

Canada Post addressing: Niagara-on-the-Lake Post Office

As per the discussion with Lord Mayor Pat Darte and CAO Holly Dowd, October 3, 2017.

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Overview:

Canada Post is responsible to develop and maintain a nation-wide system for the collection and delivery of mail. As such, Canada Post determines the methods used to address mail for delivery. This can include several different types of addressing, including the use of Post Office Box numbers, Rural Route addressing, Site & Compartment numbers, or the use of the civic (municipal or 9-1-1) address as a mailing address. Canada Post provides one free method of mail delivery to each of our customers but has the right to determine which form of mail delivery, and addressing, that is.

Niagara-on-the-Lake (old town) residents have been receiving their mail in PO Boxes at the Post Office for many years, and their addresses have reflected that, with each customer being assigned a PO Box number. This number must be put on the incoming mail so it may be directed to the proper PO Box in a speedy and efficient manner. A proper mailing address for one of our old town Niagara-on-the-Lake customers would look like this:

PO Box 123, Niagara-on-the-Lake ON L0S 1J0

Customers can, and often do, include their civic or street address. While this isn't necessary for proper delivery, as long as the PO Box number is on the letter, it does not significantly impact the efficiency of delivery to the PO Box.

Canada Post is a Crown corporation and is mandated to operate in a financially self-sustaining manner. Canada Post strives to offer the best service possible while keeping costs reasonable.

Current situation:

For many years there was relatively little staff turnover at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Post Office. With that continuity came a familiarity with the residents and some staff were able to correlate a resident's name and civic address with the PO Box. Although not required to do so, as a courtesy, they would sort mail to the correct PO Box without the PO Box number present in the address. While Canada Post makes every effort to deliver mail to the correct address, the proper procedure was to identify the incorrectly addressed mail and inform customers to begin using the correct address, which includes the PO Box number. Incorrectly addressed mail can be classified undeliverable and returned to sender.

There has been a good deal of turnover at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Post Office in recent years and most of the staff are new. As well, Niagara-on-the-Lake has grown with many newer residents relocating to the old town and homes changing ownership. This often results in the reassigning of PO Box numbers, but can also see a customer change their civic address while maintaining a specific PO Box number. Also, several business people own multiple properties but maintain one PO Box for their mail.

Without the previous familiarity with residents, new staff must take more and more time to search addresses and correlate it to the correct PO Box. This slows down the handling and processing of incoming mail and is detrimental to all customers, including those who use proper addressing. As well, in order to meet our delivery standards, mail without the PO Box number is often set aside and requires staff to work overtime in order to process this mail and deliver it to the correct PO Box. The repeated use of incorrect addressing is time consuming and has a negative impact on our attempt to maintain a high quality service.

Canada Post began to inform customers in October 2016 that the people and businesses they correspond with must have the correct address, which includes the PO Box number, on their mail or it will be subject to return effective February 2018.

While Canada Post does use the civic address as the mailing address in many communities, we are unable to use a hybrid system for delivery to the PO Boxes. If we were to switch to the use of the civic address as the mailing address, all business and residential customers in the old town who currently use a PO Box would continue to receive mail in a PO box, but would be required to begin using only their civic address as their mailing address.

Civic Addressing:

While the current addressing in Niagara-on-the-Lake is PO Box addressing, Canada Post recognizes that with the rise of e-commerce and internet shopping, many customers are asking to use their civic address as their mailing address. It may be necessary in the long-term to convert all prime mode mailing addresses in Canada to a civic address. However, this is a complicated process and will take some time to implement across Canada.

Where circumstances warrant, Canada Post is taking the opportunity to adopt the civic address as the mailing address in some Post Offices. This usually occurs when a significant update is required to the Post Office such as the need to replace old and damaged PO Boxes, improve Post Office lobby space, install parcel compartments or lockers, or relocate the Post Office. Also, Canada Post is converting many Rural Route mailing addresses to a civic number mailing address and updating the municipal name to correspond with the municipality in which the customer lives. Some municipalities have requested we convert Rural Route mailing addresses to civic addresses as a way to enhance 9-1-1 service delivery.

With that in mind, there is no immediate need for enhancements or repairs to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Post Office and conversion to a civic addressing system is not currently being considered.

Civic addressing would require all customers (businesses and individuals) to stop using their PO Box number in their address and use only their civic address. This may or may not result in a change of Postal Code for some. Canada Post would inform customers of the process and what they need to do through a

series of letters. Canada Post would provide one year free change of address and mail forwarding service, and supply customers with postage paid cards that they could use to inform the people and businesses they correspond with of their new mailing address.

Customers would likely be re-assigned to a different PO Box as the mail would be coming in to the Post Office sequenced to the order of the civic address.

Canada Post would not be responsible for costs associated with businesses who wish to change items such as letterhead or business cards to reflect their new mailing address.

It is also possible that anomalies such as several addresses sharing one PO Box will be discovered and corrected. This could result in the need to have mail delivered to some addresses by Community Mailbox as there may be the need to free up PO Boxes at the Post Office.

The conversion to civic addressing would require our Delivery Planning staff to work with municipal staff to confirm addressing and municipal naming information.

Converting to civic addressing would mean customers who wish to have a PO Box address would be required to pay for that service as their “free” mailing address would be their civic address.

Please note with the use of civic addressing, the customer’s name need not appear on the address, just the correct civic number, street name, municipal name and postal code.

Summary:

Canada Post is committed to providing the best service possible. Sorting mail with the incorrect addressing information is inefficient and hinders our ability to provide the highest quality of service.

Canada Post is asking customers who receive their mail at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Post Office to use the current and correct form of addressing which includes their PO Box number.

Mail without the correct PO Box address is subject to being returned to sender beginning in February 2018.

Most companies, particularly banks and utility companies, accept this form of addressing and if in doubt, customers should confirm their mailing address with the appropriate business or individual.

Canada Post cannot operate a hybrid system with some customers using their civic address while others use their PO Box address. If we were to switch to the use of the civic address as the mailing address, all business and residential customers in Niagara-on-the-Lake would be required to switch.

Canada Post has no immediate plans to convert Niagara-on-the-Lake PO Box customers to the use of the civic address as their mailing address.

Should you wish any further information please contact:

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