

Car seat safety standards

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become high Abbott priority

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item

By TINA IVANY

A study of Canadian car seat standards will have high priority in the consumer affairs department following a Saturday meeting involving Consumer Affairs Minister Tony Abbott and six Mississauga constituents.

The subject of car seat standards was brought to the minister's attention by Jennifer Code, a Mississauga member of the Highway Safety Committee of the Consumers' Association of Canada (CAC).

Code pointed out that due to stringent standards introduced last year, the availability of good car seats at reasonable cost has been diminished.

"When the new regulations were introduced," she said, "some American companies withdrew their product from the Canadian market rather than spend money on new product designs and manufacture just to meet Canadian regulations.

"Others modified their design by adding a parcel shelf strap to meet the standard. But studies undertaken by the CAC indicate the strap is often being improperly used or totally ignored by parents, rendering the seat at times unsafe."

Code added that modifications to meet the new standards have also resulted in an increase in cost of the seats, making them available to even fewer parents.

"A seat which costs \$25 in the United States costs close to \$40 in Canada," she said.

Code suggested to the minister that he consider implementing the standards compiled by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA). The CSA came up with its standards after a request from then Consumer Affairs Minister Ron Basford.

But the standards were rejected by Minister Herb Bray as too lenient two years later when the CSA submitted them for approval. As a result tighter standards were drawn up and implemented last November.

The CAC has however, continually supported the

CSA standards and has been lobbying for their acceptance.

"The CSA standards," said Code, "are more than adequate, I believe. Implementation of these standards would allow more children than might otherwise be protected while traveling in a car."

Abbott said he will look into the problem in the near future:

"Here's an example," he said, "of where a cost-benefit study might have shown the feasibility of not making standards so stringent. It makes little sense to have a large proportion of Canadian youngsters not having protection because they cannot afford it."

"I've got the point," he said, "and you cannot assured I'll follow it up."