

# OPINION

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## Spending by Canada Post is flagrant

Canada Post has finally done it. The Crown corporation actually turned a \$26 million profit last year. The year before, they recorded a loss of \$128 million.

This would be good news, except for the fact that the company has now bought out one of its competitors in the courier business. Until faxes become as common a household item as televisions, Canadians are bound to use the postal service. Each year stamps increase in price as service declines. Many rural areas have lost their post offices. In these villages, the post office was once a centre of the community. But no more. They were too expensive to run and



Viewpoint

Paula Crowell

Canada Post has a new respect for the bottom line.

Except when it comes to spending. They've bought Purolator Courier, they've opened more retail stores and if news releases and media packages are any indication, they're spending bundles on advertising and promo-

tion.

In the last two years, Canada Post has sent glossy posters, acrylic coasters, booklets on magazine-quality paper and numerous other general information kits to this office. In an economy when even large private corporations have cut their promotion budgets drastically, Canada Post is sending out expensive packages that make journalists take notice.

Information from the corporation details how service has improved. Average on-time delivery rate for lettermail of 98 per cent during 1992-1993, states the release.

But how does anyone know

what "on-time" means? A common complaint of the postal service is that no employee can tell customers how long it will take to deliver a letter. The only silver lining to this cloud is that at a prohibitive 43 cents each, Canadians are sending fewer letters to worry about.

Until technology reaches the point where fast communication is available to all we're stuck with this postal service. Until such means are available to all Canadians it will be unacceptable for Canada Post to spend money so flagrantly.

## Sultan is richest man - Her Majesty top woman

Buddy, can you spare a dime? I'm just kidding. I've got a dime. If you could spare three or four thousand bucks, this might turn out to be a meaningful conversation, but never mind, forget it. We're all singing the Short of Hard Cash Blues.

Most of us anyway. In place of dollars and cents we've got bills and dreams.

That's what keeps us plugging away at our nine-to-five grinds, buying lottery tickets and investing mad money in a few shares of Consolidated Moose Pasture every once in a while. There's no shortage of folks trying to get rich, but you hardly ever come across someone who's trying to be poor.

No money in it. Still... did you ever wonder what it must be like to be rich? Really rich? Rockefeller/King Midas/Scrooge McDuck rich?

Well, I can tell you it's no picnic. For one thing, a billion dollars won't buy what it used to you know. Not by a long shot. Why, measured in 1987 dollars, a billion today is really no more than a measly \$795 million according to Fortune magazine.

Which explains why there are more than twice as many billionaires in the world as there were just six years ago. Back in 1987 there weren't even a hundred people in the world with a billion bucks to their name. Today, the club membership stands at 233.

It's interesting to peruse the list and pick out the cream of the crop, the 10 richest people in the world. One of them is a woman. There are three Japanese, several Arabs, and a handful of Americans.

Put away those Maple Leaf flags folks. There are no Canadians among the top 10. You have to go all the way down to number 17 before you uncover a Canuck. There you'll find media tycoon Ken Thomson and his modest \$5.7 billion dollar grubstake.

Queen Elizabeth is the only woman on the list. They reckon her stock investments, race horses, jewellery and art, not to mention ahh... real estate, mean Her Majesty (make that Her Majesty) is worth just under \$8 billion and number nine slot in the top ten.

You know all those Mars Bars you've eaten over the years? Well, Mister Forrest Mars Sr.



Basic Black

Arthur Black

would like to thank you most sincerely for that. Your patronage earned him the title of the world's third richest person with a fortune of \$14 billion, give or take a nickel.

And yes, Virginia, there really is a legendary American family called the Waltons, but it ain't the folks that lived on Walton mountain. This Walton family owns the Wal-Mart store chain which the number-crunchers say is worth \$23.5 billion.

The richest person in the world? A rotund and smiling chap in white silk robes whose business card — if he carried a business card — would read Sultan of Brunei. Brunei is a laughable little chunk of sand not much bigger than Prince Edward Island.

Fortunately for the Sultan his patch of sand sits atop the richest known oil and gas deposit on the planet, which makes the Sultan worth a cool \$37 billion.

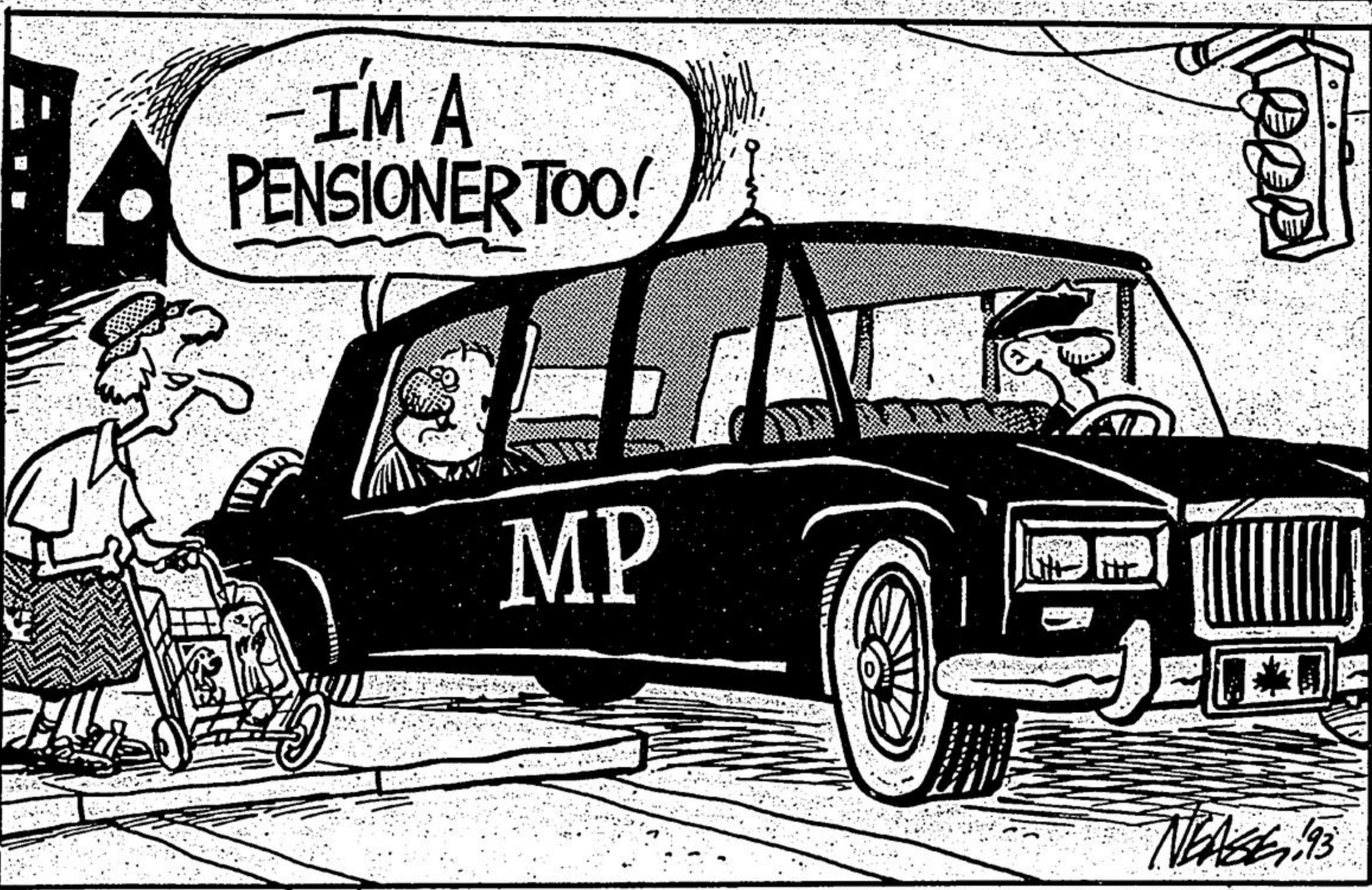
How much is that? How much is thirty-seven thousand million dollars? Who knows? Who knows how much anything is these days? We live in a world where a man-child like Robbie Alomar gets four and a half million bucks a season for playing second base in what used to be a kid's game.

We live in a world where a crook like Ivan Boesky, the convicted securities dealer, can tell a judge with a straight face that he needs \$20 million from his ex-wife because he's "barely surviving". The judge agreed. He also ordered Boesky's ex-wife to pay him \$180,000 a year for life and to throw in a \$2.5 million dollar mansion in California.

Yeah, that oughtta keep the wolf from the door.

Ivan Boesky proves the truth of Hemingway's retort to F. Scott Fitzgerald. "Let me tell you about the very rich," said Fitzgerald. "They are different from you and me."

"Yes," retorted Hemingway. "They have more money."



## ADAM

by Brian Basset

