



The Honourable Robert Runciman

NEWS RELEASE

L'honorable Robert Runciman

Immediate release

BILL PROTECT BUS, TAXI DRIVERS CLEARS SENATE

OTTAWA, September 24, 2014 – Senator Bob Runciman's bill to protect public transit operators passed Third Reading in the Senate today with unanimous support.

Bill S-221 will now go to the House of Commons where Runciman is optimistic it will win broad support and become law before the current session of Parliament ends.

The bill amends the Criminal Code to make it an aggravating circumstance that must be considered by the judge 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.

Some 2,000 public transit operators are assaulted every year in Canada and Runciman introduced the bill after examining several cases of serious assaults resulting in light sentences.

The bill was introduced on May 8 and Runciman said its quick passage by the Senate was due to its support by both Conservative and Liberal senators. Similar bills previously introduced in the House of Commons have never even gotten to committee stage.

"I think the progress of this bill through the Senate is a testament to the way members of this institution can put their differences aside and get beyond a good idea," he told fellow Senators.

Liberal Senator Mobina Jaffer also spoke in favour of Runciman's bill, noting "I have heard from so many public transit workers who have asked me to thank Senator Runciman for introducing this bill."

Liberal Senator George Baker told the Senate Chamber that he often disagrees with expanding the Criminal Code, but in this case he agrees wholeheartedly, noting that "It's done in the right way."

"The reaction to this legislation has been amazing, and heart-warming," said Runciman. "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."

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact: Barry Raison, Policy Advisor, Office of Senator Bob Runciman, (613) 943-4020 or at barry.raison@sen.parl.gc.ca.