



Canada Post Stamps Out Home Delivery

Does a letter carrier bring mail to your house? Yes? Not for much longer.

Canada Post is delivering on a December 2013 promise. Over the next five years, five million addresses will say “Goodbye, home delivery” and “Hello, community mailbox.”

■ Steps away

A community – or group – mailbox is located close to your house. Postal workers open the box, placing each neighbour’s mail in a different locked compartment. You get a key that unlocks just your section. You can pick up your mail whenever you want.

There’s a mail slot for outgoing letters. There are also locked compartments for parcels. When a package arrives for you, the postal worker leaves a key with your mail.

■ Dollars and cents solution

Why make the switch? It’s cheaper.

Hand-delivery costs \$269 a year per address. Community mailbox delivery is just \$117. The post office will save \$500 million a year. But 6,000 to 8,000 letter carriers will lose their jobs.

■ Blame computers

Computers have changed our postal needs. We send fewer letters. Email is faster, and it’s free. But now we shop online a lot. Someone delivers all those packages.

So Canada Post is cutting back on letter delivery. They’re focusing on parcels instead.

■ Safe and sound?

The new mailboxes are supposed to protect parcels and personal information better than home mailboxes. A Winnipeg woman is looking forward to that.

“I’m away a lot,” she says. “I have to get my daughter to come get my mail. If I have it in a box, it’ll just be there when I get back.”

■ Or an easy target?

But maybe it’s not as safe as she thinks. Ask Coquitlam, B.C. mayor Richard Stewart.

“In some neighbourhoods, the community mailbox has been broken into at least once a year for the last decade. People constantly have to change their credit card and bank account numbers to avoid identity theft,” he says.

■ Out of reach

The sites also get blocked with snow. Seniors and people with disabilities may not be able to pick up their mail safely, even if the box is at the right height.



Many seniors don't know how to use a computer. They don't use email. They don't bank online. If they can't pick up their mail, how can they pay their bills?

■ Out of touch

Susan Dixon has a son with cerebral palsy. She says Canada Post doesn't know how hard it's making mail pickup for parents of young children. How much it will isolate seniors and people with disabilities.

"Has anyone at Canada Post ever tried to push a stroller or a wheelchair or a walker through the snow?"

She started an online petition against community mailboxes. It's already received 200,000 signatures.

■ Posties launch protest

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) says Canada Post shouldn't have withdrawn home delivery. It isn't allowed to make that decision on its own. It needs to consult people. It needs permission from the government.

So the union is challenging the decision in court. Groups for seniors and the disabled are joining them.

"We recognize that Canada Post needs to change," says CUPW leader Denis Lemelin. "But this is not the way!"

