

UNITING *for TOMORROW*



S'UNIR *pour DEMAIN*

CONVENTION - CONGRÈS

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Report on **Appendix T**

Canadian Union of Postal Workers
Syndicat des travailleurs et travailleuses des postes

cupw • sttp

REPORT OF THE APPENDIX “T” COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

During this mandate, the Appendix “T” - Service, Expansion, Innovation and Change Committee was led by a three-member Steering Committee: Julee Sanderson, 1st National Vice-President, Beverly Collins, National Secretary-Treasurer, and Joanne Gomercich, National Union Representative – Grievances.

When it comes to new services and job creation, the past four years had their ups and downs. In some ways, the Corporation changed its tune quite a bit since the years of the Harper Government and the Five-Point Action Plan. Rather than simply cutting costs, the Corporation showed a willingness to find ways to grow. In the last two years, we’ve seen lots of movement: the opening of new Community Hubs, the launch of new financial services, and a commitment from the Corporation to electrify its entire fleet by 2040.

This is not to say we haven’t had our share of problems. The Corporation’s inability to deal with widespread staffing shortages stretched our members thin and undermined customer service. We lost count of the number of post offices we found that had to cut back operating hours because they just didn’t have staff.

What’s more, we didn’t always see eye to eye with the employer when it came to our approach to Appendix “T”. While the Union has always seen the Committee as a space for creative experimentation and innovation, oftentimes it can feel as though the Corporation is looking for any reason to drag its feet. It can take quite a bit of work to help the employer recognize a good idea.

Coming out of the COVID pandemic, we all have lots of questions about the future of Canada Post. The past few years have been very challenging for both our members and the Corporation. Letter mail volumes have continued to go down, and competition in parcels delivery has gotten more intense. With so much uncertainty, we know that service expansion is the best way to secure good paying jobs into the future.

In the rest of our report, we will give an overview of the bigger projects we took on over the past four years, highlighting both the ups and downs.

FINANCIAL SERVICES AND POSTAL BANKING

For the last two years, the financial services file took up a lot of our attention. What initially had such promise turned into a disappointment when Canada Post decided to suspend the MyMoney Loan. But as trade unionists, we know that achieving our goals never comes easily. Even though the MyMoney Loan didn’t pan out the way we wanted it to, we have every reason to keep our postal banking campaign alive.

The Appendix “T” Committee played an important role in piloting and overseeing the national launch of the loan. We worked with the Corporation to review market research, develop training programs, and discuss marketing and launch strategies. In this work, we had two main priorities: make sure Canada Post’s financial products and services were fair and affordable for consumers, and protect our members’ job security, health and safety, and collectively bargained rights.

In an agreement with the Corporation, we brought on two project assistants, Brother Steven Gilbert (Local 634) and Sister Nathalie Roy (Local 350), to work full-time on the financial services file. Brother Gilbert and Sister Roy showed real dedication to their roles. They brought their expertise and experience as retail clerks to discussions with the employer and helped their fellow counter clerks get up to speed on the latest developments. We thank Brother Gilbert and Sister Roy for all their hard work.

Despite the setback, we know that postal banking remains a win-win solution. We remain committed to exploring new options with the Corporation and look forward to continuing our postal banking campaign work through both Delivering Community Power and Appendix “T.”

SENIORS CHECK IN

We made good progress on the seniors check in file. We feel like we’re getting closer to getting a pilot project off the ground, even if Canada Post remains more hesitant than we’d like.

On the working committee level, we conducted an extensive research project about international postal operator’s check in services, interviewing management, Unions, social care experts, and postal workers about their experiences. We learned about the strengths and weaknesses of different service models, and we developed scenarios for testing a service in Canada and Quebec.

Our analysis showed that letter carriers could carry out a check in a couple of minutes, in about the same time it takes to get a customer signature for a PCI. On the right letter carrier routes, we could pilot this service without adding much in the way of new costs to the Corporation. And with the possibility of receiving funding from a government or a social services agency, a pilot could break even.

We also continued to develop good relationships with a range of new allies involved in senior care, allies that saw lots of value in our proposal. We were especially happy when the National Institute on Ageing let us know it was planning to release a research report on the benefits of mobilizing postal workers in support of senior care, a big boost for our campaign.

PRESCRIPTION DELIVERY

Other project proposals we put forward would have also been most useful during COVID. When the pandemic hit, amidst the stress and loneliness of the first lockdown, we put our mind to ways Canada Post could help keep the most vulnerable in our communities safe and connected. We proposed implementing a prescription delivery service, which would have allowed seniors to safely receive their medications in the comfort of their homes.

Although the employer turned the idea down, we on the Union side, continue to see lots of potential in prescription delivery and will continue to pursue a pilot. Prescription delivery could take advantage of existing delivery networks and our members’ daily presence in pharmacies like Shoppers Drug Mart and Rexall. It is not an impossible task. In 2020, when the government of Australia asked Australia Post to launch a prescription delivery service, the service got off the ground in just five days.

4 X 10 / DIRECT TO DEPOT INDUCTION (DDI) PROJECT

Other projects took a turn for reasons beyond our and the employer’s control. We put lots of work into the Direct to Depot Induction (DDI) project, which aimed to tackle high parcel volumes and overburdening among depot workers, only to have a major customer pull out at the last minute. The pilot project had lots of potential to create new full-time jobs and improve members’ work-life balance, so we were disappointed to see it fall short.

PAPERLESS GRIEVANCE PILOT

Recently, we finished up the Paperless Grievance Pilot Project, a project that had been originally agreed to during the previous mandate. The initiative for this project came from the employer’s side, but we agreed to take it on because it had the potential to cut back on paper waste and make the grievance submission process easier for Locals. It was also a good way for us to show the Corporation our willingness to work together.

After the pilot, feedback from Locals was mixed. Some Locals loved the new submission form and process. But for other Locals, the electronic system created more problems than it solved. Also, because we found that most Locals continued to print their grievance forms even after they submitted them electronically, the project didn’t appear to save much paper.

In the end, we decided not to pursue the electronic grievance system. We thought the way locals submitted their grievances was a decision best left to the Locals and Regions themselves.

MMHE CONTRACTING OUT

Under Section 2.1 of Appendix “T”, the Corporation must give the Union notice of its plans to contract out work normally done by members of the bargaining unit and give the Union a chance to make a counterproposal. During this mandate, the Corporation gave us notice that it wanted to outsource some Group 3 maintenance work in the Prairie Region. The process that followed was one of the low points in our relationship with the Employer on Appendix “T” during the mandate.

With little reflection at all, the Corporation dismissed our counterproposal to pilot a mobile maintenance van staffed by CUPW members. Instead, the employer chose to award a maintenance contract to Johnston Equipment. To members of the Working Committee, it felt like the employer just went through the motions, its decision already made no matter the merits of the Union’s counterproposal. The Corporation’s refusal to consider a mobile technical services van was especially disappointing given the success of the USPS mobile service technicians program, which keeps maintenance work in house and saves the postal service more than 2.5 million dollars in maintenance costs every year.

RUTGERS CONFERENCES

The Committee continued its tradition of attending the annual Rutgers Conference on Postal and Delivery Economics, bringing postal workers’ perspective on a range of issues affecting the industry. Taking part in both person and virtual conferences gave us a good chance to learn about service expansion projects at other post offices, build new connections, and meet with postal workers in host countries and learn from their struggles. We were happy to see specialists Kevin Matthews and Christopher Schwartz’s 2020 presentation get published in one of the most recent conference books. For the next conference, we will be presenting research about the impact of automation on postal workers and strategies of resistance.

FARMERS POST

The Committee kept on eye on trends in the wider postal and delivery industry, hoping to find good opportunities for service expansion at Canada Post. One of the most interesting projects we learned about was Farmers Post, a pilot project launched by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in two states in the USA. The WWF has teamed up with small farmers to use the USPS to deliver fresh local produce to customers’ doors, with same or next-day delivery. The project is very much in line with one of the proposals the Union has put forward in our Delivering Community Power Campaign.

With representatives from the WWF, Appendix “T” specialist Matthew Corbeil visited farmers and customers taking part in the project. While the project is small, and lots of work needs to be done to bring it to a National scale, early feedback was very positive. Using the USPS gave small farmers new sales channels to grow their business, and the project showed good potential to lower food waste and greenhouse gas emissions. With the USPS new Local Connect service, farmers can get packages to local customers as quickly as the same day the order comes in. As we continue to consider what new services make the most sense for Canada Post, we will keep a close eye on Farmers Post.

CONCLUSION

Overall, we are happy with the progress we made and are still making on different projects under Appendix “T”, especially financial services. During these challenging times of change and uncertainty, the Appendix “T” Committee remains as important as ever a way for the Union to carry forward its campaign for service expansion.



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