

We believe that the success of the conversion program in both urban and rural Canada rests with the proper training of employees and a dedication to ensuring the security and confidentiality of the mail. The Committee therefore recommends that:

Canada Post provide adequate training to private-sector workers in the proper provision of postal products and information as well as in the security procedures which must be implemented.

Canada Post ensure that standardized procedures are used by franchise-holders to safeguard the security and confidentiality of the mail.

For many rural residents, it is the quality, and not quantity of service which is the prime concern. Many opponents of the franchising program do not believe that the businessperson who agrees to sign an RPO contract will give the mail the priority it deserves and are convinced that customer service will decline as a result. It is imperative that potential franchise-holders understand that the provision of good postal service is an important corporate objective. We urge Canada Post through its quarterly monitoring of RPOs to ensure that this objective is met.

B. Expansion of Retail Postal Outlets

Apart from the Rural Conversion Program, the Corporation is also undertaking a program designed to improve customer access to postal services in rural Canada and provide extended hours. RPOs provide a full range of postal products and services including the sales of stamps, money orders, postage meter settings, Special Letter Sales and Priority Courier. Rural customers will also be able to pick up their "call for" items when the retail outlets are open. Through the expansion of the retail network, Canada Post hopes to increase its sales revenue; this is crucial at a time when the Corporation faces growing competition.

Canada Post actively seeks out candidates for RPOs and subjects all applicants to a ranking test which takes into account the following criteria: hours of service, location, availability of parking, access for the disabled, ability to provide security of the mail, type and physical appearance of the business, ability to satisfy credit and security checks, and bilingual capacity, if required.

The firms selected are remunerated through discounts on the purchase of postal products such as stamps as well as by payment of a fixed fee for performing certain services such as sorting for lockboxes, cancellation, sale of money orders, and meter settings. The Corporation also leases basic equipment at a nominal charge to the RPO operator. This equipment is returned to the Corporation at the end of the contract.