchment committee were the basis of a five-year plan tabled in the House in November.

The Government is not running Canada Post by ignoring it, or by directing the corporation to act in the Government's political interest. The Crown corporation is expected to manage its operations in the same way that we expect the management of Air Canada to manage its responsibilities, the management of CNR and Petro-Canada or any other Crown corporation to manage their operations. We expect the corporation to manage its operations properly, in the interests of the shareholder and not for the political benefit of the politicians who happen to be responsible at any particular time. That is the only responsible mandate that a government could or should give to a postal service.

I want to deal with some of the recommendations of the Marchment committee, and compare them with the direction Canada Post has taken. The first recommendation of the 43 made by Marchment was that the primary goal of the corporation should be the provision of a consistently reliable service within acceptable standards for first and second-class mail. We agree absolutely. The major thrust of the entire 1986-87 corporate plan is more reliable service, including more reliable service to more points of call. Every year some 130,000 new addresses are created in Canada as people move into new homes and open new businesses. Canada Post moves promptly to serve all these addresses in ways that are both convenient to the customer and efficient in terms of costs. Canada Post is moving to end long line-ups at general delivery counters where people pick up their mail, and to get rid of the green boxes that people say they do not like.

Canada Post will make it easier to buy stamps and other postal products, by using the expertise of the private sector to sell stamps and other postal services in places where postal customers shop and at times that are convenient to postal

customers. In fact, over the next 10 years the number of places where people can buy stamps and other postal products will increase by 50 per cent, bringing the total number of locations to approximately 18,000. I was surprised that the Leader of the Opposition said this was a retrograde step which will mean less service. There will be a 50 per cent increase, with 6,000 new postal outlets at places where people shop, whether they live in the country, the city or the suburbs. Those who go to the drugstore, to the supermarket or to the shopping centre will be able to buy stamps at retail outlets that are open until nine o'clock or ten o'clock at night, as are other shops. Presently, stamps being sold through Post Office operations alone are only available between nine o'clock and five o'clock, when customers are also working. Therefore, this improved service can only be an improvement. This has to be nothing but an improvement. Furthermore, it will in fact improve the service and, indeed, be more beneficial financially to the corporation and to the people of Canada.

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The second recommendation of the Marchment Committee was that an acceptable level of service be defined as two days maximum for local mail and three days maximum for mail within the same province and four days maximum from coast to coast. The second page of the corporate plan of Canada Post Corporation, which was tabled in the House in November, reads:

Canada Post will adopt minimum standards for the delivery of properly prepared first class lettermail, all to be measured from after the date of mailing: of two days within the same city, three days between major centres within a province; and no more than four days between major centres from province to province.

That is a realistic commitment to service, service which is being met constantly. That service has improved and is consistent and reliable is evidenced by the fact that Canada Post now handles a greater volume of mail than it ever did before. Customer confidence in Canada Post has increased and the volumes are there to prove it.

The Marchment Committee also recommended that Canada Post develop a more reliable system for measuring on-time delivery performance from mail box to recipient and that this performance measurement be done by independent external researchers. Canada Post is in the final stages of negotiating a contract with Clarkson Gordon, a respected independent auditing company, which will audit its performance on a quarterly basis and report that information to the public. The Opposition, or any other critics will then not be able to make the claim: "The service is going to pieces", because the evidence will be there by independent auditors. That will remove a political arrow from the quiver of the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition, so he should bear that in mind as he writes his notes for the next election campaign. We will have independent auditors to challenge any assertions of poor service he might make.

Those are the plans of Canada Post for consistent, reliable service which postal customers told the Marchment Committee