

# Canada Post MailBox Report Card

## *Retrofitting Community Mailboxes into Kanata/Beaverbrook*

V1.7

Thursday, November 20, 2014

### Detailed History of Changes

| Ver. | Date      | Who | Detailed description of Changes   |
|------|-----------|-----|---|
| 1.7  | 20Nov2014 | NJT | Canada Post has responded to the most serious safety issue and is provided information on the grass ruts problem.<br><br>Document issues with drivers using a “drive through” technique to get mail by pulling across the street (against traffic) to reach their mailbox through their driver’s window without getting out of the car (also rutting the grass and damaging the mailbox installation) |
| 1.6  | 13Nov2014 | NJT | Updated to include issues 3 weeks after Oct 20, 2014 start of service – most notably increasing ruts on the grass before and after community mailboxes due to cars pulling off the road to get their mail.  |

### Canada Post Grade

Overall, the KBCA would offer Canada Post no better than a C- grade on how Community Mailboxes were retrofitted into Beaverbrook.

A further comment would be:

Needs to work better with others – namely Community groups/Associations and the local City Councillor. Canada Post clearly lacked key information about the community (e.g. new schools, sidewalks, traffic patterns) that these sources could have provided and had no forum to understand how to resolve mailbox safety and location issues that was in the best interests of the entire Community.

### Recommendations

For any Community where Canada Post is planning a Community Mailbox retrofit, we recommend to Community Associations and City Councillors that they insist:

- That Canada Post works with them more closely vs. attempting to bypass them and go directly to the individual residents.
- That Canada Post identify a representative (email, phone), preferably the Community Mailbox installation program Project Manager for their neighborhood, so that the local Community Association and the local City Councillor can raise and resolve issues in a timely manner.

### Summary

Beaverbrook (Kanata) was one of the first communities to be retrofitted with community mailboxes from existing door to door delivery, which was completed in Oct 2014.

Canada Post announced a rollout plan which included community consultation and that they would strive to provide safe and accessible mailboxes that would be sidewalk accessible, near lighting and avoid encroaching on private property – if possible.

As the process unfolded, Canada Post's behavior when dealing with mailboxes on city property vs. condominium corporation private land was very different.

In the case of condominiums within the community, Canada Post had to consult directly with the condominium associations and get approval for each location as this is private land. Feedback from condo owners is they were happy with the result.

In the case of publically (City) owned land in the rest of the community, with the exception of some early meetings with the Kanata Beaverbrook Community Association (KBCA) and our City Councillor, Canada Post avoided meeting with the KBCA and went directly to residents in the immediate vicinity of proposed mailbox locations.

Those residents were directly contacted by letter and provided a phone number with which they could raise a service ticket on safety or other issues with a proposed mailbox location. What unfolded is that mailboxes were moved due to genuine safety issues and to complaints. In many cases the change in location was made without notifying residents close the final location. A number of residents complained that they had service tickets with Canada Post, which they never followed through on.

Communication with Canada Post, whether to ask for information or to provide input or feedback on mailbox locations was, and continues to be, almost impossible. There are no phone numbers or email addresses on the Canada Post site for other than specific issues that Canada Post is willing to deal with.

Once the installations were complete, we did a survey of the installations, the net result is that of an observed 32 post boxes of which 1 has substantial pedestrian/vehicle safety issues, 9 are unnecessarily immediately opposite driveways, plus a number of installations present wheelchair accessibility issues and potential hazards in winter months due to relatively short, steep ramps and very shallow flat areas immediately in front of the mailboxes.

In conclusion, a case of superficial consultation, with an unnecessarily flawed outcome.

As of Nov 13, after a month operation with the new Community Mailboxes, in a community with no roadside curbs, we are seeing safety issues and substantial property damage due to residents pulling their cars up onto the grass beside the mailboxes.

Nov 14, we received a phone call from a Canada Post representative who is involved with the installation of Community Mailboxes in our neighborhood who acknowledge the safety concerns for the #1 issue we had raised and outlined what is being done to correct the problem (see later in this report for details)

As of Nov 20 several drivers have been witnesses crossing to pull on to the grass and community mailbox ramp/pad, against traffic, to access their mailbox "drive through" style through their driver's window without leaving their car damaging the adjacent grass verge and mailbox interlocking brick installation.

The full report can be accessed here: [KBCA Canada Post Report Card](#)

## Introduction

Kanata/Beaverbrook is one of the first communities in Canada to have mailboxes retrofitted into the neighborhood to replace door-to-door delivery.

The Kanata Beaverbrook Community Association has prepared this report on the experience so that other communities can benefit from understanding what to expect from Canada Post and to understand what issues they may encounter.

It covers the timeline from initial announcement of guiding principles – Jan 29, 2014 - to the first day of actual delivery to the mailboxes - Oct 20, 2014.

We'll cover:

- The process as defined by Canada Post
- How the process worked in practice for both the general public and for condominium corporations
- What are some of the outstanding issues with mailbox installations, including one serious safety issue that is in the process of being resolved.
- Unexpected hazardous traffic behavior of residents who drive to pick up mail from Community Mailboxes and the property, greenspace and mailbox installation damage they have caused in less than a month.

## The Process

### As Defined by Canada Post

Publically and to community residents by letter, Canada Post defined the following:

- A notification to all community residents of the change to community mailboxes and the timeline (completion, Fall 2014)
- A survey on the location of the mailboxes and publication of the results
- A “door knocking” campaign to those residents who would have a mailbox installed in the immediate vicinity of their home
- Provision of a service phone number for residents to raise issues or concerns with mailbox locations

### What actually happened

Early in the process (March and April 2014) informal meetings were held at which some members of the KBCA, Canada Post, the City of Ottawa, and our City Councillor, Marianne Wilkinson, took part. The first meeting was quite promising. By the second meeting, Canada Post had backed away from giving the KBCA more specific site information. Marianne Wilkinson was able to insist on Canada Post providing details (including maps and photos) of proposed mailbox locations, which were posted on the KBCA web site.

The Canada Post community survey was very shallow, asking about concerns such as the relative importance of safety, lighting, security, accessibility, plus the only question which actually mattered, which was how mailboxes should be distributed – a choice of either a larger number of locale mailbox clusters or a smaller number of more centrally located mailboxes.

After the survey was complete, Canada Post did not meet with the KBCA nor did any Canada Post representatives attend any public meeting. Both the KBCA and City Councillor were unable to get any further meaningful response out of Canada Post. Canada Post never updated the list of mailbox locations provided to the KBCA nor the City Councillor.

Canada Posts next step was to do a “door knocking” campaign which was a combination of mailings and door to door notification of exact mailbox locations for those residents in the immediate vicinity.

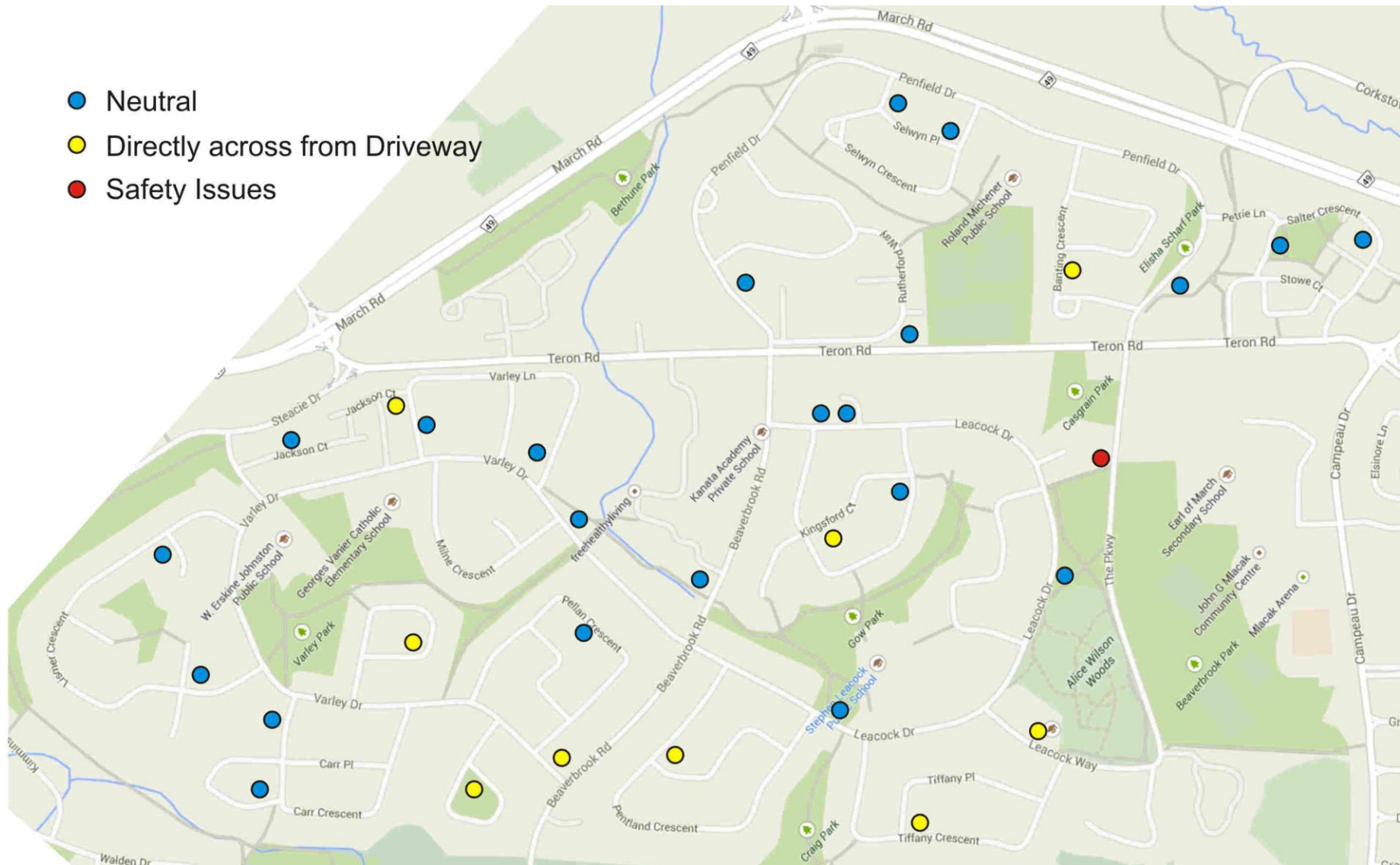
Residents were given a phone number and a few were able to obtain Canada email addresses with which to raise issues for which Canada Post provided "service tickets". In several cases, residents that did raise issues and obtained service tickets never heard from Canada Post again.

In talking with a number of residents, plus emails forwarded to the KBCA of resident/Canada Post exchanges, plus comparison of the original proposed mailbox locations vs. the final installations, there were quite a few changes made; some due to safety concerns and others due to complaints. In many cases, the residents near the final locations were not informed of those changes until the installation crews pulled up and started digging.

In conclusion, a case of superficial consultation, with an unnecessarily flawed outcome.

As the Summary provides, things are still ongoing in this story...

## Survey Results



In total, 32 community mailbox installations were reviewed of which 22 are neutral (no major issues, but some residents wanted them somewhere else), 9 are directly across from home driveways and 1 which is a clear safety hazard. Not all community mailbox locations were viewed – such as those located on Condominium properties (such as Bethune and Rutherford).





### **Community Mailboxes directly across from driveways**

Quite a number of homeowners have complained of community mailboxes being located directly opposite their driveway, citing issues of difficulty when backing out and possibly being blocked by cars parked as people pick up their mail. This also poses a risk for those accessing the mailbox as it may be difficult for someone backing out of a driveway to see them.

What is really unclear is why Canada Post placed these mailboxes where they did. In almost all cases there clearly is room for the mailbox to have been located several meters left or right of their current location, which would have resolved this problem.

The following is a typical example. The first photo shows that the postbox could have been located anywhere along the strip of grass it sits on.



Yet they chose to put it directly opposite this home's driveway.



What is also unclear is why the postbox is not facing the sidewalk/pathway that is directly behind the mailbox, which would provide for safer access and deeper setback.

## Community with Safety Issues

The Community shown below, which is marked as having safety issues in the map, is a very odd and unsafe installation:



This box is near no homes, at the edge of a park, across from the Earl of March High school.



This Google Maps overhead also illustrates the location. The homes that are adjacent are separated by a 20 foot high unbroken hedge both to the North and East, so have no access.

The community mailbox is located on a primary path for students to get to and from the Earl of March High school (grades 9-12) and soon to be intermediate school (grades 7 to 9)

It blocks a pedestrian's view of traffic (coming from the left) as they exit from beside the hedge and in turn blocks the view for drivers of pedestrians.

This will only be aggravated once there are snow banks.





After emailing this report on Nov 13 to a number of Canada Post email personnel via email, we got a response from Canada Post by phone on Nov 14 on this specific issue. They acknowledged the problem and indicated that they would do 2 things. The first is to relocate one of the “pods” to the property of the condo group of buildings at the corner of Teron Road

and the Parkway. This will allow those residents to walk only a few feet to their community mailbox vs. driving to the current location and then doing a U turn. The second “pod” will be located at the other end of the street to service those residents.

### **Community Mailboxes with Accessibility issues**

New Community Mailboxes in Kanata which are accessed directly from the street (as opposed to a sidewalk or pathway) are much closer to the road than post boxes in surrounding newer communities that have had post boxes for years:

In addition where there is an existing concrete curb, the curb has been cut down to street level with a short, relatively steep ramp and a very shallow flat area immediately in front of the postboxes. It is easy to see inadvertently stepping back onto the ramp when swinging open a postbox and falling over backwards, particularly in winter. This is particularly a concern for wheel chair accessibility. The following is one example:





## **Residents driving to pick up mail from Community Mailboxes causing property damage**

Less than a month after the community mailboxes were installed in Beaverbrook, we are seeing property damage due to residents who drive to pick up their mail parking with two wheels on the grass verge due to safety concerns on busy residential streets, which is possible in communities without roadside curbs

Clearly residents feel the need to drive onto the grass verge because they do not feel safe exiting their cars on a busy collector near locations where there are curves in the road and multiple intersections. Cars turn onto Penfield quickly and generally are travelling close to the speed limit. Drivers have little time to react if a car door opens. Most people who are driving to the boxes probably stop on the way home in the evening, when it is dark and there is naturally more traffic. The lack of street lighting at these locations further adds to the fear of not being visible.

The sequence from left to right shows the week to week deterioration in only 3 weeks.



We also discussed this issue with Canada Post in their Nov 14 phone call and they indicated that they were also aware of this problem.

As of Nov 20, we have had several sightings of drivers performing a “mailbox drive through” which involves pulling across the street (now facing oncoming traffic), driving up on the grass and onto the interlocking brick (which can be seen as a ramp leading to the concrete pad the mailboxes are mounted on) and reaching through their driver’s window to open their mailbox without getting out of the vehicle, then driving off. This would explain the damaged interlock installations (already sagging into the ground with a tire wide indentation).

This is only possible due to the combination of:

- Mailboxes facing the road
- Mailboxes much closer to the side of the road than past installations (e.g. in surrounding neighborhoods that have had community mailboxes for some time)
- No curbs or other barriers to pulling onto the grass and up to the mailbox in a vehicle.

So this is not only damaging a number of locations, it also poses an unnecessary additional traffic hazard.

## **Missed Opportunities**

- Community Mailboxes have been placed without consideration for planned sidewalks which are in City plans to be installed in the next 2 years.
- Issues with community mailboxes directly opposite driveways would have been ameliorated if these boxes were set back farther from the road
- Community compatibility - I'm sure that Canada Post wants their post boxes to stand out as a marketing vehicle. However, that's what Canada Post wants, not what the community wants.

Canada Post's post box colour scheme - brushed aluminum, gray and silver with red highlights - looks like an Air Canada aircraft in the middle of a park.

I'm sure it would have been possible to have an all green colour scheme which would have blended into the community in a much more compatible manner.

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