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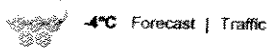
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Senators weakening safety bill, Tories say

Joanna Smith
 Ottawa Bureau

Article

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OTTAWA—Conservatives lashed out at Liberal senators for voting to weaken consumer product safety legislation that would give government inspectors greater powers to recall dangerous items.

The Conservative government has been trying to rework the consumer product safety regulatory framework for the past two years, but key Liberal members of the Senate social affairs committee voted Wednesday to amend Bill C-6, also known as the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act.

One amendment would deny inspectors the ability to issue a mandatory recall without consulting the manufacturer. Another would require them to get a search warrant before performing spot checks on home offices. The senators vote on the amendments next week.

Federal Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq said the amendments weakened the bill.

"Sadly, (with) these amendments the Department of Agriculture has more effective tools to protect animals than Health Canada would have to protect the health and safety of Canadians," Aglukkaq told a news conference Thursday.

But Liberal Senator Joseph Day, who acted as the critic for the bill in committee, defended the amendments Thursday, telling reporters the original bill gave too much power to health inspectors.

"There should be some consultation with the person, the company, the family that is involved in importing, manufacturing, packaging, labelling a product," Day said.

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Aglukkaq urged Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff to pressure his senators into voting to pass the bill in its original form, which cleared the House of Commons with unanimous support in June.

Ignatieff said he would let the Senate do its work.

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