

Mississauga - Federal Constituency

Abbott votes

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for abolition

Mississauga MP Tony Abbott yesterday voted in support of the Liberal government's plan to replace hanging for killers of prison guards and police with a mandatory minimum 25-year term of imprisonment for first-degree murder. A minimum of 15 years will be served before parole on a conviction for second-degree murder.

Abbott has consistently supported the government plan since its announcement. He argued that although public opinion polls showed support for capital punishment, "we should not be governed by questionnaires and polls."

"Falling the opportunity to be assured of the overwhelming majority view, we have no alternative but to follow our consciences," he said.

Abbott added, however, that he felt the Liberal government had made a mistake in automatically committing every death sentence

to the gallows. He said the public "bitterly resented" the Trudeau government's apparent violation of the spirit of the law.

Yesterday's close vote of 133 to 125 for abolition "wouldn't be close at all if we had carried out the odd execution," Abbott said.

He asserted that despite his support for the government's position, "I wasn't going to blindly follow a pre-announced decision."

Abbott said he read mail from his constituents and articles about both sides of the issue before coming to the capital punishment isn't a "suitable remedy."

He said he didn't know what political consequences his decision would have, but "I imagine that those who feel strongly about retention will be annoyed with me."