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Product safety bill faces herbal 'tea party'

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Article

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OTTAWA—Toymakers are the biggest target of tougher consumer product safety legislation, but the natural health products industry has been bombarding politicians with emails against giving inspectors power to recall dangerous goods.

"(This) is the Boston Tea Party of a revolution in Canada," said Trueman Tuck, a civil libertarian from Belleville, Ont., who runs an online business selling dietary food supplements.

Tuck was talking about Bill C-6, the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act – introduced by the Conservative government this year to overhaul the 40-year-old consumer product safety regulatory regime – that Liberal members of a Senate committee voted last week to amend substantially.

The bill excludes natural health products.

However, Tuck and other advocates of alternative medicine believe that if the government gives Health Canada inspectors the power to unilaterally order mandatory recalls and search home offices without warrants, then it will be more difficult for the industry to fight giving that ability to inspectors when the government reintroduces controversial legislation for greater oversight over supplements and vitamins.

The Consumer Product Safety Coalition and other industry associations also expressed concern with incident reporting, mandatory recalls and disclosure of confidential information that are reflected in the amendments.

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Tuck said that since April, more than 500,000 emails have been sent to MPs and senators about the bill through the website for Canadian Coalition for Health Freedom, his group that promotes the right to use alternative medicines.

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