

Letters to the editor;

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Raise your voice in support of the right to repair

With talk of a restructuring plan for the automotive industry, I would like to contribute positively to that dialogue.

Little notice has been given to a massive, looming economic and consumer issue. There is legislation making the rounds-- called Bill C-273, the Right to Repair Bill -- which protects Canadians' right to choose where they repair their vehicles while preserving thousands of jobs.

This right to repair crosses all party lines. From an economic standpoint, the impact is clear. The automotive aftermarket employs 45% of the entire industry, for a total of more than 410,000 workers across Canada. These workers and businesses are looking to Parliament to see if their segment of the industry has a future.

The consumer-choice issue is even more evident. Vehicle manufacturers are restricting access to tools, training and diagnostic-and-repair software to the dealer network and leaving out independent installers and retail chains. This prevents the aftermarket repair facilities from repairing late-model vehicles, effectively eliminating consumer choice (the car owner has no choice but to go to a dealer to service the car).

A good analogy is your home computer. Software companies such as Microsoft and Apple provide freeware updates for your computer's operating system. Car companies also produce recalibration software for a vehicle's computer to fix problems on a vehicle the consumer already owns. Therefore, the consumer should have the right to choose who can install this fix on his or her behalf.

The aftermarket is simply asking for the opportunity to keep running its businesses in communities across the country. Business should thrive or fail based on quality of service and consumer demand. The highly trained technicians who work in the aftermarket should be given access to the tools of their trade.

The legislation will be debated in Parliament on May 11 and voted on May 13. Canadians are encouraged to research the issues, and make themselves heard in the debate for the right to repair by contacting their MPs before May 11.

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