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RCMP memo leak upsets Tony Abbott

By TINA IVANY

Mississauga MP Tony Abbott told The Mississauga News on Monday that he is "disturbed" about the leak last week of a confidential RCMP memo.

"Although there may be too much secrecy and security in government," he said, "I really think there are some areas which shouldn't be leaked. It is a disturbing aspect of the system that the top security man in the country writes a letter to the second most important security man and that letter appears in a Toronto newspaper."

The letter, which came to the attention of Peter Worthington, editor of the Toronto Sun, concerned guidelines with respect to the investigation of the Parti Quebecois, as interpreted by Michael Dare, director-general of the RCMP's security division and author of the letter. The letter was directed to Robin Bourne, assistant deputy minister of the attorney general's office.

"On the issue itself," said Abbott, "General Dare has acknowledged that there's been a misunderstanding.

"I think it was a misinterpretation of what

he received when the Prime Minister was chairman of the security committee.

"But," he added, "that may be a matter of debate between the Prime Minister and General Dare."

Trudeau, said Abbott, believes the leak of the letter is "an act to sabotage him personally."

"But, I don't know about that," said Abbott.

Asked to comment on what government matters he thinks should be kept confidential, Abbott said, "There are powers in the world that are snooping around in Canada and have our worst interests at heart. I think there's a case for certain national security measures being kept secret."

He added, however, that he did not think the Dare letter had anything to do with national security.

"It is questionable," he said, "whether such a document should be secret."

The Parti Quebecois, said Abbott, is a perfectly respectable party, being led by Rene Levesque

who's "misguided in our view but nonetheless a respectable leader".

Abbott added that he believes there is some merit in Cabinet discussions being kept secret to ensure that all sides of a question can be adequately discussed without ministers fearing their views will appear in the paper the following day.

Abbott's with Trudeau

As long as the debate on capital punishment continues on the Hill, Mississauga MP Tony Abbott will keep an open mind on the subject.

Nonetheless, the Liberal MP said in an interview on Monday that he still leans toward abolition of the death penalty and "almost certainly" will vote accordingly.

Of Mississauga constituents who answered a questionnaire on the subject in an Abbott newsletter last year, close to 80 per cent favored the retention of the death penalty. Abbott said that he would consider the views of

those constituents but "would study all questions carefully, review all aspects from all points of view and, in a matter of conscience such as this, vote as I believe best."

Pointing out that although he had received a large number of letters demanding that Parliament hold a referendum on the subject, Abbott said he is "totally opposed to such a course of action."

"The arguments," he said, "have been made that this is an emotional issue about which each individual should be able to express his view.