

Canada Post ?going through time of change? and transition: Crown Corporation

By Brock Weir

In 2006, Canadians mailed over 5 billion pieces of mail, but just over six years later, this rate had fallen by over a billion pieces, according to Canada Post.

As these numbers continue to dwindle, however, Canada Post now has to make ?historic and difficult decisions? to ensure Canada's postal service remains up and running ? while making money.

This was the message Canada Post delivered to Council last week, ahead of a contentious discussion surrounding communications issues swirling around the Crown Corporation's decision to phase out door-to-door mail service in favour of installing community mailboxes across the country.

?We do understand that change is difficult [but this transition] will be done in a thoughtful and effective way,? said Canada Post's Andrew Walasek. ?We're seeing a rise in digital communications which nobody saw coming and we have to address along with every single postal administration in the world. [As the number of pieces of mail goes down] the number of addresses we deliver to is increasing, so we have less product going to more places and that is definitely a challenge for the corporation. Making the decision to end door-to-door delivery has been difficult. At this stage in its history, Canada Post must make historic and difficult decisions. The changes we're making are necessary to ensure the future of postal service in Canada.?

Current door-to-door service costs twice as much as delivery to a community mailbox, he added, and converting five million addresses will be the largest cost-saving measure currently eyed by Canada Post, saving up to \$5 million annually. At the moment, two thirds of Canadians already have a ?centralized mode of delivery? ranging from a community mailbox to a post office box, with the remaining third up for conversion.

?We are looking at doing a number of things, including an accommodation program for those who cannot access the community mailbox,? he continued. ?We understand some people will face challenges as we convert from door-to-door delivery service. Questionnaires have been mailed out to customers who are going to be transitioned. This information will help our dedicated team understand personal situations. We want to talk one-on-one with individuals we don't think will be able to access their locks. We will come up with a solution that fits that individual.?

Throughout Canada Post's consultation process, it was heard loud and clear from business owners that they would take a particular hit if all door-to-door delivery was phased out and, as a result, business corridors will be largely unaffected by the change.

?Canada Post believes in local consultation,? said Mr. Walasek. ?We met early on in the process to explain why this change was necessary. We will communicate regularly with residents. We will share feedback which we received as far as large and small sites are concerned, providing maps to planning departments and working closely with the municipality.

?This will allow Canada Post to be competitive in delivering services. While we have a mandate to deliver lettermail, we do have competition from the parcel industry. We must turn a profit and that is important.?