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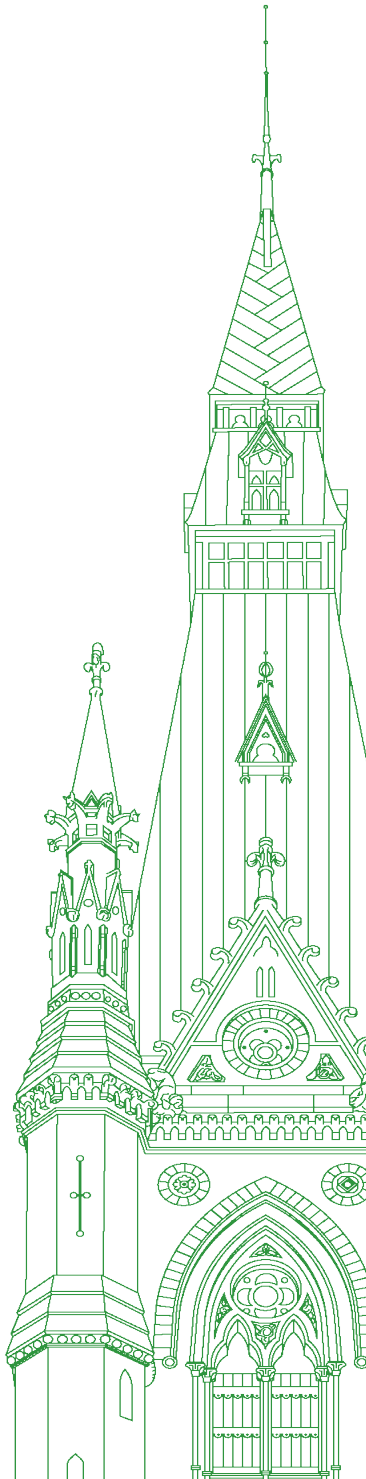
Standing Committee on Industry and Technology

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Chair: Ben Carr

Standing Committee on Industry and Technology

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● (1105)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone. I hope you all had a good week at home with your family, friends and the people you represent.

[*English*]

We are here to get going on Bill C-267.

I welcome Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval is replacing Mr. Ste-Marie, who is absent today and for a few weeks due to other responsibilities. It's the same thing with Mr. Bains.

[*English*]

Mr. Bains and Mr. Ste-Marie have been seconded to the committee that has been created for the review of Bill C-39.

[*Translation*]

I can confirm that all tests have been completed.

[*English*]

Colleagues, we are going to spend the first hour today with our colleague MP Sari, who is going to have an opportunity to discuss his private member's bill, Bill C-267, an act to establish a national framework to promote the durability of electronic products and essential home appliances.

The second hour will feature officials from the department. We did carve out a bit of extra time to go in camera to discuss the three reports that we have to get off our plate, which I hope we will be able to move past quite speedily.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sari, you have the floor for five minutes to present your bill.

Abdelhaq Sari (Bourassa, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, colleagues. First of all, I want to apologize for my voice. This is due to some fatigue from a trip that was quite long.

First of all, thank you for welcoming me to your committee for its study of Bill C-267. This is my first bill, even though this is my second year as the member elected in the riding of Bourassa.

To set the stage, I'd like to begin by explaining what I'm here to present to you today through a scenario. It's a scene that a lot of families are familiar with. Imagine a dishwasher, for example, that breaks down after four years. The technician arrives, tries to find the problem and announces that the part that needs to be replaced is no longer available or costs almost as much as a new appliance. The family then pays twice: first for the appliance they throw away, and then for the one they have to buy. The appliance ends up in the landfill.

Bill C-267 is based on a reality we're all familiar with. It calls on the Department of Industry to develop in consultation with provinces, territories, consumers and industry a national framework on the sustainability and repairability of electronic products and essential home appliances. This framework focuses on three essential, and fairly simple, elements: first, informing consumers about a product's lifespan; second, ensuring access to parts and software support for a reasonable period of time; and third, clarifying the responsibilities of manufacturers, importers and distributors. The minister would table a report in Parliament within 18 months of the act coming into force, and it would be reviewed after five years.

On June 11, the House passed this bill at second reading by a vote of 192 to 131. I would also like to thank my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Green Party for their support. This vote says one thing: Sustainability is not about left or right; it's about the cost of living, competition and common sense.

Since June, I've had a number of meetings, a number of consultations and a number of analyses on a number of issues. I met with consumer groups like Option consommateurs, I studied reports from Protégez-Vous and Équiterre, and I also met with appliance manufacturers. Their concerns are relevant and serious, and I want to address them directly before you.

On the issue of safety, Bill C-267 does not require anyone to open a compressor or a gas line. The framework can distinguish between parts available to the general public and those reserved for certified technicians, as the industry already does.

In terms of overlapping rules, Quebec, with its 2023 legislation, and Manitoba have taken the lead. The real risk today is the patchwork of rules that differ from province to province for the same imported product. Bill C-267 calls for a national framework. This is precisely the kind of harmonization that the industry usually calls for. I repeat: this harmonization is a floor, not a ceiling. Quebec retains full latitude to go further.

In terms of consultation, manufacturers want to be at the table. They're right. I'm open to amendments that explicitly name them among consulted parties.

Other groups, on the other hand, are asking me to go further and include agricultural equipment, as well as vehicles or tools in other categories. The goal remains noble, interesting and relevant. However, my bill must be limited to home and office appliances for a very important reason. If there is an overlap between industries, we lose the very essence of the bill. A bill that tries to cover everything risks accomplishing nothing and dying on the Order Paper.

Bill C-267 builds a strong foundation based on the products families use every day. The five-year review is the path to expanding the framework once it's proven. This bill does not create any new dependencies or impose any standards overnight. It provides clear direction, allows time to get things right and brings everyone together around the same table.

Families in Bourassa, just like those in Windsor, Joliette or Winnipeg, deserve to buy an appliance knowing how long it will last. They also need to know whether or not they'll be able to have it repaired when it breaks down.

As I said earlier, I understand the auto industry's appeal. Yesterday, I met with the Automotive Industries Association of Canada, or AIA Canada, and I share its objective. However, as I said earlier, vehicles fall under a separate regime, the Motor Vehicle Safety Act, and fall outside the scope of Bill C-267. The auto sector, in my view, deserves its own legislation, and I'm prepared to work on that with colleagues from all parties. A bill that tries to cover everything, as I said earlier, risks achieving nothing.

What I want to do with this bill is to repair rather than discard, inform rather than leave people to guess, and collaborate rather than impose.

Thank you for listening. I look forward to your questions.

● (1110)

The Chair: Thank you very much for your opening remarks.

[*English*]

We're going to go right into questions.

Mr. Gill, the floor will be yours, sir, for six minutes.

Harb Gill (Windsor West, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Sari, I support the right to repair, but Canadians deserve more than good intentions and yet another government framework.

We have to give consumers enforceable rights, give the independent repair businesses a fair chance to compete, hold manufacturers accountable when they break the rules and make sure that when something goes wrong, Canadians know exactly who is responsible: more choices for consumers, less unnecessary red tape and real accountability from government as well as manufacturers.

Having said that, let's imagine that you have a two-year-old washing machine that needs a small inexpensive part, but the manufacturer won't supply it. What can the consumer legally demand under this bill? What can a consumer enforce today and what can that consumer expect once this bill is passed? For enforcement provisions, what more will there be in this bill for that consumer, sir?

[*Translation*]

Abdelhaq Sari: First of all, thank you very much for your question. It is essential and very relevant.

We have to be careful. The goal here is to lay the groundwork and consolidate all the requirements related to the right to repair, the right to information and the right to access replacement parts, of course. Once again, we have to be careful not to interfere in provincial matters. Remedies related to consumer rights fall more under provincial legislation. We have to be very careful about that. For example, in Quebec, when a claim needs to be filed, it is handled and managed at the provincial level.

[*English*]

Harb Gill: You bring up a good point, sir. Consumer protection is also a provincial responsibility. Your bill relies on consultation with the provinces, yet we've seen how difficult it has been for Ottawa to persuade provinces to remove interprovincial barriers, even when the economic benefits are very clear.

What will make this different? If Ontario adopts one set of repair rules and another province adopts different rules or none at all, will Canadians have different protections depending on where they live? If Ottawa and a province disagree, who is ultimately accountable? Who does that consumer call?

[*Translation*]

Abdelhaq Sari: It's very simple: Bill C-267 establishes a floor, a minimum standard. After that, if the provinces want to go further, as Quebec is doing, in terms of recourse, requirements, access to information or labelling, that's up to them. The provinces are being given that latitude. However, when someone buys a phone in another province and the rules are different for the same phone, which was imported into Canada, we have a problem with consistency regarding the right to recourse.

That said, what we want to do here is establish a minimum standard. However, once again, if we want to spell this out explicitly in the bill through an amendment, I'm open to that.

[*English*]

Harb Gill: The challenge, sir, is what we have talked about before in this committee: the issues about shared responsibility. When there is a shared responsibility, that means there is no responsibility, sadly. Other jurisdictions have tried this approach. France has introduced repairability scores, while some American states have taken a more targeted approach.

Why start a broad national framework instead of having clearly defined enforceable rights? For example, a label might tell a Canadian that a product is repairable, but that label is of little use if the necessary part is unavailable or the repair cost is as much as the new product, as you pointed out.

How will you measure whether this bill actually saves Canadian families money? What measurable reduction in repair costs or increase in a product's lifespan are you prepared to be held accountable for?

● (1115)

[*Translation*]

Abdelhaq Sari: I'll start by answering the second part of your question, because you mentioned something that is extremely important to me: metrics. I specialize in business intelligence and analytics. I often say that what isn't measured doesn't exist and that what is measured improves. That's very important. Here, we want to require numbers. As you said so well, what cannot be measured remains a mere intention.

So there are four metrics that we want to include in this bill: the lifespan of devices, the cost of a repair compared to buying new, the amount of electronic waste per capita, which can be reduced, and the jobs created in the repair sector. When we provide access to parts, when we provide information to repairers and when we provide instructions to repairers, we will create repair jobs in small and medium-sized businesses.

With respect to your first question, I'll go back to what I said earlier. Ottawa will facilitate the work to ensure access to information and parts, but it is up to the provinces to innovate and establish consumer recourse in this regard.

[*English*]

Harb Gill: How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair: You have seven seconds.

Harb Gill: All right. I will cede my time to you, Chair.

The Chair: It's so generous of you to start the week off that way. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ntumba, you have the floor for six minutes.

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.): Good afternoon, Mr. Sari. How are you?

Abdelhaq Sari: That's the first question you're asking me. I'm doing very well, and I'm quite enthusiastic.

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: During the pandemic, like many families, I found myself having to stay home, feeling a bit cooped up, because of safety measures that limited going out. I was at home with my wife and children, and one evening, the dryer completely broke down. It reawakened my childlike and resourceful side. Armed with my screwdriver and drill, I opened up the machine by myself at home. I went on YouTube to see how the thing worked. Fortunately, I was able to buy parts and repair my dryer all by myself at home. Since then, whenever something breaks at home, my brother, my mom or my sisters call me to ask me to fix it for them.

I really like the approach of this bill. It helps families, like mine, that have been through this in the past.

What challenges emerged from the various consultations you held in Bourassa?

Abdelhaq Sari: First of all, thank you very much for your question.

In my riding, as you know, the average household income is one of the lowest in Canada. In addition to this challenge, there is the challenge faced by small and medium-sized enterprises. In Bourassa, there are many repair shops for telephones, computers and even home appliances, but they're struggling to stay in business because they can't access replacement parts, instructions or procedures available online, especially in French, and can't locate existing information. So I think those are two things that need to be addressed to prevent families from having to buy another brand-new electronic device.

On Charleroi Street, Monselet Street and other streets in my riding, there are many repair shops that are hitting a wall, namely, a lack of access to information and replacement parts. This bill gives them the opportunity to keep their businesses running, whether in Montreal, Quebec or across Canada.

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: Thank you very much, Mr. Sari.

What do you think of the 18-month time frame? Is it sufficient to develop a robust framework, given the need for federal-provincial coordination?

Abdelhaq Sari: The short answer is yes.

Why now? It's because work has already been done. Reports have already been prepared by the Department of Industry. We're not reinventing the wheel. I think 18 months is very reasonable. We can always work on that, because a lot of studies and analyses have been done. We could reuse them and then discuss the framework again. As I said—and I'll say it again—this framework is not final. It will be reviewed every five years.

● (1120)

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: Our government's priority is affordability for Canadians. Are there risks that increased sustainability requirements will increase upfront costs for the consumer?

Abdelhaq Sari: The short answer is no.

Now, how can this element really be justified? That's obviously by saying that it's already being done very well elsewhere, particularly in the United States, in a number of states, and in Europe. So we're not ahead of the game. On the contrary, we're lagging behind here in Canada in passing such a bill. When it comes to labelling, for example, we see that other countries are well ahead of us. I don't think fridges in those countries are more expensive than they are here. That's clear. It's not something that has driven up prices. Even in the United States, we see that things are moving in the same direction.

That said, we have to be careful. The devices covered by Bill C-267 are, in the majority of cases, imported appliances. That's important. When they're imported, it's up to us, of course, to require certain things, and those things are required by the countries where these devices are manufactured.

So, here, it's a matter of aligning ourselves much more with international standards, not innovating ourselves. We mustn't see Bill C-267 as something that puts us ahead of the curve, because we're quite behind in this regard in Canada. We need to have measures that allow consumers to choose repair.

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: To wrap up, over the past two years, the Government of Canada has taken a number of steps to address issues related to the right to repair. Do you think your bill aligns with existing initiatives for the circular economy and consumer protection?

Abdelhaq Sari: Not only does it align with them, but it is very complementary, even essential. That complementarity makes all of the things you talked about stronger and more relevant.

For example, in 2024, the Competition Act was amended for access to parts. That is a very important element. I believe it was Bill C-244 and Bill C-294. It opened up copyright locks, and that's important. Here, Bill C-267 seeks to add two very important elements: parts sustainability and access to information.

In 2024, the government laid the foundation, and now Bill C-267 is building the house, which I hope will be completed.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Ntumba. You are free to come to my home to solve all my problems at any time.

Abdelhaq Sari: I'd just like to add a comment.

It's good that the honourable member was able to repair his appliance, but we must be careful. Not everything can be repaired. For parts that may be dangerous, such as gas compressors, I always suggest calling in a specialist, rather than the member for Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie.

The Chair: Thank you. I would say that “danger” is his middle name, but that is an English expression. I am not sure if it is correct in French.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor for six minutes

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Congratulations, Mr. Sari, on your bill. It is always an exciting moment, after all, when we have the opportunity to table a bill in Parliament, on behalf of our fellow citizens, to advance an issue that is close to our hearts. As for the issue of repairability, I think this is a very commendable initiative. I am grateful to you for it. Indeed, it is not without reason that our political party, the Bloc Québécois, has supported your bill.

As you mentioned right at the start of your opening remarks, in Quebec, the National Assembly passed Bill 29 in 2023, which aimed to combat planned obsolescence. So, essentially, it has the same aim as your bill. However, there is one aspect addressed in the Quebec government's bill that is not covered in yours. I find it hard to understand why. You said earlier, in your opening remarks, that you did not want to cast the net too wide, as this would make the task difficult. However, it seems to me that in Quebec, they have managed to cast the net wide enough to address not only issues relating to small household appliances and electronic devices, but also the problem being experienced in the automotive industry.

Indeed, in the automotive industry, things are getting out of hand. You can hardly even inflate tires without access to the companies' servers. Everything is purportedly a matter of trade secrecy, which means it's becoming virtually impossible to repair cars. Some people live right next to a dealership, but others live an hour, an hour and a half or two hours' drive away from one. There are also people who realize that going to a dealership costs considerably more than taking their car to the local garage. I know you haven't addressed this issue in your bill, but I'd like to know why.

I'd also like to know whether, despite the comments you've made, you'd be open to improving your bill so that it complements the work done in Quebec even more effectively.

● (1125)

Abdelhaq Sari: Before answering the question, I would first like to thank you for asking it, but above all to thank the Bloc Québécois for supporting me on this bill. As you quite rightly said, this is a matter close to my heart.

Quebec has led the way, and I cannot thank the province enough for that. However, I want to reiterate and emphasize that the measures in Bill C-267 represent a minimum standard, not a maximum limit.

The Quebec legislation, for its part, is truly very interesting and quite comprehensive. Unfortunately, there are other provinces that have absolutely nothing in place, apart from Manitoba. So, the Quebec legislation remains in force, and it remains more ambitious in several respects, as my colleague rightly pointed out.

Bill C-267 raises the standards in the other provinces which, as I said, have not yet taken any action. If the Bloc Québécois really wants this set out in black and white, I am open to an amendment specifying that the framework proposed by the bill in no way limits more stringent provincial laws. This means that, if provinces wish to go further on this, the door remains open.

As for the question of just how open I am, I would say that I am very open to how this can be implemented if we genuinely wish to help consumers, industries and small and medium-sized enterprises alike. However, as regards the principle, as I said earlier, the scope of the bill's principle remains the same. On that point, I really am quite firm.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you for your reply. I would have liked to discuss this with you at greater length, but unfortunately I must take my leave.

However, I shall leave the remainder of my speaking time to my colleague Claude DeBellefeuille, who is also very interested in the bill.

The Chair: Good morning. Welcome, Mrs. DeBellefeuille. You have two minutes remaining.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I am very pleased to be here.

We know each other a little, Mr. Sari. We know that the Bloc Québécois supported your bill.

I'll leave it to you to refine your response. My colleague asked you whether you were open to an amendment to cover the entire automotive sector. As you know, the Automotive Industries Association of Canada has proposed an amendment to you because it feels somewhat neglected by your bill. This affects us greatly. You are an MP for Montreal, but there are many members from rural areas where there are small garages that repair cars; they are finding it increasingly difficult to do their work because of the computerized systems in new vehicles.

So, I'll repeat the question my colleague asked you: Would you be open to adding the automotive sector to the list of those covered, alongside electronics and essential household appliances?

Abdelhaq Sari: I am new to federal politics, but what I have learnt most is that the more you try to broaden the scope of a bill, the greater the chance it will die on the Order Paper.

So, here is the short answer to your question. I have met with people from the association. I found their requests very relevant. I took the time to listen to them. However, once again, as regards extending the bill to cover another industry, the short and clear answer is no.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Do I have any time left?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds left, so you can ask a quick question if you'd like.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Sari, I just want to let you know that we in the Bloc Québécois are going to table an amendment anyway, because we consider it important. This is simply to inform you that we will be debating this amendment regardless.

Abdelhaq Sari: Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Mrs. DeBellefeuille. I would like to welcome you back to the committee.

Mr. Groleau, you have five minutes.

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Good morning, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Sari, I would like to congratulate you on your first bill. It's exciting. You've worked hard. I offer you my congratulations.

Could you explain to the public exactly what your bill entails and what it will mean for them?

● (1130)

Abdelhaq Sari: Firstly, for the public, it provides access to information. Let's start by talking about what happens beforehand, before making a purchase. It gives people the chance to choose between two products that may appear to be of the same quality and are priced more or less the same. Don't people have the right to know that, for product A, for example, spare parts will be available for seven years, whereas for the other, they will only be available for five years? That is a right to information. Do people not have the right to know that the information is available in both of Canada's official languages? That is information. All of this comes before the purchase.

Secondly, when a problem arises during the warranty period, spare parts must also be available, which is not always the case. In this regard, the provinces already have remedies in place for consumers, but Ottawa needs to set out clear guidelines. So, when a consumer has a device for which a spare part costs around $100, they should not have to buy another device costing $1,000 or more.

Jason Groleau: You've no doubt spoken to the industry. If you ask for more guarantees and a longer service life, it will drive up prices. I have experience. You said you had experience; I have 30 years' experience in business. If I ask a supplier for more guarantees, they'll raise the selling price.

Aren't you worried about that?

Abdelhaq Sari: Firstly, I will repeat something I said earlier: in the industry we are discussing here—namely, household appliances—Canada, unfortunately, is more of an importer than a manufacturer. That is important. So, we import products from the United States, Asia or Europe. However, similar bills have already been passed in several U.S. states and in other European countries. I therefore do not see how this bill will lead to price increases.

So, to be clear, I would say that we share the same objectives as the industry. We want to see a real reduction in household bills. However, Bill C-267 does not impose any immediate obligations on businesses. It launches a consultation process involving the industry, in which it will have a seat at the table. Any future regulations will be subject to a cost-benefit analysis for the industry, for consumers and for the thousands of small repair workshops.

Jason Groleau: So, from what you're telling me, the cost analysis hasn't been carried out yet.

Abdelhaq Sari: No. That is why we are talking about an 18-month period.

Jason Groleau: How do you intend to implement this bill without imposing additional costs on taxpayers, without increasing bureaucracy and without opening up further government funding streams? How are you going to do that?

Abdelhaq Sari: We will simply add these elements to the existing import requirements. There is already a regulation in force. It is simply a matter of improving it and making it clearer with regard to these points.

Jason Groleau: Can you give me some examples?

Abdelhaq Sari: I'll give you the example of access to information on product labels. For example, this involves providing, for each warranty, information on the availability of parts and the period during which they are available. These are pieces of information. I cannot see how these could possibly be problematic.

I'll add another very important point. Most of the appliances we buy now have a software component. Knowing how long software updates will be available is very important. It is not just a question of spare parts. I used to be a software developer, and I know that sometimes you want to update the hardware, but the software is no longer compatible. That is a problematic issue which the bill also clarifies.

Jason Groleau: Earlier, you mentioned Bill 29, which was introduced in Quebec in 2023. How will this law and your bill overlap? Who will decide? How will it work? Won't your bill complicate matters?

Abdelhaq Sari: No, on the contrary. In fact, we are taking our cue from Quebec on this. Everything relating to consumer redress remains entirely within the remit of provincial legislation. Everything relating, for example, to warranty requirements remains entirely within provincial jurisdiction. Now, we are laying the groundwork to harmonize and standardize this aspect, which we aim to implement through Bill C-267. That is very important.

There will be absolutely no overlap. As I said earlier, Ottawa is simply laying the foundations. All provinces are free to innovate, to add elements and to go further. If Quebec or other provinces wish to go further, they are, of course, free to do so.

Jason Groleau: Thank you very much.

Abdelhaq Sari: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Groleau.

[*English*]

Mr. Ma, the floor is yours for five minutes.

● (1135)

Michael Ma (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): First of all, I want to congratulate you on proposing this bill.

It has been one of my pet peeves for many years. I do a lot of my own repairs and help good friends do so as well. The lack of such regulation really creates a lot more unnecessary garbage, because products don't last as long as they did.

This is my first question for you. Affordability is top of mind for Canadians across the country. How will Bill C-267 positively address cost of living concerns for the average Canadian household?

[*Translation*]

Abdelhaq Sari: Thank you very much for the question.

I would say that affordability will be achieved through two factors.

Firstly, at the point of purchase. We'll be able to make a better choice about the product we want to buy. As I said earlier, when we want to buy a product and there are two brands or two models available for the same price, we'll have access to the information.

The second factor is something that has happened to almost everyone: you have something that works very well, but, overnight, a part breaks. It might cost $100 to replace it, but you're forced to buy a replacement costing several thousand dollars. In such cases, the greatest impact is on people's wallets. That, too, is what's at stake. People might, of course, not have to buy a new appliance. It is this obligation to buy that really drives families into debt. Yet people need to be able to have essential appliances, such as a fridge, a television, a washing machine or a dishwasher.

[*English*]

Michael Ma: Essential home appliances are the domestic infrastructure that maintains a household's quality of life. Some of you may remember the old Maytag TV ads that said their products were so reliable and so forth.

Can you walk the committee through the importance of product durability and repairability for essential home appliances, in particular?

[*Translation*]

Abdelhaq Sari: Personally, when I buy a product, that's my number one criterion.

If I may, I'd like to come back to the previous question, because it's something I didn't answer, and it might also help to answer the other questions put to me by the Conservative Party: How can this help in terms of affordability?

When you buy a product, whether you're an individual or a company, there are two costs you really need to be aware of: the purchase price and the total cost of ownership. The total cost of ownership is calculated based on the number of years over which you can use the product and during which you have a warranty covering its use.

When you cannot really refurbish the product—or rather, improve it—or update the software, and when you cannot replace a part that has just broken down, that is when the total cost of ownership becomes impossible to calculate, or inaccurate in terms of the figures.

When we want to upgrade an IT infrastructure, we focus on the issue of total cost of ownership. We ourselves, as buyers, demand these details from companies. Why should this requirement not be set out in black and white in a bill such as Bill C-267? The issue of total cost of ownership is very important.

To answer your question, I would say that this is a point on which I agree. Personally, when I buy a product, I look at its durability, the materials used and its track record. I also want to know whether parts are designed to fail. That is a very relevant point which has not yet been raised today in this committee. It is something we, as a government, also want to avoid. We want to avoid this planned obsolescence of spare parts.

[*English*]

Michael Ma: When Canadian households invest in essential home appliances, they expect a reasonable product lifespan. Bill C-267 will require the development of a national framework around the minimum useful life for this product category.

How can these measures best be implemented to protect Canadian consumers against premature obsolescence and, particularly, what you just talked about? Quite often, devices are good, but when new software comes out, they're incompatible.

● (1140)

[*Translation*]

Abdelhaq Sari: To answer your question, I would say that is the core of this bill.

I want to talk more about the software support issue, because it's not just about parts anymore. There's been obsolescence in connection with parts. In Europe, there have been investigations into obsolescence in the case of computer hard drives, the plasma screens we used to use, modern-day televisions and other household appliances. The issue now is also software longevity and availability, and whether updates remain available for legacy versions.

So how are we going to help consumers in practical terms? Labelling is one way, obviously. Another is access to information. This information should be required when products are imported. In addition to a warranty that the product itself will last, there should also be a guarantee that spare parts will be available. In many countries, the label indicates the number of years. A product may come with a five-year warranty, and replacement parts are guaranteed to remain available beyond the warranty period.

The software issue is becoming very important. If you look around your home, you'll see a number of devices whose software updates regularly. The software that runs your television gets updated in the background. Your thermostat runs on connected software that also gets updated. All of these things are very important. It's up to us to say that we should not have to replace our thermostat when the software can't be updated. That's very important.

That's the key issue. Since these are now connected devices, updates are mostly about security. That's important as well.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Ma.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Sari, you're not the first member to introduce a bill to create a national framework for all the provinces. I prefer to call it a Canadian framework. I think that creates less confusion.

How are you going to get all the provinces to sign on? I'm sure this isn't the first time legislation has established a national framework or a Canadian framework. From a practical standpoint, to what extent will the provinces be consulted and to what extent will they participate in developing it? Proposed Canadian frameworks or Canadian standards tend to follow a pattern. A decision is made and a proposal is presented, and the provinces aren't really given a choice. That's often the Canadian government's approach.

How do you envision the federal government's relationship with the provinces and territories in the context of developing the framework?

Abdelhaq Sari: Thank you for the question.

First, the provinces and territories will be consulted as part of the 18-month review. That's the first thing. Ottawa—

Claude DeBellefeuille: I'm sorry to interrupt. You say they'll be consulted, but I'm talking about contributing to the development.

Abdelhaq Sari: I just want to make this clear with respect to Quebec and Manitoba in particular, because they already have something in place. Ottawa obviously can't replicate consumer protection legislation. That act is fully Quebec's. However, we will consult the provinces on product standards. That is fully Canadian; it falls under federal jurisdiction. We can require those things.

You asked me how Quebec can contribute, but Quebec has already helped, because I drew inspiration from Quebec's legislation. I think Quebec goes a little further than my bill, but what I'm doing is setting parameters. Is Quebec going to be left out? No, on the contrary. Are we imposing anything? The answer is no. Nonetheless, I repeat that we will establish import standards.

I've said it before and I'll say it again and again: We import far more appliances and electronics than we manufacture. We have the right to establish product standards when those goods are imported and sold to our fellow citizens in stores across the country. We have import standards and product standards in place. I think consumers are entitled to our protection in that regard.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. DeBellefeuille.

[*English*]

Mr. Chambers, the floor is yours for five minutes, sir.

Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Sir, congratulations. It's a pleasure and an honour to have an opportunity to propose changing the statutes of Canada. I commend you for your efforts.

I have a couple of questions on durability.

Do you think the federal government is well placed to suggest or impose a minimum-life standard for a particular product?

● (1145)

[*Translation*]

Abdelhaq Sari: Thank you very much for the question.

I do agree with the essence of what my colleague said. I just don't like the verb he used, “impose”. When products are imported, Canada has the right and the responsibility to establish product standards and keep them up to date. Bill C-267 updates those product standards, making them more robust and much simpler. How will we achieve that? As I said earlier, through access to information. That has to be in place for the software and hardware components, along with access to replacement parts. That's really very important.

One thing I may not have said often enough today is that we also want to give small and medium-sized businesses, like those in my colleague's riding, the opportunity to repair things, which can also help support the local economy.

[*English*]

Adam Chambers: We can choose any word you like, but should the federal government set a standard for the minimum useful life of a product like a washing machine or a hair dryer? Do you envision your bill giving the federal government the power to choose or impose a standard or suggest a standard that would set a minimum useful life for a particular product?

[*Translation*]

Abdelhaq Sari: To answer your question in detail, I would say that each type of product will have a different warranty or lifespan. Obviously, that won't be the same for all products, because products differ. Also, although most products contain software now, some do not, so requirements will vary.

That is why, during the 18-month period, we will engage not only the provinces and territories, but also the appliance industry, so it can provide input about which standards should apply to which products and how that can be implemented. At the end of that period, there will be a public report, along with analyses, studies and consultations.

I would add that there will be a review every five years after the report comes out. That's really important. As you know, the pace of change in this industry is accelerating. Some researchers even say that the innovation cycle is now much shorter than 18 months. People are creative, and the products that'll be available five years from now in 2031 won't have the same components we have now. We have to face that fact and take it into account.

That's why the 18-month study period is very important and why experts must be consulted. I expect you'll be inviting other subject matter experts to share their views on this with you, views that will support your study of the bill.

[*English*]

Adam Chambers: Thank you. I hope that the report will consider the total cost to consumers, both the lifetime cost and the upfront cost.

My final question is around.... As I understand it, you would like to create a minimum standard that must be met across the country, because there are some provinces that don't have these standards already. Isn't it the case that importers typically have to align themselves with the most onerous regulations available in the country? For example, there are not different appliances typically sold province by province. What importers typically do is take the most aggressive regulations and meet those. Therefore, the standards that Quebec has set effectively impact things that happen in other provinces to some extent—maybe not labelling, but I understand.

If the bill is to set minimum standards and provinces can go higher and if importers typically meet the most onerous requirements, what will the bill actually impose tomorrow that doesn't exist today?

● (1150)

[*Translation*]

Abdelhaq Sari: Thank you very much for the question.

Manitoba and Quebec are the only provinces that have something. Anything we might establish—I don't like the term “impose”—with respect to product standards will be novel and relevant for all the other provinces. Some provinces may decide to do more. We're providing a floor, not a ceiling. This will be a baseline for imported products and product standards. If they want to do more, that's up to them.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chambers.

Mr. Greaves, you will finish the round with five minutes.

Will Greaves (Victoria, Lib.): It's a pleasure. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, colleagues.

[*Translation*]

Good morning, everyone. It's a great pleasure to be part of this committee.

I congratulate my colleague on his bill.

[*English*]

I'd really like to commend the witness, Mr. Sari, today for bringing forward this particular bill, because I think it has the potential to contribute to a positive cultural change in Canadian society. I'm sure many of us around this table were raised with the three Rs: reduce, reuse and recycle. It's important to add a fourth R: repairing. It's the prospect of reducing, reusing and repairing a product before it is recycled. In that sense, the scale of waste and the scale of electronic waste in particular is a daunting one, and it's one that I feel many Canadians perhaps underappreciate.

In my province of British Columbia last year—in 2025—for instance, the Electronic Products Recycling Association of B.C. collected and recycled more than 19,550 tonnes of electronic waste. We can imagine how much additional waste was not recycled and is winding up in landfills, not only having negative impacts on the finances of households that have to then replace those goods but also contributing to some of our environmental challenges.

With that in mind, I'd like to ask Mr. Sari, through the chair, if he could elaborate on what some of the anticipated environmental benefits of this bill would be.

[*Translation*]

Abdelhaq Sari: Thank you very much for your question.

In 2019, 757,000 tonnes of e-waste were collected, which is not insignificant. Why so much? As I explained in my introduction, if I want to repair my dishwasher, but can't find a replacement part, I'll have to go buy a new dishwasher, and my old dishwasher will unfortunately end up at the curb and then at the dump. We don't want that to happen.

I'll never forget the time a teacher told me that being environmentally responsible doesn't necessarily cost more. Greener products last longer. That's very important. Greater durability is a sign of better innovation. All this bill will do is encourage industries to keep providing quality products that are more durable, more environmentally friendly and better overall. At the end of the day, those products will last longer, which will save consumers money. In other words, this is not only an environmental measure, but also an economic one.

I've always believed that, when we think about the environment and ecology, we end up with better products that, when you look at the total cost of ownership, ultimately cost less.

Will Greaves: Thank you for that.

[*English*]

In maybe a distinct vein, the environmental component of this bill is important, but I wonder if essentially there might also be benefits for local economies. If a household has to replace consumer goods, especially large consumer goods, the primary economic benefit of that is going to the corporation that produces those goods, that manufactures those goods, many of which, of course, will be from outside of Canada.

By contrast, if the right to repair were instituted more robustly across the country and if there were a requirement or an expectation that individuals located in that community would be able to provide those repair services, that is going to have local employment benefits. That's going to generate economic activity locally, rather than essentially allowing it to be outsourced or offshored to the manufacturer of that good.

Could the witness confirm whether that broad analysis is correct and elaborate on what he sees as the local economic benefits or impacts of the proposed bill?

[*Translation*]

Abdelhaq Sari: It's totally correct.

I would add another point about the circular economy and the local economy. Small repair shops all over will be able to work on these products. Here's a very simple example. Imagine that you have an older phone with a cracked screen, and you want it repaired. You take it to a repair shop, but they tell you the manufacturer can no longer provide a replacement screen because your phone is too old, even though it works very well and can still be used. The idea is to give that repair shop a chance to contribute to the local economy.

That said, I'd like to finish what I was saying about the environment. There's a saying I really like: The easiest waste to manage is the stuff we don't buy and don't produce. In other words, if a product lasts so long that there's no need to manufacture another, that's very environmentally friendly.

● (1155)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Greaves. It was nice to see two former professors engaging here in a parliamentary committee. It's not evident at all what you did in your previous lives.

Colleagues, we are going to suspend briefly as we turn over.

I am going to have some discussions with the parties, as we may look to reduce some time in the second hour to allow us to more quickly get to the reports that we have to deal with. I'll have discussions with the party members on that before we break.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sari, thank you very much.

[*English*]

Thank you for being here. We appreciate your taking the time to speak to your piece of legislation. We of course look forward to the ongoing discussion.

[*Translation*]

We will continue the discussion over the next hour and probably over several meetings to come.

[*English*]

As I said, we're going to suspend briefly as we turn over.

● (1155)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1200)

The Chair: Colleagues, we're going to continue with the second hour.

I have had conversations with the parties. Unless something comes out in the discussion we're about to have in the next 30 minutes, we'll keep it to a six-minute line of questioning for the Conservatives, the Bloc and the Liberals each, which will take place after the five-minute opening remarks from our colleagues from the department. Then we will go in camera quickly so that we can get to the reports. We may not have to use those additional resources that we sought.

Joining us today is Étienne-René Massie, the assistant deputy minister of small business, tourism and marketplace services at the Department of Industry.

[*Translation*]

He will be the spokesperson for the other witnesses who are here.

[*English*]

From the Department of Industry, we also have the director of the advanced manufacturing and clean technology branch, which is James Achoneftos.

A voice: It's Greek.

The Chair: Yes. I've always wanted to go to Greece, so there you go.

This next one is really hard: Ben Copp. It's very distant from my own name.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Ben is the director general in the office of energy efficiency at the Department of the Environment.

Colleagues, as you know, we often ask officials to join us when we are undertaking the study of legislation, to provide a more technical set of answers to some of our questions.

● (1205)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Massie, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Étienne-René Massie (Assistant Deputy Minister, Small Business, Tourism and Marketplace Services, Department of Industry): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to address this committee on the subject of Bill C-267, an act to establish a national framework to promote the durability of electronic products and essential home appliances.

Canadians increasingly rely on electronic products and home appliances in their daily lives. When these products fail prematurely or cannot reasonably be repaired, consumers often have no choice but to replace them.

Bill C-267 seeks to address this issue by promoting longer-lasting products that are easier to repair, reducing replacement costs for households and supporting a more responsible and competitive market that includes a thriving second-hand electronics market. It would require the Minister of Industry to develop, in consultation with provincial and territorial officials responsible for consumer affairs and, where appropriate, with consumer advocacy groups, a national framework to promote the durability and repairability of electronic products and home appliances in Canada, including measures to establish national standards.

This framework would support the transition to a circular economy by extending product life cycles, keeping valuable materials in use for longer and promoting more efficient and environmentally responsible resource management.

[*English*]

The government has taken steps to improving Canadians' ability to repair home appliances and consumer electronics. For instance, the government has amended the Competition Act through Bill C-59, which received royal assent on June 20, 2024. This legislation expanded the existing “refusal to deal” provision to include refusals to provide a means to diagnose or repair a product. If competition is harmed, the Competition Tribunal can now order a supplier to provide these features. The same bill also made it easier for private parties, instead of the Competition Bureau, to bring proceedings when this happens.

Further, two private members’ bills from the previous Parliament that were supported by the government and that have since received royal assent address specific issues related to repairability. Bill C-244, An Act to amend the Copyright Act with regard to diagnosis, maintenance and repair, proposed a new exception allowing the circumvention of a technological protection measure if the circumvention is for the purpose of maintaining or repairing a product, including any related diagnosis. Bill C-294, An Act to amend the Copyright Act with regard to interoperability, expanded the exceptions permitting the circumvention of a technological protection measure in order to achieve interoperability, which aligns with the spirit of right to repair, as this could facilitate the extension of product life cycles.

[*Translation*]

The government is continuing this work through Bill S-4, an act to amend the Energy Efficiency Act, which was passed by the Senate earlier this year and will soon be considered by the House of Commons. Among other things, Bill S-4 would expand the definition of energy efficiency standards to include durability, thereby allowing for future requirements regarding the durability of regulated energy-using products or durability labelling.

The federal government's responsibilities in the areas of copyright, competition and trade enable it to play a role in empowering consumers and creating opportunities for businesses to innovate and reduce environmental waste.

[*English*]

While Bill C-267 proposes a national framework, as the committee knows, the federal government cannot impose measures beyond its jurisdiction. In its consideration of the bill, the committee may wish to explore the differential impacts the bill may have related to provincial and territorial jurisdiction. Generally speaking, the right to repair concerns property, contracts, product sales and complaints, all of which fall under provincial jurisdiction.

Another area for consideration would be the definition of the term “essential home appliance”. The committee may wish to examine whether this definition is sufficiently broad to ensure that it does not inadvertently exclude important appliances. I would also note that while the bill provides a definition for essential home appliances, it does not define “electronic products”. The committee may wish to follow a similar approach to how products are defined in the Energy Efficiency Act, which defines energy-using products as a “prescribed product”, creating an opportunity to be inclusive of many products that may be regulated

In summary, the principle of the right to repair is one that requires a collaborative approach involving all levels of government and various stakeholders, including industry and consumers, given the breadth and nuance of the various elements at play. While the bill looks to move the important issue of right to repair forward, we need to ensure, as a federal government, that we do so in close collaboration with our provincial and territorial partners.

I look forward to answering any questions with my colleagues that the committee may have.

Thank you.

● (1210)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Massie.

Mr. Chambers, the floor is yours for six minutes, sir.

Adam Chambers: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to committee. Thank you for your opening statement.

I have a few questions.

Before I get into the bill, I heard you reference changes to the Competition Act as it relates to refusal to deal. Are you aware of any cases under this new section that are specifically related to the automobile sector and repairing automobiles?

Étienne-René Massie: To the best of my knowledge, no, I don't have any awareness of any such cases at this time.

Adam Chambers: The way you've described it to the committee, when I heard you say it, to me, you said that automobiles may be covered by that provision. Is that what you believe the intention was?

Étienne-René Massie: Yes, I believe that provision includes all commerce in Canada.

Adam Chambers: Okay. Thank you very much.

As it relates to the bill before us at committee, you mentioned a couple of questions about definitions that might be sufficiently broad. On the question of jurisdiction, do you have an analysis of the bill before the committee regarding the jurisdictionality of the bill or certain sections of the bill?

Étienne-René Massie: As we looked at and explored the bill, we realized that some elements of this bill touch on provincial and territorial responsibilities with regard to.... Commerce and contract law are provincial, so we will have to work with the provinces and territories to advance this bill and implement it.

Adam Chambers: I'm sorry. You say, “work with the provinces and territories to advance this bill”. If the bill includes things that are provincial jurisdiction, then those parts of the bill are unconstitutional. Would that not be the more correct interpretation?

Étienne-René Massie: The bill says the Minister of Industry will work with the provinces and territories on these matters, so we will have to work with the provinces and territories.

Adam Chambers: We just listened to the proponent of the bill suggest that the federal government would impose minimum standards. The imposition of those standards, if not in the realm of the jurisdiction of the federal government, would therefore be unconstitutional. Would that not be the case?

Étienne-René Massie: They would be difficult, yes.

Adam Chambers: Okay. I recognize I may be running short on time.

Because this bill has potential jurisdictional issues—I don't expect to be able to explore all of those with you here—it would help the committee, certainly in our deliberations, if you would outline some of those sections that you believe touch on provincial jurisdiction.

I recognize that, with the majority government, the proposer of the bill has the votes to pass it. However, in the committee's deliberations and when this bill gets to the Senate, these are very specific questions that the Senate is also concerned with.

As a parliamentarian, I recognize that consumers are not always well served by companies, but it is not the federal government's job to do the job of a provincial legislature. I'm very concerned about some of these areas. We see other legislatures have already acted. I think we should be encouraging the provinces themselves.... I recognize that we will have conversations as part of this bill as it proceeds, but we should be careful to not just assume that the federal government is coming to save the day when a provincial government fails to act.

It would be very helpful if you could share some of those issues—I won't say concerns; I won't put words in your mouth—where you believe it touches on provincial jurisdiction. That would be most helpful to the committee.

Étienne-René Massie: We can definitely work on that.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the right to repair requires a collaborative approach, and the provinces are responsible for property contracts, product sales and complaints. There will definitely be matters here where we are in provinces' and territories' jurisdiction.

Adam Chambers: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chambers.

Ms. O'Rourke, it's over to you for six minutes.

● (1215)

Dominique O'Rourke (Guelph, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm the member of Parliament for Guelph. We have had the Guelph Tool Library for 10 years. It's a very popular repair café that's really interested in the circular economy and in reducing, reusing and repairing, rather than recycling. It's fully cognizant of the impacts on landfills.

Thank you for being here. We think this bill is really important in terms of setting that framework.

I also chair the Liberal auto caucus. I have a really great understanding of the challenges of having enough technicians. The bill's sponsor, MP Sari, talked about the intent of the bill as being for household appliances and electronics. We know some proponents would like to broaden that to include auto repair.

I'd like you to comment a bit on why that's not necessarily appropriate in the context of a private member's bill, and whether strengthening the Canadian automotive service information standard would be a better way to go.

Étienne-René Massie: We also met with the Automotive Industries Association yesterday and other proponents that have come forward in light of this bill.

This bill is meant to look at household appliances and consumer goods. I think if there are discussions about expanding to automotive, it will change the foundation of the bill and what it is intended for. There are already measures through voluntary standards in the auto sector that help advance consumer rights on that front. We will hear different views, but they generally work well. On that front, that's the approach that currently works with the industry.

The industry has come to us and asked us to also consider including it in the bill, but at this point, given that the bill is really on household appliances and electronic appliances, it does not completely fit with the auto sector.

Dominique O'Rourke: Would you say household or office appliances and electronics can be a totally different beast from a vehicle that's on our roads that has safety standards, emissions standards, etc., fully recognizing that the right to repair our vehicles is an important right and this might not be the appropriate place to do that? Would you agree with that?

Étienne-René Massie: I would generally agree with that. The Department of Transport has many regulatory responsibilities regarding automobiles, and it is important that.... The department would probably be best placed for something separate from this household appliances bill.

Dominique O'Rourke: Guelph is an advanced manufacturing hub—you're welcome to visit any time.

How can we ensure that future durability and repairability standards provide meaningful benefits for Canadian consumers while remaining practical for manufacturers and aligned with international standards, which is an issue that was raised earlier?

Étienne-René Massie: When we look at the right to repair and household and electronic goods, we realize that Canada imports a lot of these goods. Because we import a lot of goods, we need to ensure that for our Canadian marketplace, for affordability and availability of different household goods, we work to make sure that we do not create such unique standards in Canada that we impede the availability of those goods and affordable household goods for Canadians.

Dominique O'Rourke: Finally, there's been some conversation around this table so far today about the legislation and how it would impose something upon the provinces. I'm wondering if you could explain how having a framework actually empowers consumers and responds to this demand that we are hearing from people about how they want to be able to fix their own things.

Étienne-René Massie: The proposed bill would have the Minister of Industry and her officials work with provincial and territorial colleagues to discuss whether we can come to an agreement on common standards, and that would establish a framework. The framework would then enable the provinces and territories to legislate within their own prerogative and within their own responsibilities and measures, according to a common approach across the country.

The bill is there to help establish a framework from which all of the provinces and territories, and maybe some elements of federal law, could then be adjusted to get to a Canadian common standard across the country.

● (1220)

Dominique O'Rourke: Finally, is it your recommendation...? I want to be sure I've understood you correctly. The Senate bill on energy efficiency defines essential electronics. Is it your recommendation that this bill should also adopt the same definition so that they're concordant?

Étienne-René Massie: I'm happy to start, and then, Ben, you can add if there's anything....

It would make the most sense from a legislative prerogative that we have a consistent definition between bills. Because Bill S-4 is in front of the House as well and is part of a much broader bill on energy efficiency, it would make the most sense to use that definition.

Dominique O'Rourke: Thank you.

I will cede my 10 seconds.

The Chair: The trend continues.

[*Translation*]

Next we go to our Bloc Québécois colleagues.

Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor for six minutes.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Massie, I may have to ask you to repeat a few things because you were speaking very quickly and the interpreter had a hard time keeping up. This may give you a chance to repeat a few points.

You said at the outset that, if the bill passes, the minister would essentially be instructed to work toward establishing a Canadian framework so that all provinces have minimum standards. You said that you would work on it without necessarily being required to achieve a particular outcome. We agree that, if the provinces refuse to adopt such standards, you can't compel them to do so.

Étienne-René Massie: That's right. The way the bill is currently worded, the Minister of Industry would be responsible for working with provincial and territorial counterparts to see if common standards can be established. We would be required to make every effort to meet the timeline, for example.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Yes, that's right; you have an obligation to set up a dialogue, a consultation.

In Quebec's case—I didn't know this, but this is also the case for Manitoba—there are laws that address the issue before us today. Quebec goes even further than what the bill proposes. I don't know when it comes to Manitoba. That means that, here, we're talking about the provinces that have decided, within their own jurisdictions, to do nothing about this matter. You're going to tell Alberta and Saskatchewan that it would be good to sit down and develop a Canadian framework together, and you're going to ask them whether they agree. If they refuse to do so, your work will end there. The act doesn't require you to do anything more. You can't impose this on them. That's what I have been hearing for a while now.

Étienne-René Massie: As I understand it, the bill as currently drafted is a concerted effort to establish so-called national standards across the provinces and territories. You're right, then: Quebec is ahead, and Manitoba is currently studying a bill.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Great.

Earlier, Mr. Sari answered these questions by telling us that we hardly manufacture electronics or household appliances here anymore. Canada used to have major manufacturers. In any case, Montreal has been home to many businesses. Those have since relocated, and appliances are now imported. However, the responsibility for setting import standards lies with the federal government, does it not?

Étienne-René Massie: Yes, absolutely.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Okay.

In that case, the bill could have asked the government to raise its import standards and include the durability factor or the right to repair.

Étienne-René Massie: The regulation of products in Canada is a shared responsibility. The federal government has responsibilities. We have responsibilities at the Department of Industry, and the Department of Health has them too. When it comes to sales contracts and issues related to private property, the provinces also have responsibilities. The federal and provincial governments already work together to manage the Canadian economy, so it would be about continuing to move that forward.

As to whether the government could impose measures directly through import standards, I would have to check whether it has that exclusive authority.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Canada imports a lot of products from China, for example. These are often Asian components that arrive here and are assembled in the United States, for example. Within federal jurisdiction, could the federal government impose a durability standard for products imported into Canada, as of today?

You're telling me that you would have to check that, but isn't this question, which is very simple, within your area of expertise?

● (1225)

Étienne-René Massie: When I was preparing to appear, I often read that the market was a North American market. It's a market where goods are imported for Canada, the United States and Mexico. The aim, then, is to establish North American standards to allow for greater product availability, which helps make products more affordable in Canada.

Claude DeBellefeuille: You're telling me that if Canada requested greater durability, for example, it would find itself somewhat going it alone, because what people want are washing machines and dryers that are cheap but that have to be replaced every three to five years. Back in the day, I had a washer that lasted 20 years—I'm old—and that I still could have gotten repaired.

You're telling me that, since the market is North American, it wouldn't fly for us to have higher import standards, because people want cheaper household appliances, and we would be going it alone from Mexico and the United States.

Is that correct?

Étienne-René Massie: I feel for the loss of your washing machine. Mine, which I had for 28 years, stopped working three weeks ago.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Poor you.

Étienne-René Massie: I think it's always a question of balance. There are a number of factors. There needs to be a wide availability of products that consumers can choose, and there needs to be affordable appliances. It's always a question of balance. I get the impression that in working with the provinces and territories, if that's where things end up, the goal will always be to ensure that products are widely available and affordable.

No, we should not go it alone by setting a very high standard, which would reduce the availability of products in Canada.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Colleagues, that brings us to the end of the 30 minutes we've dedicated to this.

Thank you very much to our witnesses for being here today. We appreciate your time and insights.

I'm going to suspend briefly. We are going to be turning over to an in camera session. Therefore, for any members of the public who are in the room—who are not associated with staff, in other words—I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

We're going to turn over very quickly, colleagues. It should not take us too long. I've discussed the next steps with all of you, but I will touch base again in a moment. The meeting is suspended.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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