

Word 'voluntary' in new rust code causing concern

By SUSAN de STEIN

An anti-corrosion code proposing tough but voluntary guidelines for automobiles has received mild reactions from both the Consumers' Association of Canada (CAC) and car manufacturers.

Announced last week in Kitchener by Mississauga MP and Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs Tony Abbott, the code covers all cars starting in the 1978 model year and outlines progressively tougher standards for later models.

The guidelines require 1978 automobiles to be free from perforation for 36 months and a 1981 model for 60 months. All cars sold after 1978 should be free from structural damage caused by corrosion for 72 months.

CONFUSION

Confusion exists however at the code's use of the word "voluntary". Policy analyst for CAC, Barbara Sulzenko feels the code is voluntary in that the decision to implement the standards has been left up to the provinces.

"Good as far as it goes, the code is adequate on first reading", she said Monday. "But we just hope the provinces see fit to make it mandatory."

The lead taken by the Federal Government should be "welcomed by consumers who've had a raw deal in terms of product safety and high depreciation", she added. "But leadership is worth nothing if no one will follow".

Implementation of the code would be entirely voluntary, Abbott said, "but it's well known that several provinces, including Ontario, are actively involved in developing warranty legislation which could be a good way of making the code mandatory".

EASILY MET

The Minister said he is "convinced that the motor vehicle industry could easily meet the new requirements". Car manufacturers, he added, have made great strides in improving corrosion resistance, but "they haven't been prepared to back this effort with a standard or code". Only Ford and Fiat mention rust problems in warranties.

A General Motors spokesman in Oshawa said in an interview Monday that "it will take a little while to sort out the ramifications" of the proposal.

Nick Hall, manager of news relations at GM, said his company has been attempting to "come to grips with the rust problem" for a long time. "We



TONY ABBOTT
... Mississauga MP

are well on the way to attaining these standards. His (Abbott's) and our objectives are the same. We're both talking the same language".

According to spokesmen at the Ontario Ministry of Commercial Consumer and Commercial Relations, Minister Sidney Handelman has yet to study his federal counterpart's proposal.