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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, October 18, 2016**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski**



## Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

Tuesday, October 18, 2016

• (1300)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC)):** Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, we'll begin now.

To the panellists, thank you all for being here, and taking time out of your busy schedules. I think you understand the process we're going to follow here. I had an opportunity to speak briefly with you just a few moments ago.

We're going to ask all of you to give an opening statement of five minutes or less. Some of your written comments that I see look like they might be a little longer than five minutes, so I'll be giving you all a one-minute wrap-up signal, if you care to look up during your presentations.

I will have to be firm, unfortunately, on the five minutes, so that we can allow questions from all of our committee members and still have enough time to complete our next panel. Witnesses will be coming immediately behind you. It has been our experience that even if you don't get through all of your presentations, usually the points you want to make will come through during questions and answers.

So with that brief introduction, we'll get going.

Mr. Rosendorff, for five minutes, please, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Steven Rosendorff (Vice-President, Business Development, CapieKonsult):** Thank you.

In my experience with not-for-profits, both at the Red Cross and in the town of High River where we made extensive use of mail-outs, we did not find any difference in the success or lack of success of mail-outs that go out to either houses or boxes. For us, there was no difference at all.

Canada Post is very good at alerting us about the strikes that tend to happen from time to time before they happen so that we can make alternate arrangements if we need to—the proverbial Plan B.

In my private capacity, not professionally or workwise, I want to touch on the issue of postboxes versus home delivery. For five years, we lived in a house where we had a postbox. It was an absolutely amazing experience to walk to the postbox and meet other people who lived near you or who you would see driving past. It created a sense of community and camaraderie; people got to know each other; people went for walks, and people got exercise. They would drive home, and then go and fetch the post.

Then we moved to the house we are in currently, where for the first two years we got home delivery. We saw all these new neighbours, and we never met them. Everybody just waved to each other. Then, suddenly, we got postboxes. One or two people complained, but today the whole crescent knows everybody because we make a point of going for a walk around the block to fetch the post. People get exercise; people meet each other; people have become friends, and people have gone into each other's homes.

I think it makes logical sense. People get exercise. People get out into the fresh air. There are occasions when people are away, and we borrow each other's keys. For the elderly, we go and help them, take their post for them, and they get to meet the community as well.

Whereas it was cool to have a postman coming and to see him every day, he never came inside. We never got to know him, and it was just a wave, whereas now, everybody who lives in the same area that's affected by the same box, is getting to know each other. I think it adds to inclusivity and diversity, and all the things that make Canada great. All these people from different places are suddenly now talking to each other. In the past, we could have lived there for 10 years, and just waved at them every day, as a lot of us do.

That's my pitch about Canada Post and boxes versus home delivery. I'm not even going to touch on the cost of having vehicles start and stop all the time, because that's an astronomical cost.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Beale.

**Ms. Anna Beale (Former President, Local 710, Canadian Union of Postal Workers):** Thank you for allowing me to speak with respect to the future of Canada Post. This is going to be a joint presentation, which is why Frank Goldie's name is on here as well.

I'm representing the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. I've been a postal clerk with Canada Post for 39 years.

What would benefit Canada Post is to diversify. When the Conference Board of Canada's report about Canada Post came out, it projected huge losses for the next five years. When a company is projecting dire circumstances like that, they look for other ways to make money, such as diversifying.

Canada Post can do that in ways such as postal banking. I have given you an attachment about different things that Canada Post could get into.

Regarding postal banking, we have post offices in towns where the bank has moved out and left nothing in its place for the citizens to do their banking. Canada Post could fill that void. Money Mart and payday loan companies are ripping off citizens. Postal banking could take their place, providing loans at affordable rates for citizens who find themselves in these dire circumstances.

We gave a postal banking presentation to Canada Post in negotiations this past year, and I was part of the negotiating committee. Canada Post wasn't interested in postal banking and, instead, said it would wait to see what the results of this committee would be.

• (1305)

Postal banking would cover that niche that is not presently covered. Our retail clerks already have financial training, in case anyone was wondering about that. They're trained when new products and services are introduced to them by Canada Post, and this happens regularly.

Logistics is another area. Due to the size of our network, this is an area we should get into. We operate from shore to shore to shore. Canada Post is part of it now, with the company shipping machine parts and so on through the mail, so why not take this one step further? In fact, I can remember, when I was working parcels one night, there were John Deere tractor parts being shipped, along with somebody's teacup.

Many companies don't keep lots of parts on hand—and you know your mechanic is one of them—and, instead, call to have them shipped. One call to Canada Post and the item would be ordered, picked up, and delivered—one call does it all. This could be from Texas to Fort McMurray.

A company with a machine that costs \$100,000 that is sitting idle due to a broken part would gladly be on board with this.

Another prospect is that some companies do warehousing for another company. When we would get a call, we could pick, fill, and deliver for a company such as Coles bookstore, for example.

Instead of contracting out, Canada Post should be contracting in. We could pick up from a customer and guarantee their products would be on the next flight.

Another area that Canada Post could get into in the future is 3-D printing. We have the vehicles that could do that.

With regard to retail, our retail network is huge and very underutilized. Our clerks should be selling bus passes, travel insurance, and gift cards. The public could be paying their utility bills there. Many Service Canada offices were closed under the previous Conservative government, and we could be bringing back services, such as assisting people to fill out their forms. We could be selling mortgages. We could have a computer for the public to use to access the Internet in our retail outlets. Not everybody has a computer today, and this would provide that service in the community, for a fee. People could order online and ship through Canada Post. We sell packaging now. We could provide the service of doing the actual packaging for them, for a fee. We know how the system works, and we know how a package should be wrapped, because we work there.

Currently, we sell licences for hunting birds. We could also sell the rest of the hunting licences and fishing licences. We could do passport checks. We could sell event tickets for events happening in the community. We could be the third national cell network.

We are in favour of Canada Post growing. At the negotiation table, Canada Post wanted to be able to deliver larger-sized householders and heavier householders. It told us that was what its customers wanted. We agreed to do that, to have that in the collective agreement.

Canada Post also wanted to expand into evening and weekend parcel delivery, to grow its parcel business. We agreed to do that as well. These things would provide more money for Canada Post and provide more middle-class jobs.

As you probably know, in September, the task force predicted a \$63-million loss. It didn't take into account the new sources of revenue we agreed to at negotiations and, instead, Canada Post made a profit instead of the loss it had predicted.

We should be leveraging our network and be competitive. We don't want to be a burden on the Canadian taxpayer in the future.

All of the above will bring in profits to Canada Post, create jobs for no extra cost, and protect the middle class, and it wouldn't have to go to the government, to the public, to be subsidized.

As you know, Canada Post has been financially self-sufficient for years. We pay for ourselves. Instead of Canada Post retail offices contracting out work, for example, to private retail outlets, Canada Post should be contracting in, as shown above, resulting in a stable, experienced workforce, decent-paying, potentially full-time, middle-class jobs, and a viable, relevant post office.

Thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** If we ever need a speed-reading course, we'll make sure to contract you.

**Ms. Anna Beale:** Five minutes is not very long.

**The Chair:** It's not very long at all.

Thank you for that.

Mr. Bennett, you're on for five minutes. Go ahead, please.

**Mr. David Bennett (As an Individual):** Thank you for this opportunity to appear before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

My presentation will focus on the five basic themes seen in my submission.

In his 1989 book, *Home Game*, the celebrated goalie Ken Dryden writes eloquently and passionately about the game of hockey and its significance as a cultural icon to Canadians. He is especially astute when he recounts the importance of the local arena to so many towns and cities, large and small, across the country, and especially here in the west.

Hockey has spurred the building of community centres. Sadly, the disappearance of the local arena has often been the final death knell of many struggling communities. Our communities tell us about who we are and help to bind us together in good times and bad.

Canada is a northern country faced with the twin challenges of vast geography and sparse population. When those challenges are combined with a hostile climate, people become acutely aware of their need to co-operate and make decisions for the common good.

Political theory generally acknowledges that the provision of public services is a necessary function of most governments. Canada's unique challenges make the provision of such services even more critically important to the survival of its citizens. With its universal obligations, Canada Post, or what used to be called the post office, is one such critically important public service.

When I visit small towns like High River, Hanna, Yorkton, or Nelson, the presence and visibility of the public post office, with its flag and its familiar signage, reminds me that we are all Canadians with mutual obligations to each other, and that we need a truly national and universal postal service. It is one of the ties that bind and a critical thread in the fabric of all communities. The disappearance of public postal outlets from our communities pulls at that thread, and our communities start to unravel just as surely as when the local arena burns down and community leaders must struggle to maintain the services and programs that citizens expect.

One might suggest that with the availability of the Internet, the need for postal services has been rendered moot. It is quite the contrary. The Internet has promoted personal isolation, and social media has encouraged a deterioration in civil discourse. We need fewer Kim Kardashians and more community leaders. We need greater public access to communications services. The Shaw and Rogers families are rich enough. We need the public postal service to expand and to prosper, for the benefit of all Canadians.

As already alluded to, public services are a critical part of the social fabric of any community. In Alberta, we have seen the effect of government policies that starve public services of the resources they need. For ideological reasons only, our health care and education systems have been starved of the financial resources necessary to allow them to thrive.

In the nineties, we saw large-scale layoffs of nurses and teachers and a move toward privatizing other related services. These actions led to widespread dissatisfaction with the public systems, which found themselves unable to meet public expectations with the diminished resources allowed. This in turn created a significant rise in the demand for private services to replace those that were not being adequately provided by the public systems.

Our post office seems to have suffered a similar fate. Canada Post management has reduced or eliminated services in smaller communities, contracted out many other services, and reduced service standards and pickup and delivery times without consultation with the public it supposedly serves.

This, I would argue, has engendered increasing public dissatisfaction with the public postal service, thus encouraging more private competition. This competition has further eroded the ability of

Canada Post to generate the revenues necessary to continue to provide, let alone expand, the public service for which it is obligated.

Moreover, Canada Post management has steadfastly refused to discuss or implement measures that would enable it to generate the revenue that would allow it to improve basic services. Postal banking comes to mind. In fact, I know that the governments of the United Kingdom and Australia have profitable postal banking services.

Before I close, I would like to address what I believe to be one of the strangest examples of pretzel logic I have ever encountered.

Canada Post management has been warning Canadians for years that there has been a sharp reduction in the volume of first-class letter mail processed by Canada Post. Yet I'm given to understand that they have also invested billions of dollars in retrofitting their mail processing facilities with equipment designed to speed up the processing of first-class letter mail.

Where I come from, if a manager invests money to handle a product for which the public has little interest, that manager gets fired. Imagine if Canada Post had invested those billions into expanding their door-to-door services instead. Canadians would enjoy better and more reliable service. In turn, public confidence would be restored, and growth in the demand for the services of the public postal service would be expected. Canada Post revenues and profits would grow.

● (1310)

Canadians would no longer be at the mercy of private couriers to fill in the gap, which Canada Post has too long allowed to exist and to grow. I urge you to recommend to the government that it take whatever measures necessary to restore and further expand the public postal service, which all Canadians deserve.

Thank you for your time.

● (1315)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much to all the panellists.

We'll start now with our interventions.

Madam Ratansi, go ahead for seven minutes, please.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

You guys have given us a challenge too fulfill. Just as a clarification, we saw the large processing plant, or whatever you call it, that Canada Post invested in. We went yesterday. Yes, letter mail has declined, but parcels have increased. They have to have a very cohesive strategy and facilities. I think all of us should go and see those facilities. There are some good and some bad initiatives that have cost them money, but we also need to be mindful that when we make statements, we have seen what they have produced.

I have a question for you, Ms. Beale.

What sorts of relationships do Canada Post employees have with their current management?

**Ms. Anna Beale:** Do you mean overall employer-employee relationships?

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Are they positive, negative, or a work in progress?

**Ms. Anna Beale:** It's a work in progress, in a sense.

People go to Canada Post for the money and the benefits. You go there; you do your job; and you go home. In the main, employees on the work floor want to have their jobs; they want to get the job done; and they want to get the mail to whoever it's being delivered to. Issues happen on the work floor, and they're going to happen as soon as you have more than two people in the workplace. There's going to be an issue. You deal with it and you move on.

At any management level, you're going to have people who should be there and people who shouldn't be there. We have that same mix at Canada Post.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** We had a group of witnesses before you, and they talked about integrated thinking and how you have to think outside the box. Do you believe that Canada Post's current management has been thinking outside of the box, or has it focused only on cuts?

I ask this to you, Mr. Rosendorff, and Mr. Bennett.

**Ms. Anna Beale:** I believe they've only focused on cuts. What I didn't have in my presentation but what was in the back of my mind was that if you feel you're going to be losing money, then you should be diversifying instead of raising the prices of the product that you're selling and cutting the services that you're supposed to deliver.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Mr. Rosendorff.

**Mr. Steven Rosendorff:** I feel that they are looking at running Canada Post like a business, looking at business principles, and determining where they need to improve efficiencies. This may mean doing things differently, thinking outside of the box—excuse the pun—by using boxes, and cutting certain areas to make it a sustainable business model without increasing the price.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Have you seen the task force report and the summary of the recommendations?

The recommendations are to change the number of times they deliver, and to convert to community mailboxes, etc. From those, do you feel that operations are going to get more efficient, or do you feel that there are other things that you can think of outside the box, like integrating and getting more revenue?

You're a business person. How would you go about increasing your revenue?

**Mr. Steven Rosendorff:** I think it's twofold. You look at the total picture and say, "how do I increase revenue to make more profit, and how do I cut costs to make more profit?" Most of these recommendations are looking at how to cut costs, which may be inefficiencies right now, and which will increase revenue and then increase profit. To increase revenue, I can't answer that. Think outside of the box and do alternative things, which could generate alternative revenue streams, if that is desired. Do not increase the price.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Mr. Bennett, I'm sure you are aware that Canada Post was selling a lot of retail products, but then it decided not to sell them or to keep forms for people, etc.

What are your thoughts? Should it be a business or a service, and how can it improve its revenue?

**Mr. David Bennett:** I would be inclined to agree that the generation of more revenue is actually one of the keys. I'm a lifelong resident of the city of Calgary. I have lived through four separate boom-and-bust cycles in the oil patch. One of the most devastating aspects, something I believe the oil patch finally learned from in 1982, was that you can cut only so far. When you cut, you lose your talent; you lose your initiative; and you lose your ability to provide your core services.

I'm afraid that's the direction Canada Post is heading in. It seems focused on cut, cut, cut, which eventually eviscerates or completely guts the value and the ability of the post office to do its job. That's why I would tend to focus on the identification and generation of new sources of revenue, such as postal banking.

• (1320)

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Why do you think it's in that mode of cut, cut, cut and not grow, grow, grow, or thinking outside the box?

**Mr. David Bennett:** From a purely political standpoint, I'm inclined to think that Canada Post management hitched its wagon, essentially, to the previous Conservative government, which for ideological reasons wanted to simply reduce the presence of government as a whole in our communities and in our societies.

For instance, the current CEO of Canada Post came from a private business environment, Pitney Bowes, which in fact is one of the competitors of Canada Post. I found it a strange move to actually hire one of the competitor's CEOs in order to actually run your own organization.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Just very quickly, how would you bridge the divide between the rural and the urban? You're talking about all urban centres having all the services. The rural areas need those community hubs. They need certain services. How would you help solve that or enhance the capability to mitigate the divide?

**The Chair:** There's almost no time left for the answer, sorry.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Okay.

You can answer it later on in somebody else's question, perhaps.

**The Chair:** I'm sure that will come up again. Thank you.

Mr. McCauley, go ahead for seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Thanks for joining us today. I appreciate your commentary. I don't necessarily agree with it all, but I appreciate it.

In the interest of full disclosure, I know Mr. Rosendorff from some past fundraising with the Red Cross.

Thank you for joining us today. Thanks for the work you did helping rebuild Slave Lake, and with High River as well. You mentioned the fundraising work you did using Canada Post. Was that addressed direct mail or just blanket mail?

**Mr. Steven Rosendorff:** It was addressed direct mail.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** You talked about a Plan B to deal with the possibility of a strike. Is there anyone else who could possibly do those services for Canada Post, or who you're using with Canada Post, or...?

**Mr. Steven Rosendorff:** We were looking at alternatives, as in courier companies.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Were you able to go into electronic fundraising at all?

**Mr. Steven Rosendorff:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** I'm just curious, because that has come up. We've had several other witnesses from not-for-profits.

**Mr. Steven Rosendorff:** Sadly, the use of postage is diminishing. Electronic is far more efficient because you can control email addresses. They bounce back, and you can track what has been read. It's much more cost-efficient and it's quicker.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** What would be the effect of a stamp increase on something like the Red Cross with the constant mail-outs? That's one thing that's been suggested, that the price of stamps be raised.

**Mr. Steven Rosendorff:** That would be counterproductive. It would increase the costs for every single not-for-profit, I would say, because they all use the postal system to a greater or lesser degree. It would just push the costs up.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Okay.

**Mr. Steven Rosendorff:** It may lead them to say that they won't post things.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Right.

Ms. Beale and Mr. Bennett, thanks for your comments.

Mr. Bennett, I loved your comment about the Kardashians. Well done. I share your view about the local arena. It's the same with grain elevators and farms as you drive around rural areas. I think we've heard a lot from people that we need to do a lot to strengthen our rural presence, so thanks for the comments.

You mentioned growing businesses, and you listed a lot of things—couriers, insurance registries, banking. They're all served by the private sector right now. You talked about creating jobs without any cost. But any job taken by Canada Post will be a job taken out of the private sector or someone else's pocket, so to speak. Do you see that at all, or do you think these are just brand new jobs that would be created without any loss by the private sector? Do you really think Canada Post can do banking better, insurance better, private courier, etc., better than the private sector can?

I'm not asking this in an argumentative way. We've heard it said a lot that we want to increase revenue, but a lot of these items are being done by the private sector right now. We can't just take from one and then not have an effect on the other side.

• (1325)

**Ms. Anna Beale:** I think you're talking about competition in a way as well, because you're saying take it away and put it on the other side. When you first started that, I had never heard it put that way before.

Anyway, of all the things I listed—that's not all of them and it's not the end of it all—a lot of these things we did in the past. We used to sell hunting licences. I worked in retail for Canada Post for 14 years. It was the best job in the world. Selling all of these things is something Canada Post has looked at and maybe thought about, and then said, "Oh, well, no, we don't want to do that", but they're all things that we have the people and the space to do. We already compete, so doing these things wouldn't be any different.

Canada Post calls itself a business, and businesses are in competition. They don't stand alone. Canada Post also provides a service. To take a job from one place to put it another place... Canada Post jobs are well paid and have good benefits; they're good middle-class jobs, but I don't think I can say the same thing about a lot of the jobs that are being created.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** These are funded by the taxpayer—

**Ms. Anna Beale:** No.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** This is not money that just comes out of the blue. If we take away banking jobs, and put them as well-paying Canada Post jobs, again, those would be funded by the taxpayers. They're not just created out of the blue with new revenue generated. That's my rebuttal of the things that have been brought up in that we'll create a \$50,000 Canada Post job and get rid of a \$30,000 bank job. Someone has to pay for that, and it's paid for with stamps, etc., from the private sector.

**Ms. Anna Beale:** I went to interrupt, and I apologize, because I'm notorious for that.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** So are we, so don't worry.

**Ms. Anna Beale:** Canada Post is self-sufficient. The days when the Canadian public paid for postal worker wages are long gone. They've been gone for a long time. I can't give an exact date—maybe David would be better at that than I am—and I should know, but the days of the Canadian public paying for us posties are gone. We pay for ourselves, and that's another reason we want Canada Post to get into different lines of business. We want Canada Post to grow. We want the presence in the community.

The cost, if you go into a different type of business, a different line of business, whether it's logistics or those kinds of things—

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** I'm going to interrupt you quickly to get on to something else you talked about that I want feedback on, and we're probably short of time.

We hear a lot of cut, cut, cut. I know there have been changes with going to community mailboxes as opposed to door-to-door delivery. What other cuts, so to speak, have there been with Canada Post in the last five or 10 years?

There's a moratorium on closing post offices, etc., and so when we hear "cut, cut, cut", please educate me on what's getting cut.

**Ms. Anna Beale:** I was thinking mainly about the cuts to the private outlets, because—

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** But that's not happening anymore, right?

**Ms. Anna Beale:** Oh yes, they are still opening private outlets.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** We're still opening them, but we're not closing post office boxes.

**Ms. Anna Beale:** No, but when you open up a private outlet 300 metres from the existing corporate outlet—

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** So the competition is good for—

**Ms. Anna Beale:** Well, there's competition in business, right?

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** You don't want the competition with Canada Post—

**Ms. Anna Beale:** Of course not.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** But you want Canada Post to compete with the private. Okay.

**Ms. Anna Beale:** And that's not true.

We've been railing against that since they opened the first one. It was in Calgary, and I was on that picket line too.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Apart from changing to that, there are no real cuts, but we hear cuts, cuts, cuts. There are no real cuts apart from the change that had been going on with community mailboxes, and there aren't any real cuts in services. There is the opening up of private stuff, but there are no cuts from Canada Post, though, are there?

**The Chair:** I'm afraid we'll have to let you ponder that for a moment.

**Ms. Anna Beale:** Darn.

**The Chair:** Perhaps Ms. Duncan might want to explore that.

Ms. Duncan, you're up for seven minutes, please.

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Thanks very much.

We've had some great testimony today. I'm simply sitting in as one of the local MPs while my colleague goes on to other meetings. I appreciate hearing your testimony.

I found Mr. Rosendorff's testimony really sad. We're famous in this city for our community links. Good heavens that we have to end postal delivery so we can meet our neighbours. I think that is a sad testimony to what's happened.

In my community, everybody knows the postie. They sit on the front porch; they talk to the kids, and the dogs play. I think that's a pretty sorry excuse for putting in postal boxes, but I'm glad it has worked for your community.

There are lots of really interesting ideas. One thing I've been reminding witnesses of is that legislation actually provides that the primary mandate of Canada Post is to be a public service. It's right in the task force report. We're not talking about making a private enterprise more profitable. We're talking about the postal service.

I have really appreciated hearing today all kinds of really innovative ideas from people, whether they work inside or outside the postal industry, about how we can make it affordable. Of course, it was a surprise to me to find out that Switzerland, New Zealand, Italy, France, and Britain all do banking. In fact, up to 70% of their profits come from the banking. They don't even have to do loans. They simply help cash cheques, pay bills, and so forth. There are lots of things we can look to our trading nations for about how to get more innovative.

Something that has troubled me, for example, is how in my own riding they shut down a post office that everybody was used to going to by bus. They moved it to a location with no bus service. That's a disgrace.

We have heard from a number of people who are concerned about who is actually being consulted when we locate boxes instead of service or post offices. We have also heard really valuable information about the difference between rural needs and urban needs, in particular in isolated communities. By and large, though, we're hearing from people from our big municipalities—Calgary, Edmonton, and Leduc.

Do you think Canada Post should also have a duty to provide equitable service to our isolated, aboriginal, and northern communities?

• (1330)

**Ms. Anna Beale:** I lived in Hay River. I lived in Yellowknife. I lived in Inuvik. I have lived in a lot of small towns in Alberta. I've been around for 150 years. The post office is the only presence of the federal government in some towns. It's the only place you see the Canadian flag flying.

In lots of small towns the bank has moved out and there's no place for people to do banking. One of the big pushes we have behind postal banking is to provide that service in the community. The post office is already there, and it's a federal institution, and the presence of the federal government there is important. That's another reason we have the moratorium, so that we fight to keep the post offices open.

If you live in a small town like Blackie, which is southeast of Calgary, there is no reason why you should have a different postal service than if you live in downtown Calgary or Edmonton. It's the same post office right across Canada. It shouldn't be any different going from Edmonton to Blackie to Westlock to wherever. You go to the post office and do all the kinds of things you need to do.

Keep that presence there. Keep the post offices open. When the post offices are closing, it's a sad situation for this country.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Are there any other comments on that?

Go ahead, Mr. Bennett.

**Mr. David Bennett:** I'd be pleased to wade in on that. I'm finding it particularly puzzling that Canada Post continues to fight the inclusion of or the elevation of services to rural communities. I know that one of the biggest issues in the latest round of bargaining was seeking equity for rural and urban carriers.



One of the issues I'm familiar with from back in the early days of NAFTA is the fact that UPS actually sought to sue the federal government by alleging that, through the exclusive privilege to deliver first-class mail, it was unfairly subsidizing the parcel-delivery portion. What was unfortunate about UPS's position was that it was quite clearly interested only in providing competitive services to major urban centres. That's where it could make the greatest revenue and the greatest profits. It clearly was not the least bit interested in providing public postal services to rural communities.

In a northern country like this, with the vast distances that must be travelled, I believe that public postal services are absolutely critical. While the nature of the services provided can change over time, that core service that must be provided, as you've pointed out, is nonetheless part of the Canada Post act of 1981. Canada Post is required to provide those public services. My position would be that this public service in and of itself is vital and critical, has an intrinsic value in our communities, and should be expanded rather than contracted or reduced.

• (1335)

**Ms. Anna Beale:** May I make one comment about that as well?

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Go ahead.

**Ms. Anna Beale:** What possibly would really help is to get our CEO, the board of directors, and the vice-presidents away from the concept that Canada Post has but 400,000 customers. I think there are a lot more people in Canada than that. Deepak Chopra is on record talking about Canada Post's 400,000 customers, so I think that with a mindset shifts, the service could be greatly improved for all Canadians.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We will go to Mr. Whalen, please, for seven minutes.

**Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all of you for coming. It's great to hear different perspectives.

As we move across the country and listen to the different testimonies, something that strikes me is that the largest obligation we have is to make sure that pensions are available to postal workers who have earned them, and that we protect well-paid middle-class jobs in this field for Canadians, both now and into the future.

It seems that the current path we're on, while it may protect some, will protect fewer of them, and the path that looks toward growing and expanding the service isn't a vision that's shared by the current management. I've asked this question to some of the witnesses who have been before us, given their past record in operating.

How does each of you feel about the ability of the current management team to deliver on a mission of expanding the service of Canada Post?

I'll start with you, Mr. Bennett.

**Mr. David Bennett:** Full disclosure: I'm a retired letter carrier and my father is a retired letter carrier. My father and mother raised four children on the wages of a letter carrier. Those wages also allowed us the privilege of attending university. The fact that my father, who is

now 88 years old, has retired comfortably has a lot to do with the fact that, yes, he has a defined-benefit retirement package. The fact that I can continue to live in an increasingly expensive city like Calgary has a lot to do with the fact that I have a defined-benefit retirement package. This is something that I value greatly, and frankly, I think it's something that all Canadians are entitled to.

I've always wondered about this sort of race to the bottom that seems to come about with the idea that somehow wages and everything have to be cut absolutely to the bone for us to be as competitive as possible—

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Mr. Bennett, here's what my question was really about. With the current management team's position, if we try to expand the services, do you have confidence that it can deliver on a revised mandate if we choose to suggest one, if we recommend one to expand the services to help fund these continued benefits?

**Mr. David Bennett:** No, I'm personally not confident in the current management. I think it has quite clearly shown its orientation, which is to move away from expanded services.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Ms. Beale, you spoke about it having worked in the direction that was perhaps suggested to it by the previous administration. If it was given clear direction from us, do you think it would achieve a mission to expand instead of contract?

**Ms. Anna Beale:** I've always been hopeful. I guess that's why I'm still here. However, I can't see that. It was a fight at negotiations. I don't know how much power you have to do that, but I'm hoping you have a hammer—not a real one—to tell it that they it has to do that, that it has to look at different areas to be able to expand and grow.

• (1340)

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Mr. Rosendorff, you haven't been really as intrinsically involved with Canada Post, but you've used its services. Do you see a role for Canada Post in selling services in competition with existing providers in the banking sphere, in the insurance sphere, and in the mortgage sphere?

You can contrast it; there's no one-area-fits-all solution, but maybe just contrast urban, rural, and suburban areas and where it might have a role.

**Mr. Steven Rosendorff:** I think it's an ideologically good idea, but practically it's not. Those are very technical products. Sure, to increase revenue you should have different revenue streams, but first, you cannot go and sell mortgages and insurance and things such as that if you're not trained and qualified; and secondly, you would then be taking away business from the private sector.

In answer to your question, sure, diversify and look for other income streams, but not at the expense of the private sector.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** What about in areas of the country where the private sector has withdrawn? We have seen the Caisse de dépôt and credit unions and banks withdraw from rural areas. When we look at the number of households in rural, suburban, and urban areas, we see that about 15% of households are in rural and far rural areas. Is there a niche role for Canada Post to play in nation building, in providing Internet banking and registration services to that underserved community?

**Mr. Steven Rosendorff:** I would answer that question in two ways. First, it's a very good idea. Second, I don't think it's a good idea, because you would have a town nearby. This morning I was in a place where only 1,300 people live. The closest town is 25 kilometres away. They know they have to drive 25 kilometres. I drive more than 25 kilometres to get into downtown Calgary. There will always be such places.

If you live in a rural area, you are living there for a reason or you're stuck there. Typically, people live there for a reason. They want a rural lifestyle and they put up with driving to the nearest Costco, which is 100 kilometres away, or whatever it is, and the same is true for service providers, banks, insurance, medical, and so on.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** That's interesting.

I would rephrase this in the context of the service charter. There are two elements of the service charter that you might not be as familiar with, Mr. Rosendorff, as Ms. Beale and Mr. Bennett would be. Section 10 of the service charter talks about how close postal outlets need to be to individuals; 98% of individuals need to live within 15 kilometres of a post office. It doesn't go to the last 2% of individuals. It also says that as of a cut-off point back in the nineties, there will be no more closing of rural post offices. There are still some closures of rural post offices when they can no longer staff them and local communities agree that it would be okay because they would be served by a nearby community.

Is that a standard that we should adhere to? Should we reset the baseline for rural community service based on the service standards? Should we put in an extra category for within 25 kilometres? Should we move the goalposts and then impose a new moratorium? Is this something that we should consider as a cost-saving measure? Should we maybe provide more expanded services in one community that serves as a hub rather than trying to be all things to all people in all places, which might not be a capital investment we want to make?

I open it to each of the three of you to speak.

Mr. Bennett.

**The Chair:** You will have to offer your commentary during the answers to our next intervenor, who will be Mr. Clarke.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Clarke, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beaumont—Limoilou, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Bennett, are you a member of Prime Minister Bennett's family?

[*English*]

**Mr. David Bennett:** Uh, no.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** You have already answered my first question. Thank you.

You said that Canada Post was a very important national symbol of federal unity. I loved your presentation. I come from a university background, and your socio-historical and political presentation delighted me, even though I don't agree with everything you have said. However, it was music to my ears.

Without fear of getting to the bottom of your comments, you say that Canada Post's precarious financial situation stems from ideological preferences rather than from a reality based on a given context. Is that indeed what you said?

[*English*]

**Mr. David Bennett:** That's not it entirely, but yes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Okay.

Based on your premise, how do you explain that the task force created by the Liberal government is still coming to conclusions that are similar to what the Canada Post management is proposing? Does that mean that Prime Minister Trudeau and that task force are following the ideological perspective you are referring to?

• (1345)

[*English*]

**Mr. David Bennett:** I wouldn't presume to assume what the Prime Minister is doing or thinking. What I do know is that a great many of the statistics upon which Canada Post has relied to justify its actions are either misleading or out-and-out false. The task force, I believe, relied on certain figures indicating that Canada Post projected a significant loss in the neighbourhood of \$200 million, when, I think, it was in 2014 that Canada Post produced a profit of \$94 million.

I'm not sure where the numbers come from, and we can cherry-pick numbers all we like, but I do suspect that the figures Canada Post and the task force are using have more to do with strategically positioning themselves according to a particular ideological position, as opposed to representing the common interests of the Canadian public.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** As a result, you are saying that the deficit is not necessarily real.

[English]

**Mr. David Bennett:** That would be my understanding. I know that at least part of one of the major writedowns in the last few years at Canada Post had to do with the fact that Canada Post was ordered to repay a certain pay equity figure in the neighbourhood of \$200 million in order to satisfy, I believe, a ruling by the Federal Court. Canada Post took a one-year writedown on that figure, I believe, and as a result it declared a loss. My understanding is that it then projected those losses to continue, as opposed to realistically projecting what its financial performance was going to be.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** As I still have a bit of time left, my next question will be for Ms. Beale.

I think it's very good that we are trying to think outside the box, but I have been noticing since yesterday—I have been sitting on this committee for a short time—that those ideas always look outward, as in the case of postal banking and passports, but they rarely look inward. For example, perhaps Canada Post could reduce the social benefits and wages of workers who are, after all, part of a privileged elite in Canada.

I would like to hear your thoughts on that.

[English]

**Ms. Anna Beale:** Okay. You're going to kick me out when I say this, but I take offence at the “privileged elite” comment. We have working-class wages. We are the working class. We work for a living. To me, the elite are the ones who have no idea about what working for a living is, so that comment I take offence at. I think at this point I've forgotten what you said.

**The Chair:** We'll leave it at that, then.

**An hon. member:** It was about lowering wages.

**Ms. Anna Beale:** Oh, yes, that was it. No. That, to me, is very narrow thinking. A company is in business. If it's one employer and two employees, and it's having a hard time, and if it can't find other things to make money from, such as changing its product, changing the service, or whatever, and its idea is to cut the wages of its employees, then maybe it should cut its own wages.

How many vice-presidents do we have—22? Oh, it's 21. I think I got rid of one last year, and it hasn't filled that spot.

We have a board of directors about this long.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. Our final intervention will come from Ms. Shanahan, for five minutes, please.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Chair.

I think we just need to get it on the record that the task force had a very specific mandate, and that was to look at the business model as it is now, which is to provide services in a business context on a sustainable level.

Our committee is trying to think outside the box. We've heard some great testimony, and will continue to do so.

Thank you very much for what you've had to say here today, because, as we know, the world is not standing still. Things are

changing very rapidly. Certainly technical innovations are impacting services and demand as we speak. Yet, we do have an obligation to serve all Canadians on an equitable basis as much as possible.

I would like to go back to questions that both my colleagues put to the panel on the urban and rural service considerations and this idea that Canada Post represents something tangible to Canadians, and what that means with regard to—and this may be thinking outside the box—other services we can be providing to continue a tremendously important organization.

I'd like to start with Mr. Bennett.

• (1350)

**Mr. David Bennett:** As you've indicated, Canada Post does need to start thinking outside the box in terms of the kinds of services it can provide. Growing up in an urban centre, I got used to having those postal services available. I worry about people in small communities who can't drive anymore, who won't be able to have access to those things.

I'm thinking in terms of the value of the rural postal worker keeping in touch with his or her customers, and understanding their needs and their concerns.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** One of the suggestions was to have a community hub. Do you see that as being a useful way for postal services to operate in rural Canada?

**Mr. David Bennett:** The model is interesting, but I think it's unrealistic to expect that community hubs of those kinds would meet the service obligations of postal workers.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Of Canadians, you mean.

**Mr. David Bennett:** Yes, I mean of Canadians.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you. Ms. Beale.

**Ms. Anna Beale:** One thing we all have to keep in mind is that Canada Post has been around for about 150 years providing a service and doing all these kinds of things including postal banking; none of this is new.

I think all of you who have been on the committee for a while know that we did have a postal bank in Canada. Am I right? Okay. I'm not going to go down that road again.

The idea of having one post office, having all these things, and then smaller ones around, in theory would be a good start. There's no issue there. We're all in favour of trying it to see if it works, and if that's what it takes—

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Excuse me. You have had some experience as well with operating the retail side of—

**Ms. Anna Beale:** Yes.

**The Chair:** You only have about a minute left, Madam Shanahan, in case you want Mr. Rosendorff to comment.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** That's very good.

Just to finish with that, do you see the expansion of retail services as being viable?

**Ms. Anna Beale:** Yes. It would be very viable.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Okay. That's very good.

**Mr. Steven Rosendorff:** I think we need to redefine the distance that you need to live from a post office. To come to your point of community hubs, post offices could possibly be in bigger rural towns, at the library, or somewhere as part of the community centre, not in a stand-alone place.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** That's an interesting perspective. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Panellists, thank you very much for your attendance here today. If you have additional information that you wish to bring to the attention of this committee, you could certainly submit it to our clerk, probably in the next 10 days to two weeks at the latest. We will be tabling a report in Parliament, probably by the end of November or very early December at the latest.

We will suspend for a few moments, while we await the arrival of our next panellists.

• (1350) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1400)

**The Chair:** Thank you all for being here this afternoon.

I know, Madame Brousseau and Mr. Opstad, you have been patiently waiting in the audience, listening to all of the proceedings. I'm glad we were able to accommodate you.

Mr. Goldie, I'm not sure if you've had a chance to witness some of the proceedings in which witnesses have testified before you. Quite simply it's a very easy process, a very simple process. We're going to ask each of you to give a five-minute opening address, followed by a series of questions from all of our committee members.

Madame Brousseau, I know that your presentation is about 24 pages long. That was probably made for a more formal setting than this. Trust me, though, that through the question-and-answer process we'll get to most of the presentation that you might have missed in your opening statement.

With that, we will start with Madame Brousseau.

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau (Director, Alberta/Northwest Territories/Nunavut, Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association):** Hi. I'm the postmaster in the village of Veteran, Alberta. It's located one and a half hours east of Stettler, an hour west of the Saskatchewan border. Today I'm representing the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association, known as CPAA-ACMPA. CPAA is the second-largest bargaining unit under the Canada Post umbrella, representing members that staff the post offices in towns and villages of rural Canada. CPAA members, consisting of 95% women, operate 3,260 post offices in rural Canada. We are in touch with over six million rural customers on a regular basis. Most often we are the only federal presence in the community, and we are the hub of the community.

Full-time assistants work 40 hours per week, and part-time assistants work from four to 40 hours per week. The post offices these employees work in are classified as grade offices, of which there are six classifications. Many who are scheduled to work 20 hours or less per week often have their hours scheduled over five or

six days. Unlike urban retail operations, part-time assistants often remain in their jobs for years before progressing to positions with a greater number of hours.

For the village of Consort, the mail truck might come in at 10:30 in the morning, so they have a part-timer come in from 10:30 to 1:00. That way it covers the lunch-hour shift for the postmaster to go for lunch. So during that time, where do you find a job in the morning to cover until 10:30? You need a job, and we're in a rural area where there are not that many jobs.

That's it for me.

**The Chair:** You have a little less than three minutes left.

**Ms. Jacquie Strong (Director, Alberta/Northwest Territories/Nunavut, Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association):** I can do that. Thank you very much.

Term employees are hired for only a particular length of time and are not appointed to an indeterminate or full-time, position. They're not allotted a certain number of hours weekly. Their employment is often precarious. A lot of our employees are on call, so they can go for days without any hours.

In my office, our parcels have quadrupled. Online shopping is starting to fill the financial gap resulting from the decline of letter mail. With the growth of online shopping, it is more essential than ever to have a post office to deliver parcels to Canadians. We get cat litter, dog food, diapers, and laundry soap. We have so many things coming into the post office in rural areas, because the people have too far to go to shop. It takes too long to go purchase stuff, and it takes planning, so they're ordering an awful lot of items online and they come through the post office. That's why our volume has increased significantly.

I have a lot of at-home moms in my area, and they love the shopping—clothing, books and supplies for the schools. There are a lot of educational materials. Many people take online courses from Athabasca University, so books are constantly coming in. There are also a lot of things for home schooling, and a lot of Amazon books. We have such a high volume of parcels, and we're loving it.

• (1405)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Mr. Opstad, you have five minutes. The floor is yours, sir.

**Mr. George Opstad (As an Individual):** I've been a letter carrier for 27 years. I wanted to speak today because about 10 years ago we had these cases that we sorted our mail into, and every time I got on to a new case, I found that it maybe wasn't laid out that well. So the first thing I would do was to take sheets of paper and write down exactly where I wanted each one of the addresses to go. Then they would send that off to a guy, and that guy would basically put them on there by hand.

After I did quite a few of these cases, I decided that somebody should write a program so that I wouldn't have to keep explaining to the guy how to set up one of these cases, so I started writing this program. After a few years, I got it to the point where it was more or less working.

At the time, maybe about every four years, they would change all the walks, and then you'd get a new case and you would have the new strips in there. It's called a volume count. Then within six months of a volume count, they'd change all the cases.

They announced that they were going to have this volume count, so basically I knew I had about six months to get it to the point where it could more or less work, so I talked to my then superintendent. His name was Bill Swan. I said, "I'd like you to look at this program I have." He said, "Okay. Next week we'll take a look at it." The next week, he said, "Something came up and we can't look at it."

I kept trying to show it to him and then finally a guy came to my place around Christmas, about two months later. He was a supervisor, so I showed it to him. Then I gave him an example on one of my memory sticks and I walked him through it. He asked me to give him the memory stick and he took it to work. I went in and asked him what they said, and he said he had given it to collection and delivery. I knew something was up, and I asked him if I could get my memory stick back. He went into his desk and gave it back to me. So nothing was given to them.

Employees can go onto a separate website called Intrapost. It's just for employees. They had a section on there that was called "Ask Moya". That was our CEO at the time, Moya Greene. I explained the situation to her and said, "I'd like somebody to look at this program", so she set up a meeting. I brought my computer in. It's a desktop, so it took a bit... I set it up, and the meeting lasted about two minutes. They didn't even want to look at it.

Then we had our changeover and they gave us our new strips, but now they had made a program to do them. They were worse than they were before. Then I sent an email to our new CEO. His name was Stewart Bacon. He said, "We're going to look at it again."

The meeting was set up. I was in Edmonton; they were in Ottawa. There was a program called NetMeeting. I could bring up the program on my screen and they'd have exactly the same screen in Ottawa. I was walking them through it, telling them what it did, and they were in Ottawa and were asking me questions. They said, "Where does it get this information from?", and I said, "I have it in a table." I explained it to them and they asked me to show it to them, so I did.

At the beginning it seemed to be going really well because they were saying, "It's nice the way it does that." Then at the end, they were starting to groan, and I wondered why. I found out that the people who were looking at my program were in fact the same people who were writing a program for Canada Post. I was, effectively, the competition, so they didn't want anything to do with me.

I complained. I said, "It's not really fair that my program was evaluated by the same people writing the program for Canada Post", because they basically said, "Your program won't work." I got a guy from Canada Post to try to investigate. He didn't want anything to do with me.

●(1410)

I wrote a letter to Judy Foote about six months ago. I kept phoning her office and saying, "Am I going to get a reply for my thing?" The response was, "You'll get a reply."

Is that time?

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, yes. I personally found your story very interesting. Hopefully during the questions, we'll get a little bit more information as to the end result of your phone calls.

Mr. Goldie, you're up for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Frank Goldie (As an Individual):** Thank you very much.

My name is Frank Goldie. I was a letter carrier for 38 years. I started at the post office when I was 16 years old and I just recently retired at 55. I've seen a lot of changes happen—some good, some bad.

We're here today to talk about how the post office is changing. My mother worked for the post office for 20 years. My wife still works for the post office. She's been there for 10 years. I have a young son who has been a letter carrier for six years. The post office has been very good to us. It's put a roof over our heads. We're all paying taxes. We live in our houses. I have very few bad things to say about the post office.

However, until recently in our postal code, T2A, we did have door-to-door delivery. We now have a mailbox outside. It's actually right in front of the playground. It's right in front of the playground zone. It's certainly not a place to go to meet your neighbour. There's nothing but garbage around there.

I can speak for myself when I say that the letter carrier does come to the door every day and sees everything. I knew everyone's name. If someone had a crack in their basement window, I would see it before they did. These people are a part of the community. They're uniformed. They're polite. They're professional and they get the job done. They talk to people. They talk to people who are lonely. They help people.

I have a terrific record with Canada Post. I have no black marks, but there are no marks on there that say I've helped somebody every day either. I'm saying this only because you have to know that these young men and women and these old men and women are out there helping the public.

As far as rural goes, we have such a different country. This is the second-biggest country on the planet, next to Russia. There has to be some give-and-take with rural people. Not only are they isolated out there, it's just pure isolation. If you take away these installations.... This is where these people go; they meet; they have coffee. It gives them a reason to come into town. If you take away this grain elevator, I don't know what's going to happen. If they thought they were isolated before in these rural areas, when that Canadian flag pulls down for the last time, they will really be isolated.

I'll change the subject for a second to the Canada Post brand. There are few brands out there that are really established. You can have your IBM, but it takes decades. It can take a century to create a great brand. If you stop or slow down this service to three days a week, you are minimizing that brand to a third-class service.

Trust me: I talk to my son every day; I talk to my wife every day. These people are working hard. These new people under the last collective agreement are not making \$25 an hour; they're making \$19 an hour and it's all grandfathered in, so anybody now is making \$19 an hour when they start. I'm not sure about you, but I don't think those are terrific wages.

I thank you very much for your time.

• (1415)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Goldie.

Thank you all.

We'll start with our line of questioning now. Ms. Shanahan, go ahead for seven minutes, please.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to each and every one of you for your service to your fellow Canadians and to the country. I'm hearing about a sense of service and a sense of duty over and above what people would typically think that a postal worker is doing, so thank you very much for that.

I want to start with Ms. Brousseau and Ms. Strong.

What I was hearing at first was that there wasn't enough work for the postal workers who were there, but then I was hearing about the parcel delivery being quadrupled. Indeed, that is very welcome business. I would like you to expand on that, and to expand maybe on some of the other services that a rural outlet could be offering that would be viable.

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** Well, we've talked about the banking.

I want to explain that in Newfoundland, 84% of the communities do not have a bank; 65% of Nova Scotia communities do not have a bank; and 61% of B.C. communities—

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** We do have that submission, so what kind of postal banking services would make sense?

**Ms. Jacquie Strong:** Well, it would be cheque cashing, because that is a problem. They have to travel an hour to an hour and a half one way to get to a bank.

A lot of these communities, especially the aboriginal communities.... There are 54 communities out of 615 in the entire country that don't have a banking outlet.

I really believe that would assist a lot of people, especially our elderly, because they don't go out of town much. I also think it's a wonderful opportunity to help the rural areas.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Okay, so postal banking is one idea that you have. What about other ideas? We heard some earlier testimony about a postal centre becoming a community hub, something like a Service Canada outlet.

Do you think that postal workers, postmistresses, and so on would be able to provide help to Canadians regarding tax returns or filling out forms?

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** They often train us on anything new that Canada Post has come up with to streamline or make things

easier. They go into detail so that we're all learning the same thing at the same time.

If they decide to do that, it would be easy enough for us all to learn the same thing. If I moved to her town, I would be able to retain whatever I had learned and would still be able to do the job. To me, it would be easy enough to learn new things, and we're willing to learn.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you very much for that.

Mr. Goldie, what are your thoughts on the strengthening or expansion of the services that would be offered at a local postal outlet?

**Mr. Frank Goldie:** You know, when I go to the Superstore, I see that they've opened a bank.

I hear that they are taking away from the private sector. Come on—the world is open to everybody. These 50,000 people are all paying their taxes. They are not lined up at Service Canada to get their unemployment cheque.

We can improve our service, and we can move into different fields as the times change. The times are changing. Please don't shortchange these postal workers thinking that they can't add two plus two, that they can't do banking. People are trained, and they can be trained. It can be done.

• (1420)

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Excellent.

Mr. Opstad, I know you had your story and we did hear some testimony about postal workers having ideas that they wanted to offer up to management. I suspect that your story is—

**Mr. George Opstad:** Yes, it was kind of like what that one lady who was here, Debby Kronewitt-Martin, was saying. She seemed to be talking about that, the way that Canada Post management.... That's what I find. They present themselves as nimble, free-thinking, or whatever, yet when you try to present an idea to them, they don't want to even look at it.

I've been trying for six years to have it looked at.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** So your idea never got presented?

**Mr. George Opstad:** No, I can't even get it looked at.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Do I have any more time left?

**The Chair:** You still have a couple of minutes left.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Excellent. Okay. Let's talk about what Canada Post means to Canadians then. Can we talk about just what that brand is? Do you think it's a brand that has been enhanced or diminished, or is maybe not important? What are your thoughts?

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** I've talked to my customers, and they're very focused on online shopping, because out where I am, they don't feel like driving an hour and a half to pick up and do all their shopping, so they do a lot of online shopping. We need to continue working on that. I know we're part of Purolator. Some of the courier companies will not come all the way out to Veteran, so they hire Canada Post in Calgary and Edmonton to deliver.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Do you think there are actual opportunities there for Canada Post to increase that business that is already increasing on its own?

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** There are for sure, even if, let's say, we close the post office for two or three hours to go deliver within the town and do theirs instead of having UPS—well, UPS doesn't like to come out—or all of the other companies do that, if we could work more on getting more of that courier.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mr. Clarke, the floor is yours for five minutes.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If I understand correctly, you are all Canada Post employees, including Mr. Opstad.

Thank you for your work. It is a service for Canadians. You are sustaining and enriching the national symbol Canada Post represents.

Mr. Goldie, unless I am mistaken, you left Canada Post two years ago. Is that right?

**Mr. Frank Goldie:** Yes.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Did Canada Post's management consult your spouse, your son and you before the changes were implemented in 2013? I am talking about the five points and the various changes put forward by the postal service.

[English]

**Mr. Frank Goldie:** I wasn't informed of anything. Basically I was a common man who went to work every day. I polished my shoes; I pressed my shirt; I went to work. I know of no five-point plan. The only five-point plan I know is to get up in the morning, pay my bills, go to work, kiss my wife, and go to bed. That's the only five-point plan I know of. I'm afraid I don't know what you mean.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Okay, thank you.

Ms. Brousseau, can you tell the committee what a typical day in the life of a postmaster consists of?

• (1425)

[English]

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** We go in and we open up the post office. We have customers come in throughout the day. I myself am a postmaster who also does supplies for other post offices, so I keep busy. Sometimes, however, our delivery outfit, our supplies, will come out by a different courier rather than through Canada Post, which doesn't make sense to me. Why are we getting another supplier that hires another courier company to deliver our supplies?

[Translation]

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** What does having a post office in a rural region mean for you? You are fully engaged. You live there and you completely personify the national symbol Canada Post represents. What does Canada Post mean to you?

[English]

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** Part of it is heritage. These people in the rural areas do not like change, and losing their post office would

break their hearts. They'd be very upset. They would miss the connection.

They love to talk beside the mail boxes. They like to catch up on who's doing what or what's happening. They ask each other, "How much rain did you get on your grain? Were you able to do your fields? Were you able to get all that done?" There's a lot of community talk together, but also, to supplement their farming, a lot of them do online sales, so they often come in with their parcels to be sent out or ask if I can tell them the price to send out a parcel because they want to charge so-and-so in Nova Scotia to have something mailed.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** My question is for Ms. Strong.

Who is your immediate supervisor in the hierarchical pyramid? What is their position, and what exactly do they do?

[English]

**Ms. Jacquie Strong:** Our immediate supervisors are local area superintendents. They make sure we're all well educated. They keep us informed and help us. If some of our offices can't be staffed, they'll help us find someone to come in and help out. People get sick, and there aren't many relief people to help us out because we're so isolated. We really rely on whoever is there. Some offices have one person.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Okay.

How many post offices is the superintendent in charge of?

[English]

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** In my area, she takes care of Camrose all the way up to Provost, and all the way down to where I am, in Veteran. She has, I'd say—

**Ms. Jacquie Strong:** It's quite a few. They just increased it a year ago.

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** They're constantly revamping, so you might have three superintendents, but now they've reduced it to two.

They keep giving them more, trying to save money,

[Translation]

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** How long have you been a postmaster?

[English]

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** I've been a postmaster since 2008.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** So you have been doing it for eight years.

[English]

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** But I've been working for Canada Post for 19 years.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Okay.

[English]

**Ms. Jacquie Strong:** For me it's nineteen and nine.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Since you became postmaster, have you noticed an increase or decrease in the number of people doing business with Canada Post? What have you noticed in that area?

[English]

**Ms. Jacquie Strong:** I've seen an increase. I think that is because we provide customer service, and our customers come first. I am a postmaster and I encourage my staff to do. Our volume of people in and out has increased significantly. Some of them didn't like to come the post office before, but I'm not cranky. I'm not going to be that way.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** You're the postmaster, so you're the leader in the office, and you have other employees.

**Ms. Jacquie Strong:** I do.

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** She does.

**The Chair:** Ms. Duncan, you're up for seven minutes.

To our panellists and colleagues, Ms. Duncan has a flight she must catch, so after her intervention she may be leaving. Do not be insulted. She's not one to leave, but we all have schedules we have to keep, and I believe Ms. Duncan has to get back to Ottawa.

• (1430)

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for saying that for me. Please don't take my departure to heart, because I'm finding your panel absolutely invaluable. I really appreciate your time and service.

One of the things that occurred to me in talking to some of the people who testified is that we have to remember that we're federal representatives. We're elected members of Parliament, and we have a particular responsibility; that is, to indigenous people, first nation communities, reserves, Métis, and Inuit, as determined by the Supreme Court.

So above and beyond whatever it says in the legislation for Canada Post, which actually specifies that it's a public service, we have that added responsibility. It's by treaty as well. We need to make sure they are being fairly and comparably served. I would be interested in hearing what you think about the service, particularly to Indian reserves. I'd welcome input on that from all of you.

I'm really interested in this issue, and you have reminded me now about the decision to give rural postal workers less money than urban workers get. I'm reminded that most of them are women. Many of them, I imagine, are farm wives, or farmers, and it's another way of supplementing their farm revenue.

Could you elaborate on that, on how precarious the work is and on ways you think we could remedy that? It sounds as though these concerns, frankly, are similar to those being raised by rail workers as they privatize and Americanize. What can we do to make sure people are being treated fairly?

I've been reminded that, in fact, 60% of Canadians get door-to-door delivery. That is because 25% get that delivery in a high-rise. They don't have to go out to a mailbox somewhere else. That's not

factored into Canada Post dollars. It's talking just about households. That additional 25% represents a lot more people cut back, a lot of Canadians, and with increasing density, it's going to be more efficient.

I would welcome comments from all four of you, and anything you want to use your time to elaborate. Use my time.

**Mr. Frank Goldie:** Thank you.

I can only bring up the urban issue. As far as losing the door-to-door delivery goes, they talk about the savings and the costs of adding more calls onto one's mail route, but there's also the added cost with these super mailboxes since you need to have a vehicle. That involves purchasing a vehicle, servicing a vehicle, filling that vehicle with gas, moving about the city, paying for insurance, and, if I may say so, having accidents. All these different things come into effect, so are they really saving that much money by putting up these super mailboxes and, in my opinion, uglifying the community?

Anyway, that's my point. Everybody has a vehicle now. I'm not a big environmentalist, but I know that walking eight hours a day is probably a lot healthier for a woman or a man who is a letter carrier than sitting on their butts driving in a car all day is.

Thank you.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Thank you.

Would either of you like to talk about this precarious work?

**Ms. Jacquie Strong:** I feel, Mrs. Duncan, that we do have to diversify. Our employees, through Canada Post, are all loyal. The loyalty amazes me. To diversify, we could add photocopying in some of the places, because they don't have it.

There were some very good presentations by previous speakers, and I really believe that if we took it all together and found a working program somehow, we would be very successful, especially in the rural areas. If we change where they pick up their parcels.... It's a drive of an hour or an hour and a half one way. Unfortunately, in the rural areas, they have to plan everything. They may go once a month to the city to collect things.

I think the committee here is really on track. You've listened to all of us, and I really think that a good plan will come through from all of this. To be honest, you guys are amazing. Thank you. You've listened. Every one of you has had great questions. I think we can all get it to happen. The only thing missing is talking to the people doing the actual work, the footwork, the carriers and the postmasters, the people who are actually doing the work, and the ones who want to evolve. In my office, I always want to evolve, because I want to keep my job. I always ask the crew to help me to make it better, because it is a team, and I have to say that I did not do it alone.

• (1435)

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Do I have any more time?

**The Chair:** You have one more minute.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Opstad, what is your job?

**Mr. George Opstad:** I'm a letter carrier.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** You're a letter carrier, so you are simply trying to offer a more efficient way of how the letter carriers can do their job.



**Mr. George Opstad:** That's right.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** It seems pretty obvious.

**Mr. George Opstad:** Yes.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Thanks.

Do you want to add anything, Ms. Brousseau?

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** No. Thank you very much.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Just for all of our panels, once again, the NDP caucus can't go without Linda Duncan for more than 24 hours, and that's why she's flying back—

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Are you sure?

**The Chair:** Thank you for being here, Ms. Duncan.

Our next intervenor will be Mr. Whalen.

Go ahead, please, for seven minutes.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Opstad, your story raises two issues. The first one is a business ethics issue and the other one is a missed opportunity.

Could you finish your story and let us know what happened after you contacted the minister and where things have gone?

**Mr. George Opstad:** I sent her this in May. Actually, my MP is Randy Boissonnault, so I gave it to his assistant, whose name was Tony, on January 4, and while I kept trying to see Randy just about every week, he said that he would be back next week, next week, and next week. On February 26, he gave me back all my stuff because Randy wouldn't be interested in looking at it. Then I sent this to Judy Foote. I didn't get a reply back from her.

Randy Boissonnault was having a barbecue on August 27, so I gave it all to Randy Boissonnault again. I actually gave it to him. I didn't give it to his assistant. I asked if he would give me a reply and he said, "No, I can't give you a reply." I asked why not and he said it was because it was in front of the minister. That's the last I've heard of it.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Okay. When you first met with the software designer people, ostensibly from Canada Post, were they in-house people?

**Mr. George Opstad:** Actually, he is at Canada Post. The last page I gave was that LinkedIn one. That's the guy I was actually talking to.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Okay. He is a Canada Post person?

**Mr. George Opstad:** That's right.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** It wasn't as though you were someone from outside the organization with what you were offering.

**Mr. George Opstad:** No.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** It was another Canada Post employee, just like you, who was working on the plan of creating...

**Mr. George Opstad:** That's right.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** It wasn't a competitor. This was someone who....

**Mr. George Opstad:** Well, he is actually officially doing that for Canada Post.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Sure, but you also work for Canada Post.

**Mr. George Opstad:** Yes, but I wasn't doing it officially; I was just doing it on my own. When he saw my program, basically, I was the competition.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Were you looking to sell your program to Canada Post?

**Mr. George Opstad:** I was trying to, hopefully, get another job at Canada Post, making these cases instead of delivering mail. I'd been delivering mail for 27 years. I thought I'd try something different.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** How much time do you think your system would save in terms of automatically sorting the mail?

**Mr. George Opstad:** It would be a lot, because I could take somebody who doesn't know anything about the job, and they could make them. With theirs, I said I had to make the paper thing, and you still do that now. You still do the paper thing, but with mine it's totally automated. You wouldn't have to know what you were doing. You would just put in a bit of information, and it would make the case for you.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Does it re-sort the mail?

**Mr. George Opstad:** No, it just provides those strips in the cases for when people sort their mail, the addresses. We have these cases that we sort the mail into.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Okay.

**Mr. George Opstad:** These strips are made by us. If you want new strips, you have to actually physically write down where you want each one of the addresses to go, whereas with mine, you just put down all the postal codes on your walk, and it creates the case for you.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Okay. How much of your time would be spent if you didn't use this program?

● (1440)

**Mr. George Opstad:** It would take a long time.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** How much time does it take you in a day to create one of your walks?

**Mr. George Opstad:** Do you mean with my program?

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** No, you're not using your program. You're going in, and you have to do it.

**Mr. George Opstad:** You mean with theirs?

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Yes.

**Mr. George Opstad:** If you have to write it all down, it might take you half an hour or so. Then every time there is a change in the case, you'd have to do it again, whereas with mine you wouldn't.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Okay, so you expect you could eliminate 15% of your daily work.

**Mr. George Opstad:** It would be the people who actually make those strips. That's where you would save the time.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** In terms of how we can provide better service or increased levels of service to rural communities, one of the things the task force report mentions but doesn't go into in too much detail on is that we could have a regulator who would oversee the service levels that are provided, and then companies that don't deliver their parcels all the way to rural communities would have to pay some type of a levy to subsidize entities like Canada Post that go all the way to the end. Is this something that would be amenable to Canada Post employees? How do you feel about that type of a model of service delivery?

**Ms. Jacquie Strong:** The customers would like it. A lot of customers get very frustrated that it can't be dropped off at the post office, because we are not allowed to accept items from other carriers unless they're paid for. They could make arrangements, and as far as I'm concerned, it would be to the customer's satisfaction. That's what Canada Post is all about, customer satisfaction.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** UPS should be able to deliver a parcel to you guys, and your customers would be able to come and pick it up.

**Ms. Jacquie Strong:** They could do that for a fee.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** There could be some type of pre-arranged fee.

We've learned that wages are now very low at Canada Post, compared to those for other industrial activity that happens in the country. Do the 50,000 employees at Canada Post still enjoy the type of wages that can allow them to raise families and send their children to university, or is it no longer possible for new people in Canada Post to do that?

**Ms. Jacquie Strong:** I'd have to refer you to our president, sir. I would take your name and number and have our president answer that, because I don't have the broad knowledge needed to answer that.

**Mr. Frank Goldie:** Mr. Whalen, if you ask me, in these times.... If you are starting at Canada Post today, at \$19 an hour, and actually working really hard until dark, when you can get jobs that are much easier for \$15, \$17, or \$19 an hour.... I believe they are underpaid. It's a tough go for young people starting off at \$19 an hour to raise a family, buy diapers, and put food on the table.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We're now going into our last two interventions. They will be for five minutes each.

Mr. McCauley, we'll start with you.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Thanks for joining us today.

Ladies, I've been to Coronation but I haven't been to Veteran. I didn't make it that far. I didn't get to the good part of it. Are you both from Veteran?

**Ms. Jacquie Strong:** No, I'm from Carstairs.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Okay.

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** I'm from Veteran.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Do you have banks in Veteran?

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** Next door to us is a business that does banking. They'll bring you your plates, and give you your sticker, but they won't do the picture.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** So they're like a registry?

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** Yes..

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** It's a bit like an ATB branch.

**Ms. Jacquie Strong:** Yes, it's an ATB, and he does bookkeeping for people, to do their taxes and stuff.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** And you have banks in Carstairs. Carstairs is larger, right?

On your Staples issue, I've dealt with Staples. A lot of companies..... They have their own contract with the courier so everything goes through that.

Mr. Goldie, I loved your comment about your five-point plan. I thought it was fabulous.

Mr. Opstad, you're still delivering mail. We talked with other posties about parcel delivery, and you mentioned the three-days-a-week delivery. We've heard that there's Admail that needs to go every day as well, but the three-days-a-week or two-days-a-week thing keeps being suggested.

I want to get feedback on whether you believe that's possible. One of the things we've heard is that we can't go to delivery three days a week because there's the daily Admail, which it's important to get daily. But there's also parcel delivery. I've heard from two different people. One says he does his route, and then he goes back and gets his truck and delivers parcels in the afternoon. Another one said he does his route and someone else does his parcels. How is it with you?

The other issue I wanted to bring up about the three-days-a-week service is that it was my understanding it's not viable. A lot of people said there is a need for daily parcel delivery. I'd like to get your feedback, please.

• (1445)

**Mr. Frank Goldie:** Sure. As I mentioned before, we're still delivering parcels, which is a huge business. We're still delivering parcels seven days a week. But taking away that five-days-a-week service is weakening the brand. People actually still—

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** To me it's more the practicality as opposed to weakening the brand, so is it practical to go to three days a week? My understanding is that the same postie who is delivering the parcel is also the letter carrier.

**Mr. Frank Goldie:** That's right. They're delivering parcels; they're delivering the Admail; and they're delivering the letter mail. It's amazing how much Admail these workers get. They're getting five or seven sets a day.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** They call it junk mail, but it works.

**Mr. Frank Goldie:** If in the wintertime they're going through with this, this, and this,... Let me tell you about Admail. It works.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** I know it works.

**Mr. Frank Goldie:** It really works, because these businesses wouldn't be sending these Admails out, whether it's for McDonald's or it's an IKEA catalogue—

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** I'm sorry to cut you off, but I want to hear from Mr. Opstad and—

**Mr. Frank Goldie:** Sure.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Do you share the same thoughts as Mr. Goldie?

**Mr. George Opstad:** Yes.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** How do you do your route? Do you do what this other gentleman—

**Mr. George Opstad:** I deliver in your riding.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** I was going to ask you where.

**Mr. George Opstad:** Yes, I do the letters and the parcels together, so I have a big truck.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** You do them at the same time?

**Mr. George Opstad:** Yes. It's basically like the old system, except that in the old system we used to have those relay boxes, so basically my truck is like a relay box. I get out of my truck and I deliver in a certain area, and then I get back in my truck and do another area.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** There's something I wanted to ask you gentlemen, because it's come up. A lot of people think the answer for everything is a three-days-a-week service, but my understanding is that it's just not practical or possible because of the Admail and the parcel delivery.

**Mr. George Opstad:** That's right.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** How much time do I have?

**The Chair:** You have less than a minute.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Wonderful.

**Mr. Frank Goldie:** The Admail is just a huge, huge money-maker for Canada Post. It charges the customer, 15 cents, 20 cents, 25 cents, even 50 cents per piece for Admail, and the customer brings it to the post office. A union person brings it straight to the carrier and they pay the carrier two cents or three cents per piece to deliver those items.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** I've sent Admail myself, so I understand.

**Mr. Frank Goldie:** It is gravy and—

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** I'm going to interrupt you, because we're out of time, but that's what I wanted to hear and—

**The Chair:** You are out of time.

Our final intervention will be from Madam Ratansi for five minutes.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Thank you.

Madam Brousseau, I have a question for you.

You say that 95% of your workforce is women. How many postmasters or assistant postmasters are there within the environment you operate in?

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** The membership consists of 1,812 semi-staff postmasters. There are 3,035 full-time and part-time employees.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Did you say that 95% are women?

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** Yes.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** You know, there are full-time employees and there are part-time employees.

When we look at our budgets, we say to every department, "You need to use a gender lens." Through that gender lens, we want to ensure that women, families, children, and so forth benefit from our tax policies and so on.

How do you think this is impacting the quality of life for your 95% women if they are not getting the work hours?

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** In my rural area it's hard to keep term and part-time employees because eventually they need more money for the kids with hockey and dance. They need more hours, so they usually end up quitting a part-time job. Who wants to work ten hours a week and be tied to a job? We do lose a lot of women because things are going in that direction.

• (1450)

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** How do you replenish it? There has been talk about elitists, and I'm sure you are not the elitist here. We have to do a reality check. What do you do? How do you get more women? How do you get more workers, actually?

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** We put out an advertisement and try to get it out there.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** How much do you pay them per hour?

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** Our new starting wage is \$19 per hour.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Oh, \$19 per hour.

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** I think that's what happened with the new collective agreement.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** In your post office, do you have Internet service?

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** No. I'm allowed to look online to track a package and nothing else. Our dial-up is very slow.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Is it because of the lack of broadband in the remote communities that you serve?

**Ms. Michelle Brousseau:** It is affected. It's not as quick as in the city.

I don't know how well your broadband works.

**Ms. Jacquie Strong:** Ours isn't that quick either and we're an hour from the city. Ours has some glitches.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** I ask because great ideas have been floating around, and we need to be practical and realistic. Somebody looked at the integrated approach and said that the post office could be used in remote areas where schools don't have Internet and where teachers could do interactive classes. It could be used as a hub for conversation. It could be used as a place where small businesses can come and have their meetings. Is there any utilization of such nature in your area at the moment?

**Ms. Jacquie Strong:** There's none that I'm aware of, but I think there should be a pilot project for that. To be honest with you, I think it's an awesome idea.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** You have the network. You're the last mile of delivery.

I'll ask you a question. If Canada Post is to lose labour through attrition, do you think management should go through the same process?

**Mr. George Opstad:** Sure.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Do you think that management, who are talking about sustainability, should take a cut in pay? They are highly paid at \$300,000 to \$650,000 per person.

**Mr. George Opstad:** Right.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Yes. How much does a postal worker make?

**Mr. George Opstad:** I don't know. Perhaps \$25,000.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Is it \$25,000, \$30,000, \$50,000...?

**Mr. Frank Goldie:** It all depends on when you started. If you started within the last two or three years, you're making \$19 per hour times 80 times 26. If you were lucky enough to start three or four years ago, you're making \$26 times 80 times 26.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** How many minutes do I have?

**The Chair:** None.

Madam Ratansi, time is fleeting.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** I know.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** To all our witnesses, thank you so much for being here today.

I do thank you for being so patient and sitting in the audience for the entire day's presentations. I'm very pleased that we had a chance to get you all to the table. Your testimony has been extremely helpful and will help us in our deliberations.

That being said, should there be additional information that you think would assist this committee in its deliberations, please contact our clerk directly. Caroline can give you her coordinates. Any information you send directly to our clerk will end up in our final report; I can assure you of that.

On a personal note, Mr. Opstad, I wish you good luck. I love to see initiative, and I certainly hope that you get a response from the minister. At the very least, if your program doesn't work, someone should just say it doesn't, but if it does work, and it can help Canada Post... I love to see that initiative in employees. Thank you, personally, from me.

Thank you, again, and have safe travels.

The meeting is adjourned.

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