

## Ottawa has no plans to quiz Toyota officials over recalls

Tony Van Alphen

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While U.S. politicians hammer Toyota about recent auto problems, Ottawa has no plans to grill the company publicly.

A spokesman for Transport Minister John Baird said Tuesday that the government has worked with Toyota Canada since last year to ensure the company has taken corrective action to protect the safety of consumers.

James Kusie, director of issues management and parliamentary affairs in Baird's office, added the government has no intention of quizzing senior Toyota officials "at this time" about a series of recent recalls that have shaken consumer confidence in the company's longstanding reputation for safety and durability.

"Toyota Canada, to this point, has been and continues to be very co-operative with Transport Canada," Kusie added. "We continue to work with and monitor Toyota's implementation of their solutions."

The company has announced five recalls here affecting more than three-quarters of a million cars and trucks for problems ranging from sticking accelerator pedals to slow brake reactions since November.

Earlier Tuesday, Toyota said it would also install a brake override system in 2005-2010 Tacoma pickup trucks, 2009-2010 Venza crossovers and Sequoia sport utility vehicles to eliminate the chance of runaway acceleration.

In Washington, some members of the U.S. Congress charged at hearings Tuesday that the company ignored complaints for years.

They say the American regulator, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, repeatedly failed to investigate defects properly.

Some opposition MPs here want the federal transport committee to call Toyota officials to hearings, but that would take some time since Prime Minister Stephen Harper late last year suspended Parliament and all committee work until March.

When Parliament returns, MPs will need to re-establish committees and their memberships before conducting any business.

Liberal Joe Volpe, the federal party's transport critic, told CBC News that the federal government "has gone missing" in the Toyota controversy by not insisting on more accountability from the automaker.

A lack of proper assurances for the public is seen not only jeopardizing consumer safety, but also the jobs of thousands of workers in southern Ontario who build the company's models.

Brian Masse, the NDP's industry critic, said he can't understand why Canada is acting as "bystanders," instead of probing Toyota's recalls more aggressively. "We need an investigation here," he said.

However, Toyota spokeswoman Sandy Di Felice said the company has kept Transport Canada informed at "every critical juncture" about its problems and solutions.

"These matters are getting federal oversight," she said.

"Transport Canada has assigned investigators to follow up on any continuing consumer reports of incidents such as unintended acceleration."

Leaders of parent Toyota Motor Corp. have apologized publicly for not confirming the problems and fixing them earlier.

Toyota has announced measures to improve communications with customers so the company can analyze problems better and address them more quickly.

The company says it is also paying more attention to boosting quality in assembly plants.

Meanwhile, Toyota Canada has started a campaign here to repair any damage to its reputation and limit possible losses in sales during the next few months.

The company has sent executives to "media clinics" in six cities to demonstrate safety technologies.

At meetings last week with newspaper editorial boards, Toyota managing director Stephen Beatty pulled out an accelerator pedal, explained how it works and how it could become stuck, and Toyota's solution.

"We're taking a more hands-on approach with the media, customers, dealers and government," Di Felice said.