

Mississauga - Federal Constituency

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# Busy beginning for the Hon. Mr. Abbott

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By TINA IVANY

OTTAWA - MP Tony Abbott, last week appointed to the Federal Cabinet as Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, has become a very busy man.

After attending a warm reception given Sunday night by members of the Mississauga Liberal Association at a regular meeting rescheduled to accommodate Abbott's portfolio demands, the former Liberal backbencher flew to Ottawa for a daylong session on Monday with the Consumers' Council of Canada.

The Council consists of national representatives appointed by the minister to advise him of consumer problems across the country. He got an earful.

Yesterday (Tuesday), Abbott flew to Vancouver to meet with Mrs. Ruth Lotzker, president of the Consumers' Association of Canada (CAC) and to discuss a grant the ministry will make to the CAC within the next few weeks.

His actions are evidence of the approach to his new portfolio that Abbott indicated he would take, during an interview following the swearing-in ceremonies at Government House in Ottawa last Wednesday.

Questioned about his approach, Abbott said, "A bias

has to exist in any ministry. In consumer and corporate affairs, it has to be in favor of the consumer. I am, after all, his representative in Ottawa."

He added, however, he would practise "an open and just attitude instead of being some kind of crusader for change".

Abbott's appointment to that particular portfolio was not expected. Speculation was strong that the Cabinet shuffle would see Abbott emerge, due to his background, as minister without portfolio in the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

It is believed Abbott became a strong contender for the portfolio when Bryce Mackasey, former Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster-General became apparently disenchanted with his direction in the Cabinet shuffle and resigned.

Abbott said however in a telephone interview that he expects his corporate background will help him achieve a balanced approach to his new portfolio.

"My prime responsibility," he said, "is as an advocate of the consumer. But I see my position as an

intermediary between the two."

Asked if he would still spend as much time in his riding, Abbott said, "Unfortunately, due to the requirements of my added responsibilities, I will not be able to spend as much time in Mississauga as I would like to.

"But, because of my new position, I believe I can achieve more for my constituents than I previously could as a private member."

He said he would continue his Town Hall meetings should constituents' interest indicate the need to do so. Having spent but two years as an MP, Abbott was asked his reaction to his appointment to a major portfolio after such a short time in Parliament.

"I suppose," he said, "that I have those particular characteristics needed for the portfolio. One I believe to be most important is the ability to communicate."

His department, he said, is now working on a number of initiatives, the major one being preparation of the second part of the competition bill which he will introduce into the House this fall.



Moments after the swearing-in of the new Cabinet at Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Mississauga MP and the new Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs Tony Abbott, was answering questions for The Mississauga News during an informal session on the House lawn. (Staff photo by Bernadette Hardaker)