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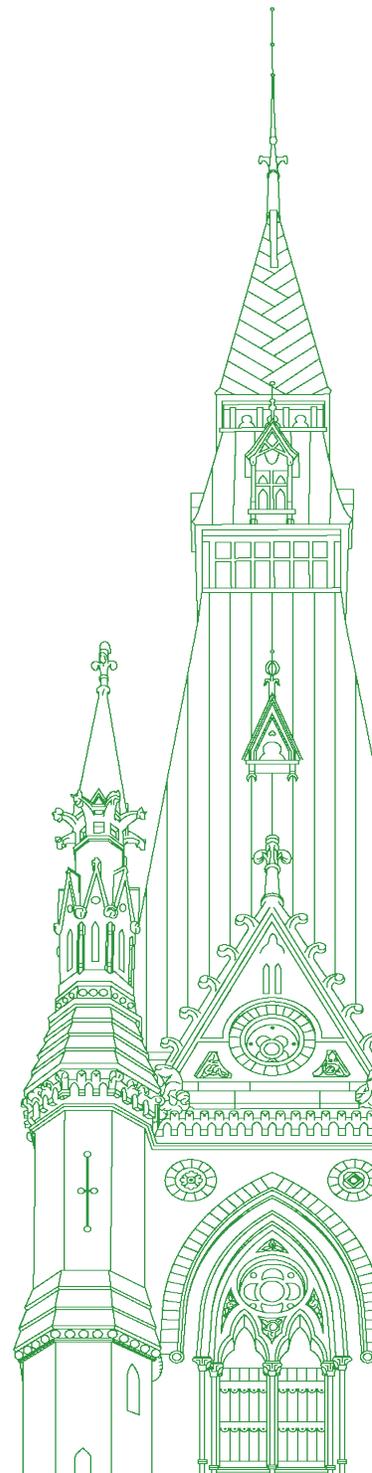
Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

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Chair: Mr. Kelly McCauley

Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. I call this meeting to order on a beautiful day in Ottawa.

Welcome to meeting number 117 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(c) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, February 5, the committee is meeting to consider matters related to postal services in Canada's rural and remote communities.

I'll remind you, as always, not to put your earpieces next to the microphone, as it can cause feedback and potential injury to our very valued interpreters.

We have three witnesses today from two groups. They are from the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association and CUPW. I understand there will be a five-minute statement from both organizations.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much to our witnesses for being here today.

I want to get to a piece of business that I believe is very important not only for this committee, but for all Canadians. I believe it touches on a subject we studied very closely last year that's tied to the arrive scam scandal, which I'm sure our witnesses here today have heard about. It's the damning report of the procurement ombudsman regarding McKinsey.

McKinsey, a company that has over \$100 million—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Chair, could I ask what the point of order is?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: —in contracts with the—

The Chair: We'll get to it, Mr. Bachrach.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: It is relevant.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: It has to be an actual point of order.

The Chair: I am waiting for that, Mr. Bachrach.

Please continue, Mrs. Kusie.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you.

It has over \$100 million in contracts with this Trudeau government, but the most damning piece of this contract—

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Mr. Chair, this point of order—

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: —in this report, Mr. Chair, is the fact—

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: I have a point of order.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: —that the procurement ombudsman found that the government actually bent the rules to favour McKinsey. It's similar to what we saw with the arrive scam scandal.

Once again, we see this Liberal government favouring its friends and insiders in McKinsey in—

Mr. Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: —the report of the procurement ombudsman, as we did with the arrive scam scandal.

Now, this is no surprise—

Mr. Charles Sousa: Are you getting there?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: —as we have had Dominic Barton, who came and testified at this committee—

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Did you get your clip, Ms. Kusie?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: This further ties into the relevance.

He advised Justin Trudeau on the advisory council on economic growth and its Indo-Pacific advisory committee—

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Chair, what is the relevance?

Mr. Charles Sousa: This is a speech.

The Chair: That's enough.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Of course, they went on to....

I'm getting to the point, Mr. Chair—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:—if they will allow me to do that.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I don't think this is a point of order.

The Chair: Gentlemen—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: It's an abuse of the process—

The Chair: Mr. Bachrach, I have the floor. I understand.

Could we have silence?

Mrs. Kusie, can you get to your point of order, please?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Yes, of course.

He went on to create the failed, scandal-plagued Canada Infrastructure Bank.

The greatest stain on our society currently, I believe, Mr. Chair, is his role and McKinsey's role in the opioid crisis. They had to pay \$600 million in damages—

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Is this “clips Monday”?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: I think, given this report—

Mr. Charles Sousa: Seriously. You would do it to us. Do it to her, please.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: —by the procurement ombudsman today, Mr. Chair, it is absolutely necessary for this committee to hear from the procurement ombudsman—

Mr. Charles Sousa: Mr. Chair, please....

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: —regarding this report, and from the CBSA once again.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Gentlemen, please—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, may I raise a point of order?

The Chair: Yes. Is it on that point of order or a different point of order?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I'm just wondering what your ruling will be on the point of order raised by my colleague Mrs. Kusie.

• (1110)

The Chair: If I could get to it, I could probably make such a ruling.

Mrs. Kusie, I appreciate your comments. This is not a point of order.

Colleagues, if you have read the report, though, it is pretty—

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): We agree, but that doesn't have—

The Chair: I'm glad you agree. It's a....

Let me speak, please.

It is a rather damning report.

I appreciate Mrs. Kusie's comments, though it is not a point of order.

I'm glad you agree. Perhaps we've had the ombudsman in before—

Mr. Majid Jowhari: No, I do agree, but that's not—

The Chair: Okay. My Liberal colleagues agree with me.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: —a point of order.

The Chair: No.

I hope that we will agree and we can get to having Mr. Jeglic in, and perhaps PSPC, on the report he's spent the past year preparing. I hope if everyone's fine with that, we'll find some time to do it.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: I guess we're still on the same point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Bachrach, if you have anything else.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I share my colleague's concern about the report, and I very much want to see this committee examine that in great detail.

My concern is that points of order are used inappropriately and the chair doesn't cut them off. I don't think that's a latitude you would allow me or anyone from another party, so I would just ask that in the future, points of order be restricted to actual points of order.

I think all parties are guilty of that at different times, but it's frustrating and it's a frustrating way to start an important meeting. I'll just leave it at that.

Thank you.

The Chair: I should have cut you off halfway through.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: No, I understand what you're saying. I've allowed a wide latitude on other points of order, I agree, but this one was certainly not a point of order. However, I'm glad you're agreeing with me—

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: It's relevant to this committee, though.

The Chair: —and Mr. Jowhari that perhaps we do need to bring Mr. Jeglic and PSPC on that report.

If everyone is fine, we'll leave it at that.

We'll now get to our witnesses.

Ms. Simpson, we'll start with you for five minutes for your opening statement.

Ms. Jan Simpson (National President, Canadian Union of Postal Workers): Good morning, committee members.

First, I would like to acknowledge the Anishinabe Algonquin nation on whose traditional and unceded territory we are gathered today.

On behalf of the more than 55,000 members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, I want to thank the committee for the invitation and for the opportunity to share CUPW's vision and values with you. We represent workers across every region of our country, including many rural and remote areas.

Today, I sit before you to shed light on a crucial yet often overlooked aspect of Canada's public infrastructure: the postal service and its integral role in our rural and remote communities.

While we often associate the postal service with delivering letters, its significance extends far beyond delivery. In rural and remote areas where traditional infrastructure might be lacking, the postal service plays an invaluable role, connecting communities, fostering equity and inclusion, and driving local economies.

First and foremost, let's acknowledge that Canada is a vast country with diverse geography encompassing sprawling rural landscapes and isolated remote regions. In these areas, accessing the goods and services that we take for granted in urban areas can be a challenge. However, with a rural network unparalleled in scope, the postal service bridges the gap by providing reliable mail delivery, ensuring that rural residents have access to communication, goods and services no matter where they live. From medication and medical supplies to online purchases, government correspondence and groceries, the postal service ensures that people living in rural and remote communities have equitable access to the resources they need to thrive.

In an era of increasing digital communication, the rural post office service remains as relevant as ever, both economically and socially.

In recent years, we have seen parcel volumes grow faster in rural Canada than they have in urban areas.

With low population density and high delivery costs, much of rural Canada is significantly underserved by Canada Post's private sector competitors. In fact, its competitors have turned to Canada Post for the last mile of rural delivery. Clearly, without the rural postal service, the private sector is not going to fill the gap.

The loss of postal services in rural and remote communities means the loss of key drivers of local economic development. The postal service employs more than 10,000 rural Canadians, providing them with good-paying unionized jobs that are now far too uncommon. Supporting the rural postal service means good-paying jobs that support postal workers, their families, communities and local businesses.

The rural post office is a community hub. It is not only a place where people pick up the mail. It is also a place where people gather to connect with their neighbours and hear about local news and events. The rural post office is a place to share knowledge and build community. Across so much of this country, no one knows more about their communities than postal workers.

We live in the age of the Internet, but in too much of rural and remote Canada, Internet connections remain spotty, if they exist at all. With its vast network of offices, the rural postal service has the potential to play an even bigger role in connecting communities and helping people stay informed. Post offices could be used to enhance access to the Internet where it is currently lacking.

In many communities, the post office is the only face of the federal government. The post office reinforces a sense of belonging to a wider community, to a shared sense of what it means to be Cana-

dian. When a post office closes, communities lose perhaps their only physical link to their government.

As postal workers, we are proud to provide a public service to all citizens, but we know that rural postal service has the potential to do even more. With a presence in every community, post offices could be used to offer access to government services and banking services. We could bring back the food north program to promote reconciliation with indigenous peoples. Based on the government's public opinion polling, we know that service expansion is a popular idea.

For all of those reasons and more, CUPW has, for many years, maintained that the moratorium protecting rural post office closures needs to be strengthened. Hundreds of post offices have been closed since the 1994 moratorium.

In conclusion, the postal service is not just a logistical operation; it's a cornerstone of community resilience and inclusivity. Its presence in Canada's rural and remote areas ensures that no one is left behind, regardless of where they live.

• (1115)

As we navigate an ever-changing landscape, let us remember the unique role of the postal service in fostering connectivity, supporting economic development and upholding the values of equity and inclusion in our society.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Simpson.

Mr. Jones, go ahead, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Dwayne Jones (National President, Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association): Good morning.

I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak about a subject that is important to me individually, important to CPAA—which I'll call "the association" in my remarks—and important to all people living in rural Canada.

The association represents more than 8,500 employees at Canada Post. I can say with pride that we only represent employees working in the corporation's rural offices. Our members work in nearly 3,000 post offices. Those offices range from small operations in people's homes, to general stores and municipal buildings, to larger operations in larger towns.

Many of the post offices are in extremely remote communities, including fly-in and boat-in locations. A significant number of our members supply the premises for the post office, largely at their own cost, and receive a small leasing allowance for doing so.

CPAA was formed a little over three decades after Confederation, in 1902. At that time, rural post offices were the centre and lifeblood of rural communities. The same is true today. Many Canadians living in urban locations take postal and other delivery services for granted. In rural Canada, the options for sending and receiving necessities of life are much more limited.

At no time was this more clear than during the COVID pandemic. During those most challenging times, the ability to get food, medication and other essentials in thousands of communities was completely dependent on Canada Post's rural offices. Workers went in to CPAA post offices day after day and week after week, understanding that they were putting their health and perhaps their lives in serious jeopardy.

They were doing so because they were considered by the government, by their employer and by their communities to be performing an essential service. It may have taken a pandemic for some Canadians to understand the importance of a post office, but most people outside of big cities already knew the central place that post offices and postal services hold.

Post offices allow businesses to reach out to the world from remote areas. They allow local operations to grow. They prevent migration out of smaller communities by offering residents in rural Canada access to services and goods. Even in the age of the Internet, they allow federal, provincial and municipal governments to communicate with residents in those rural communities.

In rural Canada, Canada Post has the ability to help those communities grow. We have been spearheading initiatives to offer more services and more diverse ones. This includes using those offices as financial service hubs. Postal banking was a service that our post offices offered during much of the last century. Some banks moved in and have recently decided they are not willing to invest in those services or those communities. Canada Post has started offering them again on a small scale. We believe that so much more is possible.

A post office is also an affirmation of our commitment to one another as citizens of Canada. From Old Perlican, Newfoundland, to Bella Coola, British Columbia, and from Kugluktuk, Nunavut, to Bromont, Quebec, the Canadian flag on each post office is a sign that Canada respects and serves all, no matter where they live.

We should also remember Canada's commitment to indigenous communities. Many, if not most, are in rural and remote communities in Canada. The need to ensure access to the complete range of postal services and facilities in those communities is part of Canada's fundamental obligation. Canada Post recognizes this obligation as part of its commitment to an indigenous and northern reconciliation strategy.

I worked in CPAA post offices in Alberta before I took on my responsibilities with the association. There, and in every CPAA office that I have visited, I have seen first-hand the dedication that our members in rural Canada bring to their work. They do so be-

cause they understand the importance of what they do. They do it for their neighbours and they do it for their families, for farmers and for small business owners. Through these people and through other people, they do it for all Canadians.

For decades, the association has been resisting the efforts of Canada Post to reduce services to rural Canada. In the nineties, we worked with other organizations to help people understand what was at stake if rural Canadians were stripped of their basic services. We received a promise from the federal government that there would be a moratorium on office closures. Even with the moratorium, Canada Post has closed hundreds of offices over the past 15 years.

We are worried that we are at risk of returning to those difficult times. Our members have had their working hours cut to the barest minimum needed to get the job done or below that.

● (1120)

In the absence of a will to support rural Canada, we worry that post office closures and cuts in service may now be back on the table. We are sure the committee understands the importance of maintaining postal services to all Canadians. The association urges the government and each of the federal parties to ensure rural Canadians can continue to live in security and dignity and receive the levels of postal service that will allow them to continue to participate fully in Canadian society.

I am passionate about these issues, because I understand the need for rural post offices and the services they provide, as well as the importance of those services in the daily lives of hundreds of thousands of Canadians.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jones.

Let's start with Mrs. Block for six minutes, please.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions will be for either one of the witnesses to answer.

I represent a very large rural riding in Saskatchewan with many small communities that, as you both have pointed out, appreciate the post offices within their communities.

In my riding I have a community that has been forced to fundraise in order to have their post office and to provide the service level they not only desire, but need. Have you heard of any other communities or post offices that require fundraising in order to operate at the required level for a community?

Mr. Dwayne Jones: Some of our offices, which are known as a group office—primarily that's a single-person office in smaller communities—have a leasing allowance stipend that they receive on a monthly basis over the course of a year. A lot of times they find that leasing allowance doesn't support the full cost of operating the post office. Communities have banded together once they realize that for anything over and above, they do have an option with Canada Post to request to have that leasing allowance increased, but it's not always guaranteed. We've seen many turned down in areas that don't have other facilities they can operate in. What they end up doing is they speak with the landlord, and sometimes municipalities have banded together to try to reduce costs for those post offices to remain.

• (1125)

Mrs. Kelly Block: That's an interesting issue that you raise. I know my colleague, Mr. Bachrach, asked about what Canada Post is willing to pay when it comes to leasing an office in a smaller community.

Have any of your members who work at rural post offices raised these concerns with you about the lack of funding for the role of the post office in their communities and how this impacts their ability to support the community?

I would welcome Ms. Simpson or Ms. Tobin to also answer the question.

Mr. Dwayne Jones: I can speak from a CPAA perspective.

We're conducting a survey. We've had over 300 surveys that have gone out to group postmasters. To date, we don't have all the responses back, but it's appearing that about a \$32,000 a month shortfall is what's coming back from these group postmasters that they're paying out-of-pocket in order to maintain that post office.

Again, this is something that we've had individual postmasters communicate through our national office to request, in accordance with our collective agreement, an increase to that amount, which we take to Canada Post. We present that on their behalf with all the expenses and revenues laid out.

As I said earlier, there's not a big uptake on it from the corporation in agreeing to that. Some are agreed to and some are denied. This is something where we're listening to the members and we're pushing when they are able to supply us with that information.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Have the amounts Canada Post is willing to pay to lease a space in a rural community increased over the last couple of decades?

Mr. Dwayne Jones: I can speak to that. I'll just give you an idea.

We have an appendix in our collective agreement and the leasing allowance for a group 1 postmaster, the rates as of April 1, 2023, to operate a post office yearly would be \$1,357. That has come up since April 1, 2019, from \$1,229. There's been a small adjustment yearly over, but not substantial amounts in order to offset expenses.

There are more numbers, just depending on the size of the group office.

Mrs. Kelly Block: What does that do to the morale of members of your unions when they know that rural post office workers are

having to fundraise to support their jobs or aren't being heard when they're asking for these increases?

Mr. Dwayne Jones: I think the biggest thing is that they feel undervalued, for one, because they're providing.... When I said that they were dedicated and committed, they are very much so, because they're integrated in that community. They're serving family, serving friends and serving neighbours, and the level of service they bring is that they give 110%.

When they don't receive that back where even the basic operating costs are covered, it's not a slap in the face, but you feel undervalued for what you're pouring in. You're feeling like your contribution isn't being equally valued amongst colleagues in other locations.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Ms. Atwin, please, for six minutes.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Hello to all the committee members today.

Thank you to our witnesses.

Those were really incredible opening statements. I had a lot of pride for Canada as you were speaking this morning. Thank you so much for that.

I'm going to begin with Mr. Jones.

Considering Canada Post's financial situation, what do you feel are the key priorities to ensuring Canada Post is financially stable and provides quality service to all Canadians regardless of where they live?

Mr. Dwayne Jones: One of the things I would like to mention is that for the many times when our postmasters are delivering a parcel in rural or remote Canada, the accounting of the revenue that's brought in for delivering that parcel isn't attributed to the office that's delivering that parcel. It's accounted for at the urban centre, where they were able to induct that into the mail stream.

Without the delivery on the receiving end, they would never have made the sale of that parcel or piece of mail they're sending to that recipient. I would like Canada Post to recognize the importance of looking at the end-to-end delivery when they're looking at what revenue is being brought in.

• (1130)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Thank you.

Ms. Simpson, would you have anything to add to that?

Ms. Jan Simpson: We know that expansion of services is really important at Canada Post. As Dwayne mentioned in his opening, Canada Post offered postal banking up until the late 1960s, and we know we can do it again.

During COVID, many banks left smaller and remote areas, and people are underbanked. The payday lenders that are there now are gouging our young people, as well as those who are underbanked at this time.

Our expansion-of-services campaign is called “Delivering Community Power”. It talks about postal banking and about a community hub. They've opened one in Membertou in the Atlantic region, one in Quebec and one in the prairie region.

It talks about a community hub, where you can meet with your neighbours. We have electric vehicles there to help with the environment, as well as a senior check-in service. We can go door to door and make sure that seniors can live with dignity in their own homes as well.

Also, it's for Canada Post to green and maybe change their vehicles.

For us, expansion of services is a way that Canada Post could ensure that nobody in the remote areas is left behind.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Thank you very much.

I have some very active members of CUPW here in the Fredericton region. I know all about this incredible program, and I very much support it. Thank you so much.

In front of me, I have the “Third Quarter Financial Report”. It mentions that:

Demand for ecommerce parcels [is continuing] to grow; rate shopping is putting pressure on price;... [expenditures] for service performance, delivery speeds and flexible delivery options—including weekend, same-day and next-day delivery—are on the rise. Merchants face pressure to compete on overall experience.

Competitors are [also] using low-cost gig-economy and contracted labour to offer cost-effective delivery solutions, while increasing their delivery speeds.

CUPW has previously stated that Canada Post's “sales software encourages offering [customers] the premium services (like Xpresspost) first, then the regular services”.

Ms. Simpson, could you explain the different levels of service for parcel deliveries and how the cost discrepancies can disproportionately affect rural and remote Canadians?

Ms. Jan Simpson: Canada Post offers different services.

Xpresspost, depending on what area you live in, could be a next-day or two-day delivery. They also have “Expedited” services, which are offered to small businesses. That is a service that is very similar to the Xpress service. Regular door-to-door parcel delivery might take three to four days, depending on where you are and, as well, if you are in a rural or a suburban area.

I think that for a lot of people the cost of sending a parcel might be a bit higher if they're just doing the regular service and taking day-to-day.... I think Canada Post could help if we could deliver at the door as well. We could have the costs come down, because we could bring the letter mail, your parcel and other services all in one package together. That's one way we can look it as well in helping the remote areas to do the delivery of their parcels.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Thank you.

The same section mentions that compensation restrictions due to government policy are making it increasingly difficult to attract and retain top talent.

Mr. Jones, could you comment on that or elaborate further and provide us with some advice or some recommendations to potentially avoid some of these pitfalls?

Mr. Dwayne Jones: With Canada Post, years ago the starting salary was considerably more than that of other jobs or opportunities they might find within their community. We find that's not the case nowadays.

There have been some slight increases over the years, but they have not kept up if you consider that the cost of living has increased. We look at other organizations within the community that start at higher salaries to try to draw that talent in.

I think we need to seriously look at the starting wages for employees as well as at maintaining benefits. Canadians are seeking those, and those are important to them. In many of our communities, they have to travel to get medical services, so to have benefits to somewhat offset some of that expense is important.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Thank you.

Would Ms. Simpson have anything to add to that question?

The Chair: Go ahead, please, just briefly. You have 20 seconds.

Ms. Jan Simpson: We have to negotiate a living wage for everybody and good, sustainable jobs, which Canada Post had and still needs to have. We're in bargaining. We're bargaining for your public post office and for our jobs to ensure that the next generation will have good, unionized jobs.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Ms. Vignola, go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here.

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers, or CUPW for short, is working to find new ways to ensure the financial viability of Canada Post without closing post offices or cutting jobs, while at the same time providing new services.

You mentioned a number of realities in remote areas. I experienced these realities back when I was young, since I lived in Fermont at a time when there were no roads. It was quite something, having all our parcels delivered by plane or, sometimes, by train. What solutions has the union brought to the table so far to ensure that medications and school supplies reach remote or even isolated areas? In those communities, everything arrives by mail.

• (1135)

Ms. Jan Simpson: Thank you for your question.

[English]

For CUPW, we know that many times we're the only ones in a community who actually come to the door, so it's very important for us to maintain our last-mile delivery. As I mentioned in my intervention earlier, many of the private courier companies use us to deliver for the last mile in the communities you spoke of. I know that in the province of Quebec there was a gentleman who actually used a boat as well as a helicopter to deliver the mail. It's very important for us as postal workers to ensure that Canada Post brings back, for those who lost it, door-to-door delivery, and to ensure that those who have it keep it as well. That means ensuring we deliver parcels to the door along with the other products people require.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: That is what you want, and that is also what the public wants. What I was asking you is what potential solutions there are to provide that service. In some areas, they are even thinking of setting up a dogsled-based service for last-mile mail delivery, as was the case more than a hundred years ago.

How do we ensure that medications, school supplies and clothing get to these locations within a reasonable time frame, which is not necessarily the case at the moment? What solutions are you proposing?

Ms. Jan Simpson: Thank you for the question.

[English]

We know postal workers are not paid by any tax dollars, but postal workers are taxpayers. If you eliminate jobs, you're going to eliminate money coming into the communities to help with the infrastructure to build roads and to help ensure that there's delivery to the front door of the Canadian public.

Also, the service charter mandates innovation in expansion of services to meet people's changing needs. We are pushing Canada Post to do expansion of services to ensure that nobody is left behind.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you.

We were told about a potential project or a study that was under way to use drones to deliver mail in remote or even isolated areas. Is that something the union is looking at? What would that mean for the union, for example, in terms of training and hiring employees?

[English]

Ms. Jan Simpson: Any time a technology happens at any company, especially at CUPW with Canada Post, we have what's called "consultation and tech chains". It's very important that our postal workers are included in any decisions made to do that kind of work to ensure that postal workers' health and safety is prioritized with the delivery by drones, but we also know that drones and automation do not pay money or pay taxes back into the community; therefore, for us it's important to keep good, unionized jobs in place but also have technology that ensures that workers are not left behind and that nobody's injured.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you.

When a post office closes, is the union consulted? I would ask you for a brief answer.

[English]

Ms. Jan Simpson: We need to have meaningful consultations, because a lot of times decisions are made, and then we're advised. Meaningful consultation is what is needed, and we can offer ideas to help expand services at those post offices to avoid closures.

● (1140)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: What I am asking is whether you meet with them. I'm not asking you about needs. I'm asking you to tell me whether the union is automatically consulted before a post office closure is announced.

[English]

Ms. Jan Simpson: We're not always consulted at the beginning of the process, but we consult at different parts of the process. Whenever they consult us at the beginning of the process, we are able to work together and find a solution where postal services are not lost in remote areas.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: My next question is a yes or no question. Do you have a list of the 600 post offices that have been closed since the moratorium was put in place?

[English]

Ms. Jan Simpson: I could get back to you and provide you with the list we have. I don't know if we have an accurate list at this time, but we definitely would be able to provide that.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Bachrach, please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both of our witnesses.

This is an issue that is very much on the minds of people in communities in northwest B.C. Mr. Jones noted Bella Coola that is, of course, in the beautiful riding that I represent and relies heavily on rural post office service. Right across the northwest of British Columbia, small post offices are a lifeline for people.

I'm here today in the village of Daajing Giids on Haida Gwaii, with another rural post office. I'm using their council chambers this morning for this meeting.

Thinking about the service that both CUPW employees and rural postmasters provide and how we sustain those over time, I was really quite shocked at our last meeting to learn that 600 post offices have closed across Canada since the 1994 moratorium was put in place.

Perhaps I'll start my questioning with a question to Mr. Jones and ask him if he could lay out the mechanism by which Canada Post allows post offices to close in the face of the moratorium. How is this allowed to take place? What are the steps that we see occur? I think there are some trends that we see across rural Canada when we see communities go from having a proper rural post office, a Canada Post post office, to a mailbox in the side of the road.

Mr. Jones, could you talk a little bit about what we're seeing in terms of that erosion of service?

Mr. Dwayne Jones: Many times, Canada Post will reach out through its community outreach program into the community. When it's speaking with representatives in the community, it will talk about postal service, but will fail to mention maintaining the same level of service.

I'll give an example. Being able to go into a post office, and receiving all the services and products available through that local post office, isn't the same as having to drive 70 kilometres to pick up a parcel, and perhaps stop at a local retail outlet to purchase stamps. It's not the same service.

When it comes to its community outreach, it'll speak about postal service, but will fail to mention maintaining the same level of service it has provided for years. With that comes a notification to the association. If it has gotten to the point where it's a temporary closure, Canada Post would normally reach out to identify a temporary closure.

We would, of course, like to have consultation. As my friend and colleague has mentioned, meaningful consultation is the key phrase there, because many times, when we're bringing supporting information into that meeting, it is falling on deaf ears. It's important that Canada Post hears that in order to maintain that post office. It may at times have to look at another suitable premise that can operate at a lower expense. If that's the case, and if it's a suitable premise, it would have to relocate or look at readjusting that leasing. Maybe it would have to increase the leasing allowance that's identified under appendix "I" in our collective agreement.

Usually, Canada Post would reach out to the community. We would want to make sure the community receives full disclosure on all levels of service within a post office. That's something I would want to emphasize, because, again, just talking about a postal service isn't talking about all levels of service.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: We see communities go from having a Canada Post post office to having a contracted-out franchise situation with a local business.

Do we ever see the opposite occur? Do we see services that have been contracted out brought back in-house, or is it largely a one-way street?

• (1145)

Mr. Dwayne Jones: Many times, when the local franchise decides to close, that's the nail in the coffin for the postal outlet in that community, sadly. That federal presence is lost in that community. Just because it's opened in a retail postal outlet doesn't mean it's going to maintain a post office in that community for years to come. It's contingent on the owner-operator of that local retail outlet.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Canada Post often struggles when it loses a postmaster in a rural community. For example, in those tragic situations where there is a death of a postmaster, or a fire, Canada Post seems to struggle to recruit new rural postmasters.

What are the main reasons Canada Post struggles to recruit new postmasters in small communities?

Mr. Dwayne Jones: It would be interesting to see the approach taken if we weren't running two parallels on trying to set up a system to deliver without that post office in the community. I would like to see the level of approach that the corporation would take if it was 100% wanting to see that post office remain in the community.

I'm sorry, but the amount of effort that's put behind the steps that are taken is a clear indicator at the beginning stage on where you want to go with that community. If it's maintaining a level, start to reach out, and look at all avenues that are available to the community.

We've seen it in—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I'm sorry. I was going to try to fit in one more question, but I hear the chair cutting me off. I was getting overambitious there.

Thank you very much for your answers.

The Chair: Thanks for cutting him off for me, Mr. Bachrach.

We'll go to our final round with Mrs. Kusie, for five minutes, please.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

I want to go back to the employment data that's being collected by Canada Post, because I believe it has a significant impact on your compensation.

In 2021, Canada Post changed how it reported employment figures by including full-time, part-time, temporary, casual and term employees, rather than just full-time and part-time employees.

Do you feel this diminishes the accuracy of the data?

Mr. Dwayne Jones: Is the question directed to me?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Yes, it's to either of you, as leaders in the postal community.

Mr. Dwayne Jones: Currently, in our collective agreement, there is what's been referred to as a two-tiered wage system. Our collective agreement is on the website, so it's public. From what we've experienced, any time you start somebody out at a reduced amount, when it's literally.... I won't say "pennies", but when it's just above minimum wage, it's very hard to attract and maintain a viable workforce.

That's something that I think needs to be looked at because, as we've seen in remote areas.... For example, even up north, in Iqaluit, Nunavut, there's a situation where we've had to look at the idea of a starting salary and a living wage.

Ms. Jan Simpson: Also, for CUPW members, and as Dwayne said, we have temporary workers with a two-tiered wage, which was implemented by the Harper government. We've seen many young workers left behind because they're not guaranteed hours.

We need to negotiate through this so everybody gets a living wage. We all know the economy has fallen behind. We've all fallen behind. A lot of temporary workers leave because they don't get enough hours to support themselves or their families. There's a high turnover in temporary workers. That's a problem we face, as Dwayne said. The lower starting wage and the insecure number of hours required of these workers mean they don't have the proper benefits and pension they deserve. They're doing the exact same work side by side with a co-worker who's a full-time or part-time employee.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you for that.

I think speaking truth to power is something that we focus on here in this committee.

Compensation costs for executives have increased from \$10 million in 2015 to \$15 million in 2022. Are you aware of whether this is because the salaries and bonuses of executives have increased, or has the number of executive positions increased?

• (1150)

Ms. Jan Simpson: I can speak for my members. They have not received that kind of increase. We're in negotiations right now.

Canada Post has their compensation models for the executives. We all know they all received bonuses throughout the pandemic. I would ask you to speak to Canada Post about their compensation plan for upper management.

However, for postal workers, we know many are falling behind with the lower starting wages that were implemented in previous years and continue to be implemented. We need to get rid of the two-tiered wage system and the number of hours required for a worker to become a full-time worker and receive the proper benefits they deserve, the same as their co-workers.

Many of the workers who are left behind are young workers, racialized workers, women and indigenous workers, as well—those who are part of equity-seeking groups.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: I think this is to my point exactly. It would be frustrating, I believe, in your positions, to see executive compensation and a \$5-million increase over seven years when you're talking about new workers being given a wage barely above minimum.

Do you think executives are increasing their own compensation, rather than focusing on the compensation of employees and the success of the company at large? Do you think that, when they are receiving these additional funds—\$5 million—they are also giving consideration to the team of workers who serve Canadians across the country?

Ms. Jan Simpson: Like I said, we're in bargaining right now, and we hope the government allows us to bargain a good, fair collective agreement, where people have a living wage and are able to have a defined benefit pension plan. We know members of Parliament all receive a good pension plan after being here for a short pe-

riod of time. For postal workers, many have made it their career and they deserve to retire in dignity. All Canadians deserve a living wage and all Canadians deserve to retire in dignity, as well.

In this round of bargaining, we're bargaining for the public post office and our work, so hopefully wages will be brought up to a proper wage and everybody can live with dignity.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: That's my time, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, all.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We're talking about supporting rural communities.

Today, Canadians from coast to coast to coast will be receiving the Canada carbon rebate. Some of that will be delivered directly into bank accounts and some of that, of course, our postal workers—

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Is this relevant to the topic?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Thank you.

Of course, we know that our carriers will be delivering some of those cheques to Canadians. Families in Ontario will be receiving the first of quarterly payments that will add up to about \$1,120. In Alberta, a family of four will receive \$1,800 in quarterly payments.

It's unfortunate, because right now the Conservatives in committee are holding up the rural top-up, which would put hundreds more dollars in the pockets of rural families across this country.

Three out of the four parties around this table believe in climate change. I certainly know the members of CUPW believe in climate change, because they are at the front line of the battle against it. They see it on a day-to-day basis. Last year, in 2023, 17 million hectares of forest was burned in Canada, and we felt, saw and tasted the smoke, even in communities—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk:—like mine in Windsor.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Kusmierczyk. I'll stop the clock. There's a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I wanted to make sure that Mr. Kusmierczyk came to the right room today. It seems like he thinks we're a different committee, so I want to clarify we're the government operations committee in room 025—

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: —in West Block. I hope that's helpful to the committee.

The Chair: Please go ahead, Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: I know that climate change, and especially the forest fires and thick smoke we saw blanketing our communities, including my community in Windsor, has an impact on letter carriers across the country.

There were 150 mail delivery interruptions over a six-month period last year due to wildfires, floods and climate change. From your vantage point, what are the impacts of severe weather events on services to rural and remote communities, and on our letter carriers?

• (1155)

Mr. Dwayne Jones: I can't speak to letter carriers, but I can speak to some of the rural communities that were being relocated because of fires or evacuation orders that were brought in.

Our members were going above and beyond to forward mail to other local points where people could pick it up, so that they could maintain a sense of normalcy during those times.

We were disappointed to hear that employees in some of those locations were being asked to use their personal leave in situations where they were being evacuated out of an area. We found it very disheartening that they were being pressured into doing that.

Ms. Jan Simpson: We have seen, among the many letter carriers who deliver the mail in the wintertime with the thaws and freezes, many slips, trips and falls, and other health and safety issues. Canada Post was asking these workers to suppress these injuries, to self-accommodate and to not go through the proper channels. We know that if we are injured today, it could lead to a long-term injury later on, but workers are afraid to report the injuries they have suffered.

With regard to delivering throughout the pandemic, as well as through the smoke, we need to provide proper health and safety equipment for the workers. If it's not safe to go out, Canada Post has the ability to not require workers to go out to deliver the mail on those days.

You also mentioned gas. Many rural and suburban mail carriers, the majority of whom are women, provide their own vehicles. We want Canada Post, through our "Delivering Community Power" campaign, to provide electric or hybrid vehicles to help eliminate some of the carbon in the environment. The campaign allows Canada Post to transform its fleet with more electric vehicles, and install electric charging stations to encourage customers to come to a retail postal counter, plug their vehicles in there and do their shopping.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Thank you very much. I believe I only have 30 seconds left for my question, so it's a quick one.

The analysis we received says that overall on-time service performance for domestic letter mail delivery was 93%, which was an improvement of about 2% over the previous year.

What can you attribute that excellent performance to?

The Chair: You have five seconds.

Ms. Jan Simpson: Postal workers love their jobs, and they love the Canadian public.

The Chair: Perfect. Thanks, Ms. Simpson.

Mrs. Vignola, please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Simpson and Mr. Jones, every five years, Canada Post must review the Canadian Postal Service Charter, which should have been done in 2023. We are told that it has been in the works for a year, but that there will not be any major changes because the charter is working well. However, when I look at what is happening on the ground, I cannot believe anyone thinks it's working all that well. When I think of the ideas that the unions have been bringing forward for at least five years, specifically to improve and diversify services, I don't understand how a 2009 charter that simply gets renewed can still be considered adequate.

Are the unions involved in reviewing and analyzing the Canadian Postal Service Charter, or are you informed once it's done?

[*English*]

Mr. Dwayne Jones: Many times, we're being informed, it takes the latter.

I will draw from the numbers in the 2016 executive summary that was presented. On the services that are owned and operated as public services, 88% of Canadians and 83% of businesses in rural communities believe that the mail is highly important and that Canada will always need a postal service.

We know the demand is there. It's a matter of trying to make it fit within those communities. I'll speak on behalf of CPAA. In rural areas, they don't have a lot of additional providers to contend with; sometimes they're the only provider in that area. If it's a bedroom community near an urban centre to which people have to travel, then we should possibly be looking at the hours that the post office is operating. Maybe operating on a Saturday, when people can pick up their parcels, would make it convenient for them, or possibly it should be open late one day during the week or hours should be extended.

There are solutions. We just need all parties to be open to hearing them.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: You should also be more involved in the work surrounding the charter. That's my understanding.

[*English*]

The Chair: Give a quick answer only, if you have one.

Mr. Dwayne Jones: We would welcome all involvement, and early involvement is the key.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Mr. Bachrach, please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Jones, earlier you mentioned the stipend that is paid essentially to cover rent for these rural post offices. You mentioned \$1,357 per year. Could you clarify what the number meant?

Mr. Dwayne Jones: That's correct. That would be for a group 1 post office, and it's \$1,357 per year. In order to request an increase to that, they have to supply all the revenue and expenses.

What I referred to earlier as well was the survey we're doing. We've sent out approximately 300 surveys to group postmasters. We don't have all the responses back, but the numbers right now are indicating that they're operating at a deficit of about \$32,000 a month. This is from those surveys we sent out.

Our members are paying out of pocket in order for the post office to be maintained. That's something we are pushing with Canada Post, because nobody should have to pay to go to work.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Absolutely. It reminds me of schoolteachers having to pay for school supplies for their students out of their own pocket. I think everyone would agree that this is entirely unacceptable.

Mr. Jones, I have one more question and then I'm going to move a motion. We've been trying to get some information on the wages for these rural postmasters. I understand that you're in collective bargaining right now, but looking at previous years, let's say a year or two ago, what was the starting hourly wage for a group 1 postmaster in a rural community?

Mr. Dwayne Jones: A group 1 postmaster being paid at level 1 in January 2019 would have started at \$17.04 per hour.

Somebody at the same level in January 2023 would receive \$18.44.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: That's absolutely incredible. Thanks for providing those numbers, Mr. Jones.

Mr. Chair, with that, I would like to move the motion that I put on notice: "That the committee order the Department of Public Works and Government Services to produce a complete list of all...".

I'm hoping I can modify the words on the fly. I'm sure, Mr. Chair, you will correct me if I'm wrong in that.

The Chair: Yes.

You won't table the motion that you had on notice; you can maybe just read the new one. It has a slight change, I understand.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I understand that other members have asked for another change as well, so I'm going to try my best to get through this in one go.

That the committee order Canada Post or Public Services and Procurement Canada to produce a complete list of the 600 rural post offices that have been closed since the 1994 moratorium, with the location, dates of closure, stated reason for closure, and that, no later than Friday, April 26, 2024.

The Chair: Thanks.

It seems to be just adding the request for information for the reason of the closure from the one you had originally—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: There was one other small change there, Mr. Chair, and that was to indicate that it could be either Canada Post or PSPC that could provide the information. The other tiny change was that I noted that we used the two names of the department interchangeably, the old name being Public Works and the new name being Public Services. I thought it would be best to reflect the current name of the department.

Thank you.

• (1205)

The Chair: It will always be Public Works to me, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I know.

The Chair: I understand that we generally have consensus.

Ms. Sousa, do you wish to address that?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Yes, we have consensus to include both.

The Chair: Are we all clear on that?

That's perfect. I don't think we need a vote, so we're done, and you're out of time as well.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses.

The Chair: We'll finish up with our last two members.

We have Mr. Genuis and then Mr. Sousa.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Chair, I believe I'll be taking that round.

The Chair: Sure, go ahead, Mrs. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: I know that in the last meeting we held with individuals from Canada Post and PSPC, we heard that, despite the moratorium on closing rural post offices, over 600 post offices have been closed, and we've talked about that again here today. We've heard that's 600 over the last 30 years, so that would be about 20 post offices a year.

Do you have a yearly breakdown of the post office closures? Can you tell us if that has accelerated in the last couple of decades?

Mr. Dwayne Jones: I would be interested to hear the fallout from that motion that was just put forward and to see those numbers, because the numbers I'm looking at indicate that, between 1994 and 2007, there were 63 post offices closed, and, between 2007 and 2023, we have 321 post offices noted. I would be interested to hear that list of the 600 that was put forward in that earlier motion.

Mrs. Kelly Block: What I'm hearing from you is you don't know where that number came from.

Mr. Dwayne Jones: I would be very curious to see the list that Canada Post would produce to send that. I imagine that's where it was coming from.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Okay, thank you.

Obviously, it sounds like that number has accelerated in the past 17 years to reach the number 600.

In your opening statement, Ms. Simpson, you outlined the critical role that post offices play in rural communities. Again, at the meeting where Canada Post presented, we heard from them that they have developed a long-term strategy and a transformation plan that they believe is not dictated by their financial position, whether they're running a deficit or not.

I'm wondering if you can tell us if you're aware of this long-term strategy and transformational plan and if either your association, Mr. Jones, or the union has been consulted on it or has provided any kind of input.

Ms. Jan Simpson: In our collective agreements, we have consultation language. As well, we have what's called an appendix T, which talks about expansion of services, such as financial services, at Canada Post.

As you heard my colleague, Dwayne, say very clearly, a lot of the time, consultations start after an idea has been done by Canada Post. We need to have true consultation at the beginning of the process because nobody knows the workflow and the work that we do better than postal workers, postmasters, postmistresses and assistants.

We feel that the consultation process has to be true, transparent and clear with the unions at the beginning, not when ideas have already been done and we're "voluntold" what's going to happen.

We do have visions. Our "Delivering Community Power" campaign has allowed Canada Post to see how we see expansion of services happening, and not leave anybody behind. As well, it's to ensure Canada Post remains financially sustainable because taxpayer dollars do not pay for postal workers' salaries.

Again, we are taxpayers within the communities.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you.

I know you're aware that Canada Post has been running significant deficits for a number of years. Again, they stated that they are trying to refocus on their core business. They have actually sold off two profitable companies as a step toward that.

Is it all concerning to either of you that Canada Post, which is actually struggling with deficits, sold off profitable companies that would have brought in revenue that may have helped subsidize their core business and the work your members do?

Ms. Jan Simpson: My members were not represented at those two companies; they are represented at Canada Post.

For us, any time Canada Post makes a decision that is not seen to be financially the best, it's their decision. Again, we as postal workers want to expand services at Canada Post for the jobs that our members do. That's why it's important for us to push and have the "Delivering Community Power" campaign.

In its own polls, the government showed that the public wants an expansion of services at Canada Post. Even the public is fully in support of expansion of services at Canada Post.

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Sousa, go ahead, please.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for appearing before us.

In 2003, Canada Post agreed to recognize rural route contractors as employees, represented by CUPW. They're known as rural and suburban mail carriers. In 2005, CPAA signed a memorandum of agreement with CUPW that a bargaining unit of the rural and suburban mail carriers was appropriate. CUPW agreed to respect the separate bargaining rights of CPAA.

As you're well aware, there's no definition for "rural" in the rural moratorium.

Could you please provide the respective definitions for rural and suburban mail carriers?

Ms. Jan Simpson: To deliver in a rural area—not what is considered an urban area—that's the outskirts of many cities. For example, an urban area would be a city like Toronto or Montreal and the major, big cities. Rural areas are the smaller communities on the outskirts of the big urban areas.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I know that CUPW first negotiated protections for the urban public network in 1992 because of the Conservatives' plan in the late 1980s to privatize the entire retail network and introduce more private postal outlets. There were concerns.

Could you highlight any similarities between the urban collective agreement and the rural moratorium?

Ms. Jan Simpson: Could you repeat your question?

I'm sorry.

Mr. Charles Sousa: What similarities exist between the collective agreements for urban and rural...and the moratorium?

Could you elaborate on why no rural network protections were negotiated at that same time?

Ms. Jan Simpson: For us, we feel they do the exact same work. We're in bargaining right now to try to get one collective agreement because we feel that both bargaining units do the exact same work.

For us, the difference is that Canada Post, even though RSMCs are employees, is still making these members provide their own vehicles and pay for their own gas. We were able to eliminate that in the urban collective agreement years ago.

We want it eliminated in this round of bargaining for the RSMCs as well because there is no need for them to be providing their own vehicles, paying for their own gas and providing their own relief workers. Many couldn't even go to their families' funerals or events because they had to provide their own relief people.

For us, if you're an employee of a company, all the tools to do your job should be provided by the company.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm getting to this next question as a result of these two and that is considering Canada Post's current financial situation.

What do you feel are the key priorities for ensuring that Canada Post is financially stable and can provide quality service to all Canadians regardless of their postal code?

Ms. Jan Simpson: What was the last word you said?

Mr. Charles Sousa: You have this disparity. You have these regional differences. You have this tremendous amount of pressure on Canada Post to get through these financial concerns. We want and need to have national distribution, but we have conflicting matters. We have another world out there at our heels.

What do we do to provide that quality service?

What are your recommendations, given these circumstances?

Dwayne.

Mr. Dwayne Jones: Canada Post is looking at... If you look at Manitoulin Island and Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, you'll see that it's looked at enhancing the services through what it's calling "hubs" in order to see what would help drive extra revenue into that local post office and community.

That would be one thing I would highly recommend: that it look at each community individually when it's looking at the overall approach. You can have similarities, but the cookie-cutter approach is not necessarily going to work with every community. It has to be flexible enough to pivot to be able to adapt that to each.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Okay.

Ms. Simpson.

Ms. Jan Simpson: As postal workers, we've done a lot work with the communities to know what they need as well, and you've done a poll through the federal government saying that they do want an expansion of services in many communities.

For us, like Dwayne said, each community is unique with its own people. However, postal workers actually work in the community and are part of the community, so we know, from talking to our customers, what they need. For us, expansion of services is a great opportunity for Canada Post to secure revenue, especially with postal banking.

We've changed what we mostly deliver, from letter mail to parcel mail. That delivery method is a lot different now. As well, many people shop online. We have the ability to deliver these parcels right to the doors of all of these people, and to ensure that people have access to good services and good, unionized jobs as postal workers in all of the communities.

We know that in Membertou we were able to hire—also in Elsipogtog—an...on-reserve site. We were able to hire indigenous workers to deliver the mail. It was with great pride that I received an email telling me that the community was so proud to have an indigenous person delivering the mail to their front doors for the first time.

We have to look at the communities because we all want to see ourselves when we're in a community. With our community hubs, through "Delivering Community Power", this is, for me, one of the proudest moments of being a postal worker.

● (1215)

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Witnesses, thank you for joining us today.

Colleagues, we're going to suspend for about five minutes.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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