



“In a fair, unbiased and timely manner, the Ombudsman at Canada Post will independently review customer concerns unresolved by other avenues offered by Canada Post to help improve postal service for all Canadians.”

Annual Report
2006

Mr. Gordon Feeney
Chairman of the Board of Directors
Canada Post

Dear Mr. Feeney:

In accordance with the mandate established by the Board of Directors of Canada Post on November 13, 1997, I am pleased to submit my fifth annual report as Ombudsman covering the period January 1 to December 31, 2006.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light yellow background. The signature is cursive and reads "Michel Tremblay".

Michel Tremblay

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From the Ombudsman

As the final appeal authority in the complaint resolution process, I am committed to responding to all customers who contact my office. Therefore, I do not consider any request to be trivial. I am neither an advocate for customers nor a representative of Canada Post. Being removed from the contentious issues under investigation, I am in a unique position to observe and analyse situations in an objective manner. I also have the responsibility to maintain strict confidentiality and, in that regard, I do not divulge information provided by parties involved in a dispute without their consent, except in cases of imminent danger.

In 2006, my office processed 7,290 requests for assistance, representing an increase of 10.3% over last year. These include 5,068 complaints that required investigation, an increase of 15.5%, and 2,222 complaints that were processed and closed at intake, an increase of 1%. Of the 5,068 investigated complaints, 2,233 were resolved at the initial stages of the investigative process, and 2,835 yielded 1,480 recommendations to Canada Post. Specifically, 1,024 recommendations resulted in Canada Post modifying its original decision and 456 recommendations maintained Canada Post's original decision as I found no cause or justification to recommend a different resolution. The 2,222 complaints processed and closed at intake consist of requests for information, and complaints that were non-jurisdictional, resolved internally or referred to a broad spectrum of public or private sector agencies.

My role is to review complaints raised by customers once the complaint resolution process has been exhausted. As such, I expect customers to allow Canada Post every opportunity to resolve their complaints prior to contacting my office. Our telephone statistics demonstrate that intake staff processed 12,300 customer calls, of which 2,404 were from customers who contacted my office prematurely. In an effort to raise customer awareness, the complaint resolution process was incorporated into our integrated voice response system.

In addition to reviewing complaints, I continued to bring emerging trends and concerns to Canada Post's attention, which I felt were or could become problematic. As such, I met with Canada Post executives to relay these issues with a view to assisting the Corporation in gaining a better understanding of customer complaints and the manner of their resolution.

Like all Ombudsman, I base my practice on confidentiality. As such, I do not divulge information provided by parties involved in a dispute without their consent, except in cases of imminent danger. Confidentiality also applies to media relations. Even with a customer's consent, I do not discuss with members of the media any specifics regarding a complaint, nor do I confirm or deny any specific complaint.

In our continued efforts to raise customer awareness, a new brochure was distributed throughout Canada Post's retail network, outlining the complaint resolution process. This brochure continues to be prominently displayed in all postal outlets for easy access to customers.

In closing, I take this opportunity to thank Canada Post for its continued cooperation as this synergy often leads to diligent resolution of customer complaints or of recurring areas of concerns that could otherwise require systemic reviews. Also, I thank my staff for their ongoing dedication and professionalism and I am confident that the office will continue to respond to customers in a fair and unbiased manner.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "Michel Tremblay".

Michel Tremblay

The Ombudsman's Role

The Ombudsman is the final appeal authority in the complaint resolution process at Canada Post.

Impartial

The Ombudsman is neither an advocate for customers nor a representative of Canada Post. His neutrality allows him to review both sides in a dispute without favouring one or the other. Being removed from contentious issues under investigation, the Ombudsman is in a unique position to observe and analyse situations in an objective manner.

“Your report addressed all aspects of my complaint and I now understand why your recommendation did not rule entirely in my favour. Although I disagree with your decision, I respect your impartiality.”

British Columbia

Independent

The Ombudsman independently investigates postal service related issues raised by customers; therefore, he operates at arms-length from Canada Post.

“I didn't realize how independent from Canada Post you are until you explained that I needed to provide you with all the details of my complaint. I thought all I had to do was give you my Canada Post customer Service file number.”

Ontario

Recommendations

The Ombudsman recommends equitable courses of action in an effort to resolve customer complaints. Consequently, he assesses the possible impact of his recommendations to ensure the consistency of postal services to all Canadians. Canada Post has the latitude to accept or reject any of the Ombudsman's recommendations.

“Thank you for all the work you did. Shortly after I received your final report, Canada Post implemented your recommendation.”

Nova Scotia

Mediation

The Ombudsman acts as a mediator between Canada Post and its customers when challenging situations result in a breakdown in communication.

“I had reached an impasse with Canada Post and did not anticipate a positive outcome when I approached your office. I was pleasantly surprised when your intervention produced a solution that was fair for both me and Canada Post.”

Manitoba

Appealing to the Ombudsman

Complaint Resolution Process

The complaint resolution process ensures that Canada Post has every opportunity to resolve customer complaints. Therefore, prior to appealing to the Ombudsman, customers must contact Canada Post Customer Service at 1-800-267-1177. Customer Service agents will attempt to resolve customer complaints and provide them with a file number referencing their complaint.

Once Canada Post Customer Service has completed its review and rendered a decision, if customers are not satisfied with the proposed solution, they may appeal to the Ombudsman.

Customers must submit their complaints to the Ombudsman by completing a *Request for Review* form. Before complaints can be assessed, customers must provide the following information:

- ❑ Contact Information;
- ❑ Canada Post Customer Service file number;
- ❑ Summary of complaint;
- ❑ Details on how Canada Post offered to resolve the complaint;
- ❑ Description of the outcome the customer believes to be fair; and,
- ❑ Copies of all relevant documentation, including postage receipt, proof of value of contents, etc.

The Ombudsman's final decisions are based on the facts and circumstances specific to each complaint. Therefore, it is in the best interest for all parties involved to provide all relevant information.

The Ombudsman will not divulge information provided by the parties involved during the course of his investigation without their consent, except in cases of imminent danger. Furthermore, he does not discuss customer complaints with the media, nor does he confirm or deny any specific complaint.

Intake

All complaints are assessed in order to determine whether they fall within the Ombudsman's mandate. While some are within jurisdiction, they are resolved internally at the initial stages of intake. Others are non-jurisdictional and may be referred to a broad spectrum of public or private sector agencies. In all cases, the Ombudsman is committed to helping customers who request his assistance.

At intake, staff processed and closed 2,222 complaints as follows: 1,549 resolved internally, 134 non-jurisdictional, and 539 were information requests.

Additionally, the office received 12,300 calls of which 2,404 were from customers who did not follow the complaint resolution process. These customers were guided through the process by intake staff.

Investigations

The focus of the investigations is to determine whether Canada Post applied its policies, procedures and guidelines appropriately. Investigative staff treat all complaints with the same dedication and apply the following investigative procedures:

- ❑ Interviewing parties involved, if necessary;
- ❑ Gathering and analyzing all relevant information;
- ❑ Developing investigative plans; and,
- ❑ Conducting on-site visits, depending upon the complexity of the complaint.

The office conducted 5,068 investigations resulting in the following outcomes:

- 1,480 warranted an Ombudsman recommendation;
- 889 were resolved without the need for a recommendation;
- 2,233 were resolved at the preliminary stages of the investigative process;
- 267 were discontinued by either party; and,
- 199 were carried over to 2007.

Recommendations

The Ombudsman has no binding authority. His moral suasion assures that his recommendations to Canada Post are carefully considered. Canada Post may accept or reject any of his recommendations.

The Ombudsman made 1,480 recommendations to Canada Post as follows:

- 452 requested that Canada Post provide complainants with some form of compensation for a service failure;
- 572 requested that Canada Post implement corrective measures; and,
- 456 maintained Canada Post's original decision as the Ombudsman found no cause or justification to recommend a different resolution.

Types of Complaints

The following is a representative sample illustrating the types of complaints brought to the Ombudsman's attention during November 2006.

- Addressed Advertising Mail
- Customer Service
- Delivery Employee
- Expedited Parcels
- Hold Mail Service
- International Mail and Parcels
- Lettermail
- Mode of Delivery
- Regular Parcels
- Retail Services
- Priority Courier
- Publication Mail
- Purolator (when sold at postal outlets)
- Redirection Service
- Registered Mail
- Unaddressed Advertising Mail
- Xpresspost

Case Reviews

The following case reviews illustrate a sample of the complaints the office receives. In order to protect the confidentiality of personal information, no names have been used and any details that would identify customers have been omitted.

The Buck Stops Here!

A customer mailed a watch using Canada Post's Xpresspost service. At the time of mailing, he purchased insurance for damage or loss in the amount of \$2,000. In the light of the fact that the addressee received the watch in damaged condition, the customer contacted Canada Post Customer Service to file a claim. In response, Canada Post offered to repair the watch per its procedures.

As the customer did not agree with Canada Post's offer, he appealed to the Ombudsman stating that he felt he was entitled to the full indemnity of \$2,000.

The facts gathered during the investigation revealed a number of inconsistencies - namely, that the retail cost of the watch was \$200, not \$2,000. Because the customer failed to respond to the investigator's queries regarding these inconsistencies, activity on the file was suspended and the Ombudsman denied the customer's request for compensation.

Bon Voyage?

A customer requested the Ombudsman's assistance because he feared an impending family vacation could be jeopardized as only three of four passports he was expecting were received. When the customer contacted Customer Service, he was advised that since the scanning information for the item indicated it was still in transit, immediate assistance could not be provided.

Intake staff acknowledged the urgency of the situation and initiated a series of telephone calls to various Canada Post offices resulting in the passport being located and delivered to the customer.

Never give up!

A customer appealed to the Ombudsman explaining that a parcel he mailed to his residence in Canada while abroad was received in damaged condition. The customer stated that although Canada Post repaired its packaging, some of the contents were missing, including an item of great sentimental value. Subsequent to the customer contacting Canada Post to report the loss, he was informed that a search of Canada Post's facilities proved to be unsuccessful. Furthermore, Canada Post explained that as two postal administrations were involved, it could not confirm with certainty where the item went astray. As such, it was unable to assist him.

The outcome of the investigation produced additional information, which enabled Canada Post to narrow down its search parameters. This resulted in the item being located and returned to the customer.

Whose fault is it?

A customer mailed a clock via Canada Post's Regular Parcel service and insured it for damage or loss in the amount of \$675, at the time mailing. As the clock was received in damaged condition, the customer contacted Canada Post to file a claim. Canada Post denied the customer's claim stating that it considered the clock to be fragile and that its indemnity covers for loss only when items are of a fragile nature.

The customer did not agree with Canada Post's decision and appealed to the Ombudsman requesting a full reimbursement.

The investigation revealed that the packaging used by the customer to protect the clock was insufficient. Conversely, the box used to mail the clock was crushed, which could have been the result of mishandling during processing.

The Ombudsman concluded that both the customer and Canada Post should share equal responsibility for the damages sustained to the contents; therefore, he recommended that the customer be compensated half the insured value of the clock.

Contact Information

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Facsimile:

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Website:

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