



Priddis post office closing its doors

Foothills: Parcel pick-up service moving to Silverado despite community efforts

By Krista Conrad

Staff Reporter

A small rural postal outlet is closing its doors, despite its community rallying to save it last fall.

Priddis residents received notification at the beginning of February that the hamlet's post office will close as of Feb. 28, and that parcel pick-up would be deferred to the Silverado postal outlet in south Calgary.

MD Coun. Suzanne Oel said the news came as a disappointment to area residents.

"We were very hopefully but we're now in receipt of this announcement they weren't able to find a successful candidate for the position of postmaster," said Oel, "They're saying it's not been successful in staffing is their reason."

She said Canada Post intends to move all post office boxes from the outlet into community mailboxes to accommodate mail delivery for residents who had P.O. boxes for mailing addresses.

It will mean an address change for those people as they're shifted into the community boxes, which Canada Post is doing at no cost, she said. The change is in keeping with continued mailing address changes through the Foothills as Canada Post switches residents over to their emergency addresses, she said.

"They're going to be changing those addresses only in the hamlet area and they're going to be obtaining the postal codes, which will be rolled out for the rest of the group in the Foothills," said Oel.

She said there are some options for people as far as package delivery. If they choose not to have their items shipped to the Silverado outlet, they can



WHEEL FILE PHOTO

The Priddis community raised close to \$12,000 in the fall to save its post office, but it wasn't enough. Canada Post announced this month it would be closing the outlet due to being unable to staff it.

opt for flex delivery, which would allow customers to choose whichever postal outlet they wish to pick up parcels, like Okotoks, Millarville, Bragg Creek, or even other Calgary locations, she said.

However, there is still hope for some level of postal service in the hamlet, she said.

While the changes are being made, the retail division of Canada Post is conducting its own investigation, she said, to determine whether another business in Priddis could obtain dealer status.

"So a dealer level of service does not include the retail aspect of being able to send a package, but you can buy stamps or prepaid

envelopes and do parcel pick-up," said Oel. "So there's still a possibility out there of coming back to one of the businesses as a place to pick up packages for the approximately 700 residences in the area this post office has served."

It could take up to three months to achieve dealer status, so in the meantime Canada Post is following through with its commitment to shut down the Priddis office, she said.

Though there may be some hope for service, Oel said people in the hamlet are disappointed in Canada Post's decision.

"The community has tried hard to support Canada Post to stay in the hamlet and accommodate

them when they wanted to move out of the old building," said Oel. "They had that all set up and then they say they can't find a person to staff it. It's frustrating."

Ed Osborne, president of the Priddis Community Association, said the community is upset to see the service leave after working to find a new temporary location. Once located in the old school house, the post office moved in November to the hamlet's strip mall, where it would have stayed until a new multi-purpose building, currently in the planning stages, was complete.

Members of the Priddis community had come together to raise about

\$12,000 toward keeping the post office, he said, which was largely used to pay for renovations to the strip mall bay, three months' rent, and utility bills.

He said the community would have had to launch another fundraising campaign if the post office had stayed.

"In some ways it's good we've come to a resolution on this before we got too far down the road with expenditures," said Osborne.

The balance of funds not yet spent will be put toward the multi-purpose building project, currently getting underway, he said.

A conceptual design of the building, which is

set to house the library, programming space, skating change facilities and a preschool, will be revealed at a public open house March 20, he said. Once public input has been collected, the association will look for donor commitment.

The building, which he said will take two or three years to complete, was once intended to be the new home of the post office as well.

"It's a shame to see it pulled out completely," said Osborne. "All things come to an end, I guess. Hopefully we can still have a reasonable service at the end of the day."