

Canada Post warns of COVID-19 delays



May 6, 2020

By Michael RileyLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter

If it seems that you've been waiting an extra long time to take delivery of that item you ordered online, or that family memento from a loved one, you're not alone. In a press release from April 23, Canada Post has warned of Christmas level parcel volumes, resulting in delivery delays to customers due to COVID-19.

With so many people adhering to the stay at home order, and non-essential businesses shut down, online shopping has dramatically increased. People are also couriering items they might normally have hand delivered to family, friends and acquaintances pre-COVID. The delivery of these goods has created a huge increase in the number of packages Canada Post delivered versus this time last year. According to their April 23 press release, they delivered 1.8 million packages on April 20 alone. Canada Post workers are also working on Sundays to get mail and packages to people in the timeliest manner possible under the circumstances. They also remind people that with these delays, they can keep track of their packages using their tracking number on the Canada Post website and their free mobile app.

The trend is also evident at the Bancroft Canada Post office, which has reduced opening hours, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Friday, to allow employees to clean, restock, and provide relief. Employee Chris McGrath says they're getting a phenomenal number of packages coming through daily;

?We're getting far more volume than we got last Christmas. It's getting hard to move around in here. We're getting twice the number of parcels,? he says.

Customer feedback to these delays on the Canada Post twitter feed has been roughly divided 50/50 between those thinking they're doing a good job under difficult circumstances and people who are not so understanding. Most of the complaints have to do with what these customers see as Canada Post's inaccurate tracking system.

Despite these complaints and the unprecedented volumes for this time of year, Canada Post is following strict health and safety protocols set out by national and provincial public health authorities. They've maintained physical distancing measures in their facilities, which were not meant to keep people two metres apart in the first place, and that has led to delays. They have also made changes to the way parcels are delivered and picked up. For deliveries, they have initiated the Knock, Drop and Go approach, whereby the delivery person will knock, put the parcel in a safe spot outside the door and then leave when you answer. This

eliminates the need for signatures at the door, speeds up delivery and reduces the items that will need to be picked up later on. For parcel pickup at the post office, Canada Post has suspended their usual return to sender deadline of 15 days, so that customers will come to pick up only when they are sure they are feeling well and it is safe to do so.

Canada Post requests that customers continue to maintain physical distancing from delivery people at all times. They also ask that they keep their dogs inside and under control. The number of interactions between its employees and customers' dogs has been increasing, which makes physical distancing difficult when owners come out to get their dogs, and also increases the risk of dog bites.

?We are doing everything possible to maintain the services you rely on while keeping people safe. This situation will continue to evolve and we want you to know you can count on us to do our very best,? said Canada Post president and CEO Doug Ettinger in his March 19 press release. ?I also hope that something as simple as seeing a Canada Post truck or letter carrier walking in your neighbourhood provides some reassurance that you continue to be connected to all Canadians.?