



Mrs. Fred Currie

Abbott told of allergy runaround

The buck stops here. Or so Mississauga resident Allan Currie could have said following a meeting he attended with Consumer Affairs Minister Tony Abbott on Saturday.

Currie, the father of two children with allergies, has been involved with what he termed, "government runaround" during the past year. As a member of the Allergy Information Centre, a volunteer organization based in Weston, he has been lobbying for a \$30,000 grant to keep the centre from imminent dissolution.

"Everyone seems to think the money is deserved," he said, "but no one wants to admit it belongs in his department. We've been shuffled from health to consumers all year."

Currie told Abbott the centre receives calls for information about allergy related questions from all over North America, at a rate of "300 a week".

"Many questions," he said, "come from parents wondering if a certain ingredient is in a certain food product. Ten per cent of the questions which come from the United States are from

doctors."

The operation, he said, is now being run out of a volunteer's home. The centre is requesting a federal grant to set up and staff an office.

Abbott said he would ask his department to bring to him all the material submitted by the centre to determine which department should handle the grant request.

"Personally," he said, "I'm attracted to making a donation to an organization like the centre rather than making another label change in the food industry, for example, and having that cost passed on to the consumer."

In reply to a question about nutrition labeling, Abbott said his department is monitoring a pilot project on nutrition labeling in the United States. He indicated consumers are not really responding well to the idea. He said following the problems which occurred after the implementation of textile and bilingual labeling, he is not convinced more labeling is either wise or necessary.

"The costs ultimately end up in the consumer's lap," he said. "I'm impressed with a directive now at the executive level in the U.S. which will require that any major change in legislation must have applied to it a cost benefit analysis to justify the increase in cost to the consumer."

Abbott also made it clear that he does not believe the CAC should be asking the government for \$700,000 a year and receiving \$400,000.