

TRI-CITY NEWS

Your Community News Leader

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Canada Post Corporation,
Strategic Review Advisory Panel,
330 Sparks Street (HCCR)
Ottawa, Ontario
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To Whom It May Concern:

As a newspaper reporter, editor and publisher over the past 47 years, I have a fairly good understanding of how important community newspapers can be to the readers they serve.

Unfortunately, since its transition into a Crown Corporation, Canada Post has been guided and will continue to be guided by principles that position it at variance with private "information delivery vehicles" and the readers they serve. In many instances it is in the unique position of being both a supplier and a competitor at the same time.

That is, exactly, the challenge for community newspapers. In rural areas in particular, but also in urban and suburban areas where "super boxes" prevail, Canada Post enjoys the unique advantage of taking money in one hand and using unfair practices and regulations to penalize "their clients" on the other hand.

And this has happened and continues to happen despite the very best efforts of some excellent Canada Post employees who try within their own spheres to recognize the importance of community newspapers.

Because of its size and scope, its previous and current status, Canada Post also benefits from the enormous infrastructure that is in place, without recognition of past capitalization expense which was financed by taxpayers. It therefore has a further economic advantage when competing with independently owned and operated companies.

This is particularly obvious when Canada Post arranges to have flyers or "mailers" printed at below market rates for customers and then has them shipped across the country (with no transportation charge) to postal centers. Then they are then delivered at significantly discounted rates, effectively subsidized by more expensive first class mail, and often placed in "super boxes" which only Canada Post can access.

That situation places privately owned information service companies at a distinct disadvantage because they must deliver to the householder's doorstep at an increased cost.

While this is happening, community newspapers in rural areas across the nation are facing continuous pressure to accommodate increasingly stringent rules with respect to the flyers and mailers that they insert into their publications for delivery by Canada Post.

It seems obvious that Canada Post fully understands that in rural communities newspapers don't have an affordable option and therefore they can "beat that poor horse" as much as they want. And that's done effectively by continuing to impose higher rates and even more stringent requirements.

Years ago politicians and federal civil servants had some capacity to arbitrate disagreements. The importance of the community press was recognized and Canada Post did not have the unfettered power that it currently enjoys.

The ability to have a third party intervene is no longer available. Charges/rates and regulations appear to be imposed arbitrarily by Canada Post with little or no recourse available to the customer.

I believe it is long overdue for Canada Post's customers to have their arguments fairly heard through an arbitration process where the weight of the arguments – customer and corporation – can be fairly assessed and appropriately adjudicated.

It would be my hope that this Strategic Review would result in a better understanding of the need for Canada Post to be more respectful and fair in some of its competitive practices, and to be held responsible when it acts incorrectly or inappropriately in its dealings with its customers.

Yours truly,



Brian McCristall

Publisher

The Tri-City News

Port Coquitlam, B.C.