



Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Mississauga MP Tony Abbott (centre) discussed consumer concerns with six Mississauga residents at a Saturday morning meeting. From left, Allan Currie, Fraser Code, Abbott, Pat Currie and Jennifer Code. Also present at the discussion were Jane Brown, and Judy Duncan. (Photo by Alex Kalnins).

Minister Abbott pans policy

Consumer Affairs Minister Tony Abbott panned the government for being "shortsighted in the past with respect to research grants" at a Saturday meeting with Mississauga constituents.

"Inflation has also eroded our capacity to keep up with the already inadequate level of research in Canada," he said.

His comments were in answer to a question from Fraser Code, a Mississauga resident and physics professor at Erindale College who expressed his concern over recent government decisions to buy technology.

"Why is the total National Research Council budget equal to the cost of one aircraft?" Code had asked.

Code also asked the minister to address himself to the concerns of foreign control of the Canadian economy and the proposed changes in the patent laws.

"The market place is 80 per cent controlled by Americans," Code charged, "and the Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRA) protects American interests in our economy."

Abbott agreed that Canadian ownership is important but emphasized that he did not want FIRA to become a "dishonest broker" by allowing Canadian companies to "walk in and take over another company at a fire sale price.

"In the long pull," he said, "let's not kid ourselves. Canada cannot stand alone. We can work like hell to be effective trading partners with Japan and Europe and that's good . . . but basically it's that 225,000,000 people "down there" who believe this is their natural marketplace. Our futures are very much linked."

Abbott said Canadians should not "set up too nationalistic a policy which will shrink opportunities here".

The possibilities for Canadians to establish new businesses should also be increased, Abbott said, by proposed revisions to the competition and bank acts expected this fall.

Code relayed fears expressed at a recent meeting of the Sheridan Park Research Association that the proposed changes in patent legislation would make it difficult to do research and development in Canada.

Abbott admitted his department has received a number of negative responses to the working paper on patent law revisions.

"Rest assured," he said, "that we are looking into why everybody seems to be out of step with us."

Abbott said he would speak with Hugh Faulkner, minister of science and technology about some of the concerns Code raised.