

**Speaking Notes for Director, Rural and Cooperatives Secretariats
Christine Burton to the Canada Post Corporation Strategic Review
Advisory Panel**

July 15, 2008

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon,

On behalf of the Rural and Cooperatives Secretariats at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, I would like to thank you for your invitation to appear before the Advisory Panel leading Canada Post's Strategic Review.

My name is Christine Burton and I am the Director of Rural Policy and Strategic Development in the Rural Secretariat.

In terms of organization, I will present an overview of the issues faced by rural Canada within a competitive global marketplace, respond to the key issues identified by the Panel and provide you with recommendations with regard to rural communities.

The Rural Secretariat, located in Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, is the central point for rural policy issues within the Government of Canada. Its mandate is to provide analysis and advice on issues affecting rural and remote regions; to facilitate the creation of partnerships around rural issues and priorities; and, to promote dialogue between rural stakeholders and the federal government, and between the federal, provincial and territorial governments.

The Cooperatives Secretariat is the federal lead on supporting Co-op development that contributes to economic growth and social development of Canada.

RURAL CANADA AND THE COMPETITIVENESS AGENDA

The Government of Canada's long term economic plan *Advantage Canada*, is all about creating the right conditions for Canada to be competitive and to improve the country's economic prosperity.

Rural Canada has a role to play in a strengthened economic union but it is currently under a lot of pressure to adapt to the new global economy.

Rural Canada, especially resource-based communities, are dealing with significant adaptation issues as local industries are restructuring in response to international competitive realities. Communities dealing with population loss, diminished public services, and reduced tax bases find it a struggle to be competitive.

They may not have the capacity to maintain the support infrastructure, services and institutions required, and may lack the critical mass of human creative capacity and financial capital that would allow them to innovate and move forward on to new opportunities.

At the same time, many such communities possess under-utilized strengths and assets (natural, physical, social, cultural, environmental and human) that could be mobilized to more effectively meet adjustment challenges, strengthen adaptation, expand local economic bases, and increase their support to sectoral growth, innovation and competitiveness. 2