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CLC/CTC - FTQ - UNI

September 21, 2005

The Honourable John McCallum
Minister Responsible for Canada Post
Connaught Building, 7th Floor South
555 MacKenzie Ave.
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0L5

Dear Minister McCallum:

Re: Closures, Privatization and Deregulation

I am writing to object to postal network closures and Canada Post's plan to close the mail processing plant in Quebec City.

As you may know, Canada Post is reviewing its national network and has announced plans to close a mail processing plant in Quebec City as the very first step in its review. This plant closure will undermine service and destroy 302 jobs in Quebec City. We are concerned that the corporation may close other parts of its network in the course of its review.

We are also concerned that Canada Post is not abiding by the spirit and letter of the moratorium on post office/outlet closures.

I would like to explain by providing you with some background information. In the mid eighties, the Conservative federal government set out to close down all public post offices except for one in every large urban centre or capital city.

The Tories were stopped in their tracks by postal union opposition, public outrage and an election defeat in 1993, but only after 93 urban and 1,442 rural offices and outlets had closed.

In 1994, the federal Liberal government announced that no rural or small town post office would close as long as the Liberals were in power.

Nevertheless, Canada Post has been closing post offices. Approximately 50 rural offices have been temporarily or permanently closed. Most of these closures have occurred since 2001 (Source: Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association, May 2005).

To deal with growing public opposition to closures, you recently issued a statement claiming that the federal government's commitment to the moratorium on rural post office closures "remains unwavering".

However, in the very same statement, you admit that some closures may be unavoidable. You state that Canada Post will contact you about any closure and that your staff will then inform the member of Parliament in the area. There is a vague assurance that Canada Post will work with "local officials" to see if a post office can be reopened. Not the public. Not municipalities. Not postal unions. Not major stakeholders. Just local officials.

This is a far cry from the government's original commitment. When the Liberal government announced the moratorium, it said "As long as this Government is in power, no rural or small town post office will close" (See attached media release, Minister Responsible for Canada Post Corporation, Feb 18, 1994).

It promised *not* to make any changes to this policy without first undergoing "a full and comprehensive consultation with Postal Service Customer Councils." The government said, "The people will decide." (See attached, Notes by Minister Responsible for Canada Post, February 17, 1994)

Postal Service Customer Councils no longer exist. There is no clear process for "full and comprehensive consultation" to deal with closures. The people are not deciding on what happens to post offices.

CUPW would like the government to live up to its commitments by instructing Canada Post to let people (not just local officials) in communities decide if they want to keep their post office, or if they want their mail delivered door-to-door or to rural mail boxes.

Please let me know whether the government is willing to give these instructions to the corporation.

CUPW would also like the government to acknowledge that Canada Post needs a uniform and democratic process for making changes to its network of offices, outlets and plants. The public and postal workers need to be part of this process in both rural and urban areas. Canada Post is, after all, a public post office.

Please let me know if you have any plans to instruct Canada Post to adopt a uniform and democratic process for making changes to the postal network.

As well, CUPW would like to know whether you support or oppose the privatization and deregulation of Canada Post. There is an election coming and the public and postal workers have a right to know the government's position on these issues.

The union would appreciate a response to the three issues we have raised (i.e. instructions on the moratorium, instructions on adopting a uniform and democratic process for making changes to the postal network and views on privatization and deregulation). CUPW would also like meet with you to discuss these matters, which are of utmost importance.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah Bourque".

Deborah Bourque
National President

c.c.: National Executive Board
CUPW locals
Paul Martin, Prime Minister
Moya Greene, President of Canada Post
Gordon Feeney, Chair, Canada Post Board of Directors
Brian Pallister, Conservative post office critic
Bev Desjarlais, NDP post office critic
Robert Bouchard, Bloc Quebecois post office critic

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