

Bill S-221 to Protect Transit Operators and Taxi Drivers Clears Senate

Etobicoke, Ontario, September 24, 2014 – The Bill to protect public transit operators introduced in May by Senator Bob Runciman, yesterday was given unanimous support at Third Reading in the Senate.

The legislation is now headed to the House of Commons for debate. In his news release yesterday, Senator Runciman indicated he is optimistic that S-221 will obtain broad support and become law before the end of the present session of Parliament.

Mike Mahar, Director of the Amalgamated Transit Union Canadian Council, (ATU Canada) says the Canadian Council is thrilled that Senator Runciman has successfully spearheaded the passage of this Bill through the Senate and believes it will win “the support of all parties” when it is introduced in the House of Commons.

Bill S-221 would amend the Criminal Code to make it an aggravating circumstance that the judge must consider if the victim of an assault is a public transit operator, which is defined to include drivers of not just city buses and streetcars, but also school buses and taxi drivers.

“The passage of such a Bill has been a priority of ATU Canada for close to a decade as over 2,000 of our members have been the victims of life altering and career ending assaults each year”, said Mahar. “The impact on their families and industry as a whole is exacerbated by the light sentences the assailants have received in the past”.

“Senator Runciman and his Senate colleagues have shown a great deal of compassion and respect for these victims while understanding the threat to public safety when these operators are assaulted”, added Mahar.

ATU Canada has previously met and discussed this serious issue with Members of Parliament (MPs) and Senators from all parties and have found that it has received major support.

ATU is pleased with Senator Runciman’s comments that, “The reaction to this legislation has been amazing, and heart-warming, I’ve heard from bus drivers, taxi drivers and their families from across Canada, letting me know how much this bill means to them. It’s been a gratifying experience”, Mahar indicated that MPs from coast to coast have had these same conversations and ATU members are grateful for their ongoing support in helping putting this through Parliament.

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For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact: Mike Mahar – Director , ATU Canada 416-476-8350 (Amalgamated Transit Union, Canadian council)