

TO: CANADA POST CORPORATION STRATEGIC REVIEW**SUBMITTED BY: RURAL DIGNITY OF CANADA
20, CH. DES COTEAUX
BARACHOIS, QUEBEC G0C 1A0****2 September 2008**

Rural Dignity of Canada is a citizens' group chartered nationally in 1987 to work with and on behalf of the hundreds of rural municipalities, towns, hamlets and villages across this country. The group's particular focus has been to save and improve the infrastructures of communications, transportation, health care, education and economic development essential to the survival and renewal of rural Canada. Over the past twenty years our volunteer networks have advocated to maintain and expand public postal service, to save and improve passenger and freight rail lines, to stress the importance of giving voice to our rural realities through CBC / Radio Canada radio and television programming, to promote the strengthening of public health care in our small hospitals and community health clinics, to keep rural schools open and to ensure banks and credit unions maintain their commitments to service in rural areas.

From 1987 to 1994 Rural Dignity worked tirelessly and effectively to stop the privatization and closure of Canada's 5,221 rural post offices. Our efforts were key to winning a federal government moratorium on the closures and privatizations in 1994. As we explained in our brief to the Radwanski Postal Services Review Committee, rural Canada does not have to hypothesize as to the effects of privatization of our services: we have seen it and lived it with the loss of almost half our former public service post offices. We have documented in that submission and elsewhere in previous briefs to government ministries the loss of quality service, the sometimes erratic application of pricing policies and the frequent disappearance of postal service altogether as a result of public post office privatization and closures.

It was with dismay that Rural Dignity learned Canada Post and the federal government are again headed down a wrong-headed policy road, this time with potentially even more disastrous short and long-term consequences for Canadians.

We refer to the government's consideration of deregulating letter mail service.

We request the review committee members to think hard and honestly about this: Do you genuinely believe letter mail service can be handled more professionally, confidentially and affordably with private companies? There is no data from the international examples to date to support this. Do you believe Canada Post can survive and thrive as the public service it is meant to be by legislated mandate, if the central part of its service is gutted?

Do you truly believe a full and affordable public postal service can be maintained for all Canadians, regardless of where we live (as per the 1981 Canada Post Act) if a critical part of the system is deregulated?

Do you not admit to yourselves and the Canadians you serve that to recommend such an erroneous step would be but the beginning of losing entirely our public postal service?

Under the present system, Canadians enjoy approximately the same service and the same pricing structure throughout the country. What do you propose to replace this system? Should the letter mail monopoly be removed, you know that no private company will push to take over the non-lucrative delivery of letters between Barachois, QC and Badger's Quay, Nfld., between the Ojibway community of Wikwemikong, On. and Sandy Lake, Sk.

You surely understand our point; how would a universal, affordable mail service be guaranteed? We know from UPS's half-hearted and short-lived incursions into rural Quebec some fifteen years ago that "non-lucrative" regions are of no interest to private companies. What then? Will people living in rural and remote areas be forced to pay a premium for the privilege of doing postal business there? Do you view us as second-class Canadians, destined to receive a second-class postal service characterized by falling service and increasing prices?

Examples of the colossal failure of postal deregulation, particularly with regard to rural areas, abound internationally. Being without the research staff at the disposal of your review process, I will not attempt here to reiterate statistics that your people can compile for you. The evidence is overwhelming.

In addition to postal service, we request you also to review and consider in your deliberations the deregulation of other relevant sectors, for example, telecommunications and airlines. The pattern is distressingly familiar: open to competition, thereby gutting public services which Canadians have for generations paid for, built up, supported and benefited from; let the "cream" of the operations, that is, the lucrative elements be devoured by private, multinational companies with no interest in providing a public service to citizens; peg the cost of the remaining, "difficult to serve" areas to a region-specific price structure, and / or eliminate service to the hard to serve in the short or long-term.

During the peak of Rural Dignity's advocacy work we succeeded, in coalition with other rural groups, in having the federal government create the Rural Secretariat whose mandate was to examine all government policies and programs through a "rural lens" to analyze the impacts on rural communities and rural community development. It seems clear that no one has applied a "rural lens" to this deregulation proposal which would constitute an abandonment of the universal, affordable service provisions as outlined in the Canada Post Act.

Rural Dignity acknowledges that, of course, we all live in a changing world. E-mail has proliferated; personal computers continue to grow in use. But none of these technological and social changes have obviated the necessity and importance of letter mail. This is certainly true for our rural communities.

We have repeatedly analyzed the current and continuing essential role of a universal, reliable and affordable public postal service from the perspective of economic community development, of municipalities, of job loss (particularly for women), of Canada's senior population and of our growing small, "niche" and mail-order business sectors. In fact, the documents we produced over the past 20 years constitute over 60 standard-size file boxes which because of their significant value of content have been transferred this past year to the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Postal Museum.

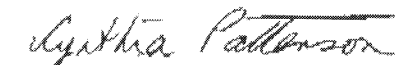
While we welcome this opportunity to submit a brief to the Canada Post Corporation Strategic Review, we are deeply distressed that such a process has not been well-publicized and public hearings held in every part of this country.

In closing, we call upon Canada Post Corporation Strategic Review to:

1. Make no recommendations until a full and open public process of hearings is held nation-wide;
2. Maintain and improve the public postal service Canadians have paid for and deserve;
3. Maintain the monopoly on letter mail;
4. Respect the Canada Post Act's commitment to affordable service regardless of where in Canada its citizens live;
5. Apply a "rural lens" to any proposed policy changes.

We at Rural Dignity would be prepared and pleased to appear in person to engage in dialogue with those at Canada Post involved in the Review Process.

Cynthia Patterson



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Rural Dignity of Canada

2 September 2008

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