

CANADA POST CORPORATION—CLOSURE OF ST. LAWRENCE
SEAWAY POST OFFICE

Mr. Joe Reid (St. Catharines): Mr. Speaker, in response to a question put on April 15 last questioning the justification in the closing of the only marine post office servicing those seamen using the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Minister responsible pointed out that it was done to save money and that it, the Post Office, was looking for a convenient alternative.

There is no convenient alternative. Will the company offices of those shipping lines of ships working on haphazard schedules handle the mail? Will the company official or clerk open his doors or travel to the canal as that deckhand waits for word from his wife and family? Is this family communication to be reduced to emergency electronic ship to shore communications only? Mail service is not anything to write home about now, Mr. Speaker, but does Canada Post consider a postal box at a tourist oriented pop-shop with its short hours, short weeks and even shorter season good enough for some 10,000 persons formerly served by the marine post office?

The Lock 5 site was chosen in the first place because it was the most convenient location along the Seaway. It is on the Welland Canal section of that waterway where it is said that "ships do climb the mountain". It is where ships going either up or down the Seaway go through three levels of flight locks, giving the seaman some three-quarters of an hour to transact business or to make personal contact with spouse and family and time as well to pick up the mail, address a response and still get back on the ship. It is the most convenient location on the Seaway from which those plying the Seaway waters have been served for the past 20 years and from the Welland Canal administration office before that.

• (1810)

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the closing of that Post Office will effect a savings. The amount is questionable, but if we can follow the logic of cutting service to save expense, I wonder where that logic would take us. Would the Post Office look at a remote village and say that delivery of mail will be stopped because it cannot be justified? Would the Post Office, for any reason stop mail delivery to a community of 10,000 persons without warning, without dialogue, and without justification?

If the Minister says that it is unfair to talk in terms of 10,000 persons, I will remind him that there are 5,000 seamen plying those lakes. Most of them have spouses and most of them have more than one business contact. It is the service to these people that is being cut off. I have had communications from mayors along the Welland Canal division, union leaders, businessmen and women, and seamen urging the restoration of postal service to this community of users.

I ask those responsible for the administration of the Post Office to not look for the easy way out by cutting service. They should look at the multibillion dollar operation which continues to operate at a loss across the land. I am sympathetic to

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the desire of the Government that we must save money, but to save it at the expense of service is an unfair and unjustifiable course of action. Forty-eight thousand dollars is a mere pittance compared to the amount spent by the Post Office. That amount could be found by finding a cost-efficient method of operating that coast-to-coast facility. Restore the service, Mr. Minister, and improve the efficiency of the operation.

Mr. Bill Domm (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Canada Post): Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member for St. Catharines (Mr. Reid) mentioned, in the past sailors had to pick up their mail at the Thorold Marine Sub Post Office located at Lock 5 along the Welland Canal. Canada Post has decided to give these sailors a more convenient and improved service. Canada Post's decision to close the Thorold Marine Sub Post Office was taken following consultations with representatives of shipping companies using the Canal facilities. These companies have long encouraged their employees, that is crew members aboard their ships, to have their mail addressed in care of their own particular companies.

Prior to the decision to close the Thorold Marine Sub Post Office, shipping company agents were already handling 80 per cent of the mail addressed to crew members on various ships. As early as last fall, ship owners indicated to Canada Post their willingness to utilize their internal mail distribution system and have their agents deliver not just 80 per cent, but 100 per cent of the mail addressed to employees working aboard these ships.

Shipping company agents, working in shifts, greet their ships at various points on a 24-hour basis. Shipping companies' own agents would know on which of their own ships their own employees are serving and thus be able to ensure that the mail reaches the crew member. It was after discussions with the various shipping companies that Canada Post determined it could provide a more convenient and improved service to these sailors by having their mail routed through the shipping companies' agents. These agents are located in most ports across the country. They provide these sailors with supplies and will now provide them with their mail. These sailors will now receive their mail at various points along their route through their companies' shipping agents. This will result in improved service for the sailors and save Canada Post \$48,000 in the process, which will help the corporation cut its costs and help it to achieve its mandate set by Parliament to attain financial sufficiency.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 3(1).

The House adjourned at 6:16 p.m.