

'Well Made Here:' when economic sovereignty rhymes with public finances and SME growth

Guessing game: What program enables Canada to both reduce its dependence on exports and its vulnerability when a supply chain fails; to improve government tax revenues; and, to support local manufacturers and the retail networks they rely on to sell their hardware items and building materials?

Answer: It's 'Well Made Here,' a joint and collaborative initiative supported by most of the hardware and building material banners and purchasing groups, and already supported by 100 manufacturers.

Now that COVID-19 is generally well under control, or so we believe, this ambitious program can raise its head, stand tall, and undertake, for the first time since its creation, a genuine crusade in favour of promoting quality, domestically manufactured products destined for the residential market.

Over the next 16 pages, you'll learn more about:

- the intentions of the founders in creating the 'Well Made Here' organization,
- the potential for local purchasing even for industrial
- the return on investment of a measure of nationalism after unbridled globalization,
- the multiple impacts of manufacturing jobs on the economy, society, and public finances,
- and several other program related topics.

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A promise, a mission, a vision that is even more relevant now than when the organization was founded

On October 31st, normally, we celebrate Halloween. In 2018, more than 80 people opted instead to meet - undisguised and unmasked - (there was no pandemic to fear at the time) in order to inaugurate the 'Well Made Here' organization.



The organization belongs to the dozen buying groups and associations that co-founded it. After a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19, 'Well Made Here' resumes its awareness campaign to put the spotlight on accredited products and companies that believe in instilling a favourable bias towards products that are made here rather than those that are simply imported.

The inauguration event took place in Montreal, QC, at a venue that goes by the predestined name Maison du développement durable, evoking the non-profit organization's central mission to emphasize quality. 'Well Made Here' is registered under federal charter and eventually moved its headquarters to Ottawa, ON, in order to better represent its pan-Canadian character and, if necessary, to be closer to the nexus of power.

Since day one, and despite any slow down that may have resulted from the pandemic, the program's progress since it launched, its promise, purpose, and vision have not changed one iota. From the point of view of its board of directors and its management, 'Well Made Here' remains relevant in the present context.

The promise: Quality housing, from the cellar to the attic.

The purpose: Encourage the purchase of quality building materials and other items manufactured in Canada and intended for the residential market.

The vision: For the first few years, strengthen the value chain between manufacturers, banners, and their network of hardware

stores and home improvement centres, to better serve consumers and building contractors.

More specifically, 'Well Made Here' seeks to address five issues:

- **For consumers:** To help them find information on quality products made locally.
- **For certified contractors:** To enhance their offering, in conjunction with retailers, through the purchase of local, quality products.
- For retailers: To position themselves as destinations of choice for customers keen on purchasing accredited products.
- For banners: To have their image and networks associated with the growing movement in favour of buying local, quality products.
- For manufacturers: To stand out from imported or low addedvalue products by providing technical information for

While it is true that the releases issued and the regulations adopted on inauguration day remain unchanged, it would be fair to add that an international dimension has gradually been added to the original mandate.

DIYers and contractors.

Capturing the unifying potential of the organization's logo and leveraging its marketing reach on foreign markets, although most of the efforts remain focused on the domestic market, the administrators and staff now allocate resources to explore promotional and advertising avenues abroad. The United States, Mexico, France, Germany and Great Britain



It is in this prestigious building, the TCC, located at 150 Elgin Street in Ottawa, Ontario, that the "Well Made Here" organization has its offices, a stone's throw away from Parliament and from the offices of elected federal officials in leadership positions at various government departments.

are priority targets, not to mention the Nordic regions because of the technical advantages several Canadian product lines possess for dealing with extreme cold.





The more we produce in Canada, the less vulnerable we will be to international disturbances

Psychology teaches us that of these three possible tactics – fight, flight, or subjecting oneself to suffering – only the third is harmful. And yet, Canadian society endures demographic deficits that weaken it. It is dependent on vaccines and other necessary items in health crises that put the population at risk and there are delays with respect to meeting climate obligations for which there will be a high price to pay someday.

The 'Well Made Here' program presumes that raising awareness – among the population, those who issue contracts either privately or within the political class – about the direct and indirect effects of prioritizing Canadian residential products as much as possible over imports would allow the country to be less at the mercy of geopolitical conflicts, social tensions, climate pressure, and other possible pandemics which affect, and perhaps break down, global supply chains.

In addition, supporting Canadian producers fosters their growth, perhaps on foreign markets, thus their capacity to generate influxes of foreign currencies into our state coffers. This is something any country can appreciate.

Yet, especially in situations of economic crisis like the prevalent one, intervention is necessary to mitigate the all-too-easy tendency to buy from big international brands whose often aggressive pricing serves to maintain an appearance of standard of living for consumers. In reality, most of these multinationals do not really invest in our country and their popularity is cause for concern when it comes to the future of our local and national economic health.

Let's not forget the threat of the parallel virtual universe. About 50 per cent of online purchases are made on Amazon, while about 20 per cent of transactions are being linked to Canadian retail websites.

Encouraging local buying in a context of inflation - when customers' ability to pay is severely limited and cost prices, transportation, and wage costs are on the rise - does not require courage but, rather, lucidity; that of comprehending the pernicious long-term effects of an ultra-open market that neglects to protect its local stakeholders.

Prioritizing local industry by encouraging Canadian small and nedium enterprises (SMEs) is a way to link our communities while

: Techniseal



promoting our sustainability and fighting global warming through shorter production and distribution cycles.

While it may be difficult to interfere with macroeconomic factors such as wars, terrorism, or COVID-19, or with their effects on stock market volatility, definitive measures can be taken. Supporting

the local manufacturing of residential building materials will help make our society more resilient.

'Well Made Here' invests in 'local champions' who are competing in their domestic market to bask in the proverbial rays of the sun in an attempt to attract the attention of buying groups and construction professionals. As it turns out, several have potential for expansion abroad

Our manufacturing companies are sometimes so lacking in support in Canada that many of them – approximately 15 per cent – end up displacing production to subcontractors outside the country, hence resulting in a loss.

Breaks in long supply chains are a challenge that affects the profits of manufacturing companies in 60 per cent of cases.

The pandemic has also exacerbated the limitations of the just-in-time approach. Delays and disruptions in supply chains are problems that have major implications for the manufacturing sector. Eight out of 10 manufacturers are delivering late on contracts or orders.

Why protect Canadian manufacturers?

There are many reasons why governments and economic operators

should positively discriminate in favour of local building materials, in logical step with border control and the flow of goods.

The primary argument resides in the protection of manufacturing jobs and of the industries that create them because protecting the

livelihoods of workers and the businesses that employ them is essential to the economic growth and well-being of a region, and a country. The premise is that, without some form of protectionism, a country might lose industries and this will result in the loss of jobs that are generally better paid than those exercised in retail. On the

whole, the end result would be a rise in unemployment and an eventual decline in gross domestic product (GDP).

Competitiveness can be invoked. Relying too heavily or solely on foreign manufacturers in a given residential market can seriously affect the nature of competitive pricing and the level of product quality.

Consumer protection is a useful argument against dangerous imported products. In our highly technical and standards-based industry, inquiries products regularly prove that manufactured abroad fail to meet requirements in terms of human health or product safety, nor do they meet our environmental standards, be it due to the process used for manufacturing or at the distribution stage. Cases about dumping of non-compliant products, even pirated or counterfeit products, are regularly submitted to the courts and they harm our local players. It is far riskier for a domestic manufacturer to put a non-compliant product on the market whereas, as the saying goes, "Travelers from afar can lie with impunity."

Finally, the argument for supporting budding businesses – the renowned start-ups – is worth mentioning. Any new manufacturer struggles to compete with well-established and well-funded companies. Setting up support

mechanisms – in the form of tariffs, subsidies, administrative trade policies, or quotas – until these start-ups have reached a level that allows them to compete with foreign companies seems to us to be a good idea.



A container brought over from Asia represents employing three to five times fewer Canadians than when the same quantity of goods is produced here. Imagine the compounded impact on state coffers in terms of payroll

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The debate on buying Canadian taking place at the House of Commons

An advocate of free trade yesterday and the day before yesterday, today the government of Canada wonders if it might be time to put the emphasis on more mutually beneficial two-way exchanges, especially with its American neighbour.

In fact, the government believes so much in the virtues of free trade that when awarding public contracts, Ottawa grants foreign suppliers of goods and services greater access to federal contracts than is strictly required under its free trade agreements and in relation to its commitments to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Not all of Canada's trading partners reciprocate in this regard. Some countries have even recently introduced new restrictions that further limit the access Canadian suppliers and goods have to their government procurement markets.

This is especially the case with the U.S., which added new 'Buy America' national content requirements to its recent US\$1 trillion infrastructure plan, which will negatively affect the access of Canadian suppliers, in particular with regard to manufactured goods and building materials used in U.S. infrastructure projects undertaken with federal financial assistance.

Measures for reciprocity

Ottawa is also considering whether it might be better to restrict its public markets only to the extent 'strictly required' in its trade agreements or, if it should open its market in greater or lesser measure to foreign suppliers depending on the degree of equity of these countries. These new rules could also apply to provincial public contracts benefiting from federal subsidies.

All of Canada's trade agreements (except the one with the European

Union) allow contracts to be restricted to small businesses, a measure that could also be leveraged more systematically.

The fact that a country like Canada, which is usually rather zealous in matters of free trade and multilateralism, is considering a more nationalistic and accountable approach to its trade relations likely attests to signs of reaching a certain maturity.

It is much more a lack of political will than matters of law that prevents Canada from putting the emphasis on favouring its own businesses and securing domestic supplies.

Ottawa is not alone in pondering these questions. The growing impression of being taken advantage of by the U.S. is prompting China and even Brazil to reassess things. The European Union is also exploring the idea of requiring reciprocity moving forward.

Approach advocated by 'Well Made Here'

The 'Well Made Here' organization, which has been invited to participate in the next consultations, will advocate two related viewpoints.

On the one hand, "we must limit ourselves to the requirements of existing free trade agreements and not be 'holier than thou'," argues Richard Darveau, president and CEO.

Basically, under this scenario, suppliers of goods and services from countries where markets are closed to Canadian suppliers, or that provide less access to their markets than they enjoy in Canada, would have reduced access to Canadian federal contracting opportunities.

On the other hand, consideration could be given to award additional points during the evaluation process when a bid meets the prescribed requirements in terms of Canadian content.

Taking it a bit further, Mr. Darveau adds, "The federal government, the provinces, and municipalities, as issuers of such opportunities, could even restrict access when it comes to public contracts when matters of sovereignty or national security come into play."

In such cases, the 'Well Made Here' accreditation for residential construction items could provide the government with double proof; products that comply with health standards and construction codes, for which the main processing costs (51 per cent or more) have been incurred on Canadian soil.

To complement these two measures, Canada could also consider implementing a program that is consistent with its trade obligations reserving some calls to tender for small businesses. Such a program would mean that foreign suppliers would generally be unable to bid on government contracts to the benefit of Canadian small businesses. For this to take place, the value and scope of contracts to include in the program would need to be determined. An assessment should also be made to determine if, in certain cases, Canadian content requirements would also apply these contracts.

For example, the U.S. federal government automatically reserves any contract valued at US\$250,000 or less for small businesses and minority-owned businesses from the U.S., as long as the 'rule of two' is followed (i.e., when there are at least two small U.S. companies that are competitive in terms of market price, quality, and workmanship and who might want to bid on the contract). Contracts valued at over US\$250,000 can also be reserved for small businesses so long as that the 'rule of two' is followed.



"Canada is a trading nation. We value fairness, openness, and transparency in our trading relationships," said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland as she launched a public consultation process on the issue at the end of March.





Negotiations underway to make Canada a major attraction at two international shows

'Well Made Here (WMH) management's proposal has truly caught the attention of the National Hardware Show's (NHS) promoters who are beginning to storyboard the event with two other major shows (KBIS - Kitchen & Bath Industry Show and IBS - International Builders' Show) under one roof (Las Vegas, NV) on the same date (January 31 to February 2, 2023). And the same scenario will be discussed with the organizers of Batimat, a major European tradeshow held in Paris every

What does the pitch consist of? Make Canada one of the major attractions at these international events, a factor on which rests the hopes of the entire hardware and building materials community to revive the popularity of in-person attendance at tradeshows.

The idea examined in Las Vegas, which will again be put forth by Richard Darveau, chief executive officer (CEO) of 'Well Made Here,' in October during an exploratory mission to Paris, entails designing a pavilion and providing some crowd animation to promote the advantages of WMH accredited items, and thereby Canadian-made, to retailers and professionals. The entertainment component involves the presence of an essential, maple syrup: hosts in plaid shirts would offer maple taffy on snow to visitors.

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Near the potential 4,000-square-foot booth, a surface area apt to attract attention, a complete business and diplomatic program is in the works, including:

- 'Meet the Buyer'-type activities that take place in private with the executives from a few of the banners visiting the show, organized with the help of the commercial services of the government of Canada office in Los Angeles, CA, (and in Paris)
- Face-to-face meetings with American (and European) representation agencies for interested Canadian manufacturers
- Formal meetings with the authorities from the concerned embassies and consulates

For their part, the promoters of the trade show are considering promotional means to entice visitors to discover Canadian products by incorporating a Canadian promo into their media kits and their invitations, and by distributing an interactive map allowing visitors to locate the WMH participating manufacturers' booths on the site plan. We will ask nothing less from the promoters of the Batimat show who, in both cases, happen to incidentally be from the same firm.

Once the concept has been finalized and its costs clearly assessed, the WMH team will approach the Canadian government to obtain technical and financial support.

"We have reason to believe that some manufacturers, by the nature of their products and their logistical representation, will be more interested in one or the other of the two markets," says Darveau. As a result, he thinks that the products presented will be different.

The CEO of 'Well Made Here' takes this opportunity to emphasize that such efforts on markets outside Canada must remain marginal, the purpose of the program being first and foremost to saturate the Canadian landscape. "That said, it would be a waste if we failed to help ourselves and did not take advantage of the critical mass of represented manufacturers in order to generate greater success abroad."



Avenues for collaboration are positively emerging on the horizon between WMH and the non-profit organization MANA, whose mission is to match manufacturing companies with competent and relevant agents for their American markets. Darveau poses with Charles Cohon, president of MANA.



A 'Made in USA' area had been set up at the NHS this year. Célie Cournoyer, director of operations for 'Well Made Here,' admits that she expected a larger scale. She thinks the eventual Canadian pavilion will radiate in appearance and vibrancy.

We encourage the purchase of Canadian-made residential use hardware products and building materials

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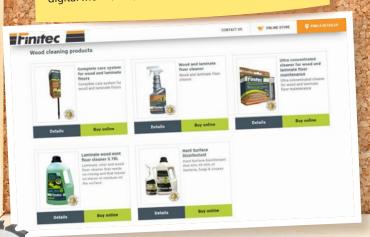
Accredited products and participating manufacturer status: showcased more and more

Building awareness of the 'Well Made Here' (WMH) brand and integration of the logo are ongoing processes. We can expect to see more and more of the "Well Made Here" logo in hardware stores as stock with old packaging turns over and additional manufacturers join the program every month.

One of the simplest ways to leverage the logo is to link it to products so that it can been spotted in stores. **A. Richard Tools**, **Adfast**, **Duststop Air Filters**, **EAB**, **Laurentide Paint** and **Sika** are among the many participants who have integrated it directly onto labels, packaging or display elements.



Finitec is one of several participating manufacturers who prominently display the logo on their website, in digital media, on product labels and wherever possible.







Intermat has added the logo to the bottom of this fleet vehicle's

Global Decking added the logo to its TV ad spot, which has been running seasonally on national media outlets since 2019, and is available on their YouTube channel.



At trade shows, WMH elements are visible at participating manufacturers' booths, including those of OSBlock and Technoform Industries.

Mini roll-up displayed at NHS 2022 by **Technoform Industries**, the first to sign up in 2018





OSBlock has integrated the WMH logo onto the backdrop of the booth setup so that it sits directly under the spotlight.

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Spotlight on participating manufacturing companies

While 'Well Made Here' continually welcomes more manufacturing companies operating in Canada, here are brief portraits of some of the first hundred to join the program. And more importantly, how they satisfy the program's mandatory requirements.



For over 40 years, **Adfast** has supplied a full line of adhesives, caulking and insulating foams. Continually improving its offering by developing new products tailored to different applications, over 320 sealant colours are manufactured. Today, thousands of customers are served through its 4 fully automated manufacturing plants, 11 Adstore customer centers, and 7 Admobile stores on wheels.



Founded in Montreal in 1960, **Belanger Laminates** is one of the industry's leading manufacturers of post-formed countertops. Renowned for its design innovations, Belanger Laminates is one of the largest post-formers in Canada. Its dedicated employees produce superior quality products for kitchens, bathrooms and the furniture industry.



Dural, a division of MULTIBOND has been manufacturing adhesives and polymers for industrial and residential use for 70 years. Each container of DURAPRO glue or adhesive is the result of years of formulating, producing and marketing by a highly qualified and experienced technical team.



Since 1895, **Garant** has distributed and manufactured quality tools. The company is recognized for manufacturing and marketing non-powered tools and accessories for landscaping and gardening, construction and percussion tools, as well as tools for cleaning and snow removal in Canada. Its top priority is to offer innovative tools that make life easier for users.

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Duststop Air Filters has been helping families across Canada breathe easy for over 40 years. Based in Petrolia, Ontario, the company holds dear to its core promise of producing the highest-quality air filters for residential and commercial forced air furnaces and making them available at the most affordable price. Recycled and/or recyclable materials are sources for use in the manufacturing of its products whenever



For over 50 years, **MAAX** has been operating and innovating in the bathware industry. Employing more than 800 Canadian workers, they take pride in providing quality, "Made in Canada" products.



Permacon employs more than 500 employees, who work in manufacturing facilities in Quebec and Ontario. The company offers residential, institutional, commercial and industrial masonry and landscaping products in addition to serving the major retail banners.



Simpson Strong-Tie, with facilities in Brampton Ontario and Pitt Meadows in British Columbia, is a world leader in structural solutions, products and technology that help people design and build safer, stronger homes, buildings, and communities. Founded in 1956, there are currently more than 3,200 employees and 250 engineers employed in offices, manufacturing facilities, research laboratories and distribution centers around the world. In Canada, there are 113 employees.

'Well Made Here' welcomes any business, regardless of its country of origin, so long as it makes building materials that meet public standards, and / or other hardware items, intended for the residential market and produced at a manufacturing facility operated in Canada.









Is it too much to ask for more Canadian buying, here and elsewhere?

From the time I was young, I've held the notion that the planet is one single market open to everyone and everything, fueled by the leitmotif: where there's a will, there's a way.

Today, it seems to me that the invisible hand of the economy is sending us different, less generous messages.

We Canadians have always opted for fair play, strictly respecting the laws of free trade. Which means, among other things, not protecting our own creators of wealth - Canadian manufacturing companies, while accepting that our neighbours, the U.S., have a field day. Whether under Obama, Trump, or Biden, with 'America First,' the 'Buy American Act,' the 'America Creating Opportunities for Manufacturing, Pre-Eminence in Technology, and Economic Strength (COMPETES) Act,' the 'United States Innovation and Competition Act (USICA),' or the 'Build Back Better Agenda,' our economic

players are subject to many American iterations of protectionism.

China is not excluded with its 37 measures preventing or reducing the access of foreign products to their growing market, making it the smallest participant in international trade among the 25 major economies of the world.

Canada, its government included, regardless of the colour of the party in the leadership position, has almost always been timid when it comes to flaunting its industrial products, to boosting businesses that make the delicate and risky choice of producing items here rather than opting to import goods from Shanghai.

Firm Agenda

'Well Made Here' has a firm agenda. It consists of improving the

quality of residential buildings by banking on products that are made to meet current health standards and construction codes, sourced from manufacturing sites that employ Canadians in Surrey, BC; Winnipeg, MB; Kitchener, ON; Quebec; Moncton, NB; and locations all across the country.

Most of the major buying groups have understood that by promoting 'Well Made Here' accredited products while still offering what the rest of the world is making available in terms of best or least expensive, they are positioning themselves favourably with consumers and better assume their status as corporate citizens in the eyes of society.

It is important to debunk a persistent myth: The Canada-United States-Mexico Free Trade Agreement (CUSMA) does not, and nor do any other of the 15 other signed trade treaties, prevent economic operators in our country and their government from promoting the purchase of local products to Canadian citizens and companies. The treaties simply regulate and supervise sales on other markets.

Moreover, no treaty prevents a Canadian manufacturing SME from promoting its products on foreign markets, even within the framework of the said treaties, with the specific exception of forestry, agri-food, automotive, aeronautics, and culture, the inter-country transition united by treaties aims to encourage exports between territories.

In reality, public procurement should be distinct from the rest. Due to government subsidies that alter the value or the price of several product lines, the treaties and their related dispute resolution mechanisms will serve first and foremost to avoid, as much as possible, offering unfair competitive advantages during public calls for tender.

Generate Jobs

Manufacturing items here generates dozens, often hundreds, of jobs in small municipalities, while an imported product only pays the person processing the transaction.

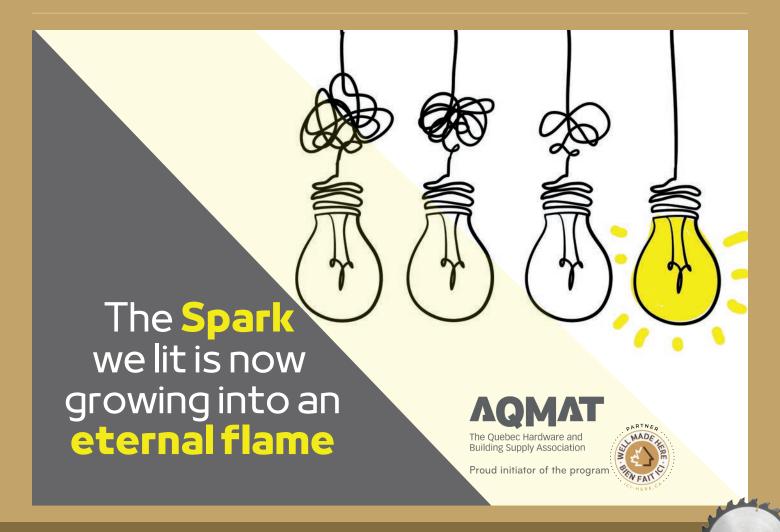
Canadian products may have a lighter ecological footprint than alternatives from overseas.

A domestically manufactured product generates tax revenues that are three times greater for the government than an imported product.

Better sales revenues for manufacturers on the domestic markethelps them to export their know-how to the U.S. and other external markets, which generates foreign exchange, an element that is absolutely essential to Canada's trade balance.

We are only just beginning to hear all about the virtues of buying local - not only for food - but also for industrial products. Other sectors of our economy are closely following our movement and will adhere to it too. Other products will seek to distinguish themselves by eliciting the fact that they are made in Canada and comply with the standards, codes, and laws in effect here.

I conclude by bringing a correction to the title of this editorial. It's not too much to ask for more Canadian buying, here and elsewhere. Globalization 2.0 of markets makes it mandatory and so, the new paradigm to adopt is: 'Think globally. Buy locally!'



What the buying group leaders have to say about supporting 'Well Made Here'

Several habitually competitive banners and buying groups have set aside their differences for the good of consumers and in support of products manufactured in Canada. Each has its unique operational model and corporate culture; therefore, each generates awareness and promotes the program in its own way. The meeting of the minds takes place when executives come together at board meetings, given that each partner holds a seat and has a say in good governance. Here is what the CEO's have to say about supporting 'Well Made Here.'



"Castle Building Centres Group is an industry leader of independent lumber and building materials dealers across the country. Our members have strong connections to the communities they serve and as such, we're very proud to have been among the founding buying groups, providing our retail network with the opportunity to position their locations as destinations of choice for accredited 'Well Made Here' products."

- Ken Jenkins, President and CEO of Castle Building Centres Group



"As a genuinely Canadian company and one of the founding banners of 'Well Made Here,' Home Hardware understands our customers appreciate the availability of Canadian-made products. When customers shop at our close to 1,100 locations across the country and see the 'Well Made Here' logo, they know they are purchasing quality items while also supporting local entrepreneurs and manufacturers."

- Kevin Macnab, President and CEO of Home Hardware Stores Limited



"At Lowe's Canada, we are always looking for ways to improve our product and service offering to better meet the changing needs of our customers, including having a product offering that fits their values. Therefore, we are proud to be one of the founding partners of the 'Well Made Here' program and we continuously work with our vendors to offer thousands of certified Canadian-made products in our network of Lowe's, RONA, and Réno-Dépôt corporate and dealer-owned stores."

- Tony Cioffi, President of Lowe's Canada



""Flagship of the renovation industry in Quebec, **Patrick Morin** is a proud and growing Quebec-based company that supports thousands of customers in their construction and renovation projects. As one of the founding banners of the 'Well Made Here' program, we are proud to offer consumers, do-it-yourselfers, and contractors accredited local products."

- Daniel Lampron, Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer of Patrick Morin



"As a proud Canadian company,
Sexton Group's success is built
on strong relationships and
responsiveness to its member's
needs. Our growing partnership with
'Well Made Here' is one of several
ways in which we look to expand
competitiveness in local markets and
work to ensure the success of their
business."

- Eric Palmer, Vice-President and General Manager of Sexton Group



"TORBSA is a Canadian company that prioritizes quality domestically-made products. A long-term partnership with 'Well Made Here' contributes to our efforts in enabling our shareholders to compete on a level playing field in today's ever-changing market. It's a natural fit with our growth strategy and values."

- Paul Williams, President of TORBSA Limited





In order to address issues surrounding protection measures originating from the USA, to generate public awareness about the quality of products, to mitigate our supply chain's dependance on overseas markets, and to counter the regression of our national manufacturing capabilities.

TODAY

our organization is already comprised of...

700 accredited lines of product

which translates to 6 500 items

originating from 170 manufacturing sites

situated all across the country

supplying 2900 hardware stores and renovation centres

affiliated with **6** banners and buying groups

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