



Beaconsfield Citizens Association

Brief Submitted to:

**La Commission sur le développement social et la
diversité montréalaise**

**On the Elimination of Home Mail Delivery by the
Provision of Community Mail Boxes**

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1. Canada Post's Plan

1.1 Overview

In 2013, Canada Post planned and released its *Five-Point Action Plan* designed to reorient its current method of operations in various parts of its business in order to be more cost effective and strengthen its footing for the future. **"Canadians expect Canada Post to continue to be financially self-sufficient and not to look to their hard-earned tax dollars for funding."**¹

Canada Post's plan as set forth addresses five main points:

- ✓ Community mail boxes
- ✓ A new approach to pricing
- ✓ Franchise post offices
- ✓ Streamlining operations
- ✓ Labour

While these five points are integral and inter-related, this brief mainly addresses the first one, community mailboxes. This appears to be one of if not the major thrust of the plan and will affect many Canadians.

2. Profile of Beaconsfield and its Citizens

Beaconsfield is an older, bedroom community, comprised off 6,811 private homes and less than 500 businesses. There is no industry in the city. Housing density for the most part would be considered low as it consists mainly of single-family dwellings. (5,770). It occupies 24.5 square kilometres. There are 125 kilometres of streets of which 95 have no sidewalk.

Population of Beaconsfield by age and sex ²¹				
Years of Age	Total	Male	Female	Group %
Total Population	19,505	9,510	9,995	100
0-4	895	465	430	4.5
5-9	1,245	630	620	6.4
10-14	1,565	805	755	8
15-17	1,035	490	535	5.3
18-19	670	360	310	3.4
20-24	1,205	600	605	6.2
25-29	560	295	270	3
30-34	565	255	305	2.9
35-39	990	420	570	5.1
40-44	1,475	685	790	7.6
45-49	1,820	865	960	9.3
50-54	1,720	840	875	8.8
55-59	1,425	690	735	7.3
60-64	1,275	640	635	6.5
65-69	1,025	490	530	5.3
70-74	750	380	370	3.8
75-79	565	285	285	2.9
80-84	390	185	205	2
85 and older	340	120	215	1.7
Median Age of pop.	43.5	43.2	43.8	
% of pop. 15 and over	81	90.1	82.0	

¹ Source - Canada Post's *Five-Point Action Plan*.

² Source - Statistics Canada 2011 Census.

As indicated in the table, 15.7% of Beaconsfield's citizens were 65 years of age or older in 2011. One can safely project that due to the stability of our residents, the percentage aged over 65 today is probably close to 20%.

Single Parent Families			
No. of Children	Total	Female Parent	Male Parent
1	325	250	75
2	225	170	55
3 or more	85	55	30
Total	630	475	155

The city has two train stations, five shopping areas, one secondary school, five primary schools, a recreation centre and a city hall.

While it is true that most people today have adopted the digital way of life and this trend will only become more pronounced with time, many residents, seniors and handicapped individuals in particular, are not comfortable with modern technology and still depend on the traditional mail service for personal and professional purposes.

3. The Plan

3.1. Main Concept of Community Mailboxes

Clearly, the migration to community mailboxes will result in most letter mail, including letters, cheques, invoices and credit cards, being delivered to such locations. In addition, unaddressed ad- and incentive mail will also be delivered there. Contrary to popular belief, packages will no longer be delivered by truck to the home, but deposited in the community mailbox. Packages too large, or requiring signature or payment will require a trip to the local post-office.



Package delivery boxes at bottom left

3.2. Potential Savings

The times they are a changing! Over the past few decades, the world has experienced a paradigm shift in the way people live, shop, bank, send and pay bills. The quantity of letter mail has diminished dramatically, while parcel delivery is on the rise as a result of online shopping.

Clearly, the elimination of door-to-door delivery presents an opportunity to reduce costs in terms of salaries and pensions. Cost of fleet operation may also be reduced.

4. Challenges and Dangers of Community Mailboxes

4.1. *Health and Safety*

4.1.1. Conditions

The elimination of home delivery will have a serious impact on the most vulnerable members of society. This includes the elderly and the handicapped. In Beaconsfield, 75% of our streets do not have sidewalks. With the cost of everything rising, snow removal is less than ideal and because of financial and environmental concerns, the salting and sanding of streets has been drastically cut back over the years. The result is that streets are hazardous for pedestrians of any age or category to walk on in winter. For days after a storm, icy conditions make walking risky; even cars have difficulties at some intersections.

For the elderly and/or handicapped, walking to a community post office is more than an inconvenience: it represents a major challenge and threat to personal safety. Slips and falls frequently result in broken hips and their inherent complications, which can alter or end the quality of life for these people for the rest of their lives. Snow and icy conditions aside, just going out in extreme cold or heat threatens the health of seniors leading to problems such as pneumonia, cardiac issues, colds, and other breathing difficulties. It is also important to keep in mind that many seniors do not have cars and they as well as handicapped individuals will be forced to walk to the boxes.

However, others will be affected by this decision. For instance, single parent families will face the challenge of dressing and bringing out one of more children in order to collect their mail.



Woman injured when going out for her mail

(Source Internet- <http://www.wellandtribune.ca/2014/03/17/woman-injured-retrieving-her-mail>)

4.1.2. Roads

Walking on streets without sidewalks exposes pedestrians to other dangers, such as being struck by cars skidding on the snow and ice or driven by an inattentive or intoxicated driver, etc.

4.2. Traffic

Pedestrians walking on streets where there are no sidewalks will not only be unprotected, but will also impede traffic and force cars to change lanes to get around them.

While many will choose or be forced to walk to a mailbox, even more will drive. This would add to traffic congestion around these boxes especially at rush hour. In addition to an increased risk of accidents and greater vehicle usage, it would surely contribute to carbon emissions.

4.3. Lighting

Being an older community, Beaconsfield still has many older style street lights, frequently mounted every second telephone pole. While they are safe enough for the general level of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, in many cases they would provide insufficient light to ensure ease of use and security at night at community mailboxes. In a dark suburban area, reduced visibility would make it difficult for individuals to retrieve their mail and for vehicles to see pedestrians at mailboxes. It would also expose individuals to the hazards of mugging, etc.

4.4. Location

A large number of locations will be required to ensure a reasonable level of access to these boxes. Finding ones that are convenient and provide adequate lighting and safe and easy passage for users will be difficult task in an urban area such as Montreal. In Beaconsfield, this problem will be compounded by the lack of sidewalks, the presence of snow banks in winter and the city's open ditch drainage system. Furthermore, our city prides itself on its beauty: the placement of these boxes will deter from it and provide potential targets for thieves and vandals.



Left -Stolen Mailbox

Below - Graffiti



4.5. Maintenance

While it is presumed that Canada Post will be required ensure proper maintenance of these boxes, the city and its citizens will also be involved in this responsibility. At the very least, the city will incur additional costs for snow removal in the area. Due to the limited amount of sidewalks, this may require additional capital expense, as the large ploughs currently used are unsuitable for close up clearing work. Additional labour may also be involved in trimming grass and raking leaves around these obstacles.



So-called junk mail also become a problem. Some boroughs have provided trash bins for disposing this mail. This resulted in unsightly conditions and extra expense to clean and remove this trash. Private homeowners in the vicinity of these boxes inherited the job of cleaning up unwanted junk mail that has been thrown or blown onto their properties



Two Different Locations

Is there a trend here?

5. Economic and Social Considerations

5.1. *To Canada Post*

5.1.1. Lettermail

Since lettermail is not likely to disappear, the proposed approach penalizes the most vulnerable members of our society and its biggest users. A good percentage of these seniors and handicapped do not have or are unable to use the new digital technology and therefore are reliant on traditional mail service. Removing it may force these people to resort to alternative solutions, thus adding to a further drop in Canada Post's revenues.

5.1.2. Unaddressed Admail (Junk Mail)

This mail currently generates a certain amount of revenues for Canada Post.

It also benefits merchants and retailers with cost effective and time sensitive advertising. When delivered directly to the home, the advertisements have a greater impact because of their timeliness. If dropped off at a community mailbox, these ads may not be seen by the sale date, if seen at all, and the problem of waste on the streets will only increase. These factors may result in retailers choosing alternate delivery methods, resulting in another potential loss of revenue for Canada Post.

5.1.3. Package Delivery

The future revenue maker for postal service and courier companies is the delivery of online purchases. Canada Post's proposed approach will place it at a huge competitive disadvantage. Why would one choose Canada Post and have to pick up parcels at a community box with all of the inconveniences and risks involved or, in the case of large parcels, travel to the post office? Most people would opt for home delivery.

This approach seems like suicide in what has become a highly competitive market.

5.2. *Impact on Others*

5.2.1. On Federal and Provincial Governments

As mentioned earlier, this approach will result in an extremely significant loss of high paying, middle-class jobs. That alone will have serious implications for the Canadian economy in nearly every community in the country.

5.2.2. On the Individual

The planned approach will negatively impact each and every person involved in this service reduction. Vulnerable seniors, handicapped persons and single parent families will be impacted every time they have to go to a community mailbox, especially in the extreme cold of winter and heat of the summer, resulting in increased personal injuries and damaged lives.

5.2.3. To Businesses

The rollout of community mailboxes will have a negative effect on the effectiveness of unaddressed admail. This could result in lower sales and lead force businesses to seek alternative suppliers to meet their needs.

6. Alternate Approaches

There have been many discussions and suggestions as to other approaches that could help Canada Post achieve its goals while providing solutions that lessen the negative impact on the population.

The digital world is an unstoppable force, changing the way we do business forever. However, the government subsidizes many unprofitable services simply because they are part and parcel of running a country. Canada Post was given the mandate to provide service to Canadians and while the economy is changing, that responsibility remains.

The following lists some alternate approaches as society transitions into digital era.

6.1. *Reduced Home Delivery Days*

Reducing the number of home delivery days from the current five could generate significant savings on carrier manpower. In this scenario, attrition by resignation and retirement could lessen the negative impact on the workforce and the economy generally. However, it may be necessary to re-evaluate the requirements specified in the Canadian Postal Service Charter regarding frequent and reliable delivery.

6.2. *Phased Transition*

Seniors make up the group that still depends most on traditional mail service. To a large extent, they have not adapted to the digital world and will be most affected by Canada Post's current proposal. While phasing in community mailboxes for the general population, Canada Post could maintain traditional service free of charge for the most vulnerable persons in society, namely seniors and medically certified handicapped individuals. This service could also be made available for a fee for others who wish to avail themselves of the service.

As the number of those tied to traditional mail service declines, the need for this option could be re-evaluated.

6.3. *Maintain Door-to Door Service for Packages, Registered and COD Mail*

This approach would place Canada Post in a better competitive position in the marketplace and help to protect a good portion of the revenue stream in the evolving digital world. Registered and COD mail could piggyback this delivery service at little cost and further protect that market. Furthermore, this avenue would also provide the resources necessary to provide the service mentioned in 6.2.

6.4. *Other Services*

In its *Five-Point Action Plan*, Canada Post states that its new options offer added security and convenience, citing in particular the problem of mail build up while residents are on vacation. Their current hold-mail service already addresses that need. On the other hand, services like "Delivery to Post Office" option do provide a convenient service and can be provided without the removal of others. Adding additional conveniences will only help Canada Post's position in the market.

7. Municipal Legislation

We are uncertain to what extent municipal bylaws apply to Canada Post. The following suggestions are based on the presumption that they do. If they do not, the Federal Government must insist that Canada Post respect local legislation.

In order to preserve the unique appearance of the various communities, protect the security of their citizens and minimize the financial impact on their taxpayers, we urge them to enact legislation governing the installation and maintenance of community mailboxes. This includes zoning and

construction bylaws as well as regulations that ensure user safety. The following some of the bylaws that municipalities could consider.

7.1. Safety and Access

Boxes must be placed in a convenient location and at a safe distance from the side of the road and or sidewalk. People collecting their mail should not obstruct the sidewalk. Safety barricades meeting specified safety and appearance standards should be placed to protect users from vehicular accidents (e.g., gas stations). Boxes should be handicap accessible for people in wheelchairs or using canes or walkers.

It should also be remembered that for years, Canada Post has demanded that homeowners maintain a clear and safe path for their letter carriers and refused delivery if this was not done. It should be held to the same standard with its community mailboxes.



7.2. Lighting

An adequate level of lighting should be specified to meet safety and convenience needs. Should the level of light provided by existing street lights or adjacent lights be insufficient, Canada Post should be required to furnish, install and maintain additional lighting. Moreover, these lights should be designed such that they not shine into neighbouring houses or into traffic. Canada Post should bear all installation, maintenance and electric utility costs associated with these lights.



7.3. Drainage

Adequate drainage should be provided to prevent water build up in the area surrounding a community mailbox, specifically directly in front of it.



7.4. Refuse

Any installation should include a depository for users to deposit unwanted junk mail. It should be the responsibility of Canada Post to dispose of this refuse.

7.5. Maintenance

A toll free number to report maintenance issues with the boxes should be displayed on the front of the boxes.

7.6. Other

When multiple modules are installed to increase capacity, all modules should be fastened together so as to create a single unit.

8. Conclusion

Canada Post has put forth an action plan and is taking aggressive steps to improve its profitability. However in doing so, it has adopted the approach of a private rather than a crown corporation whose responsibility is to serve the people of Canada.



The implementation of community mailboxes coupled with the elimination of door-to-door service may make Canada Post's bottom line of look better. There are those who would applaud it for that effort. Nevertheless, it will have potentially serious impacts on the quality of life of our most vulnerable citizens

"Canadians expect Canada Post to continue to be financially self-sufficient and not to look to their hard-earned tax dollars for funding." While this statement may be true, the proposed action plan runs the risk of transferring costs out of Canada Post's books onto the backs of citizens.

The above-mentioned alternatives as well as many others that will surely be suggested on the course of this consultation could not only help to achieve cost reduction goals, but improve Canada Post's competitive position and provide improved services to the people of Canada

It would appear Canada Post has rushed headlong toward eliminating home delivery. It should be forced to provide a strict economic evaluation of what its plan hopes to achieve, including an assessment of such factors as the potential loss of revenue to competition, severance costs, implication for the UI system, etc. Moreover, it should be required to provide comparative economic evaluations of viable alternative plans so that the Canadian Government can make an informed decision before allowing Canada Post to abdicate its responsibilities.ⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱ Note that there are some minor discrepancies in Statistics Canada's total figures. Figures quoted here are official Statistic Canada numbers and no effort was made to resolve discrepancies.

Some images in this document were taken from the Internet, while others were taken in West Island suburbs.

Appendix 1



Images taken in Pointe Claire, Ste Anne de Bellevue, Kirkland and Beaconsfield



Images taken in Beaconsfield

Appendix 2

Displaying actual road conditions in Beaconsfield

