



**Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA)
Association canadienne du transport urbain (ACTU)**

Mr. Chair, Chers membres du comité,

Je tiens tout d'abord à vous remercier de l'invitation à comparaître aujourd'hui devant le comité de la justice et des droits de la personne. Nous sommes reconnaissants d'avoir l'occasion de nous prononcer sur le projet de loi S-221, qui vise à faire des agressions contre les chauffeurs de véhicules de transport collectif un facteur aggravant dans la détermination de la peine.

CUTA is the collective voice of public transportation in Canada, dedicated to being at the centre of urban mobility issues with all orders of government. We represent public transit systems, suppliers to the industry, government agencies, individuals and related organizations in Canada.

First, I would like to make it clear that the Canadian Urban Transit Association and its members unequivocally support Bill S-221. We have previously addressed the Senate's Constitutional and Legal Affairs committee on this Bill, and my comments today will be a direct reflection of those made at the Senate committee.



Every day, transit operators across the country drive thousands of people to work, school, recreation facilities, to health care and community services. Among their many tasks and responsibilities, operators must drive a large, heavy-duty vehicle, often in stressful traffic and weather conditions, respect the schedule, collect fares, provide customer service, and, most importantly, ensure the safety of their passengers. On this last point it is critical to understand that operators are solely responsible for the safety of all passengers boarding the vehicles.

While they deliver essential mobility services to our communities, making our cities vibrant and prosperous, they don't necessarily benefit from a safe work environment, as our annual data demonstrates. In fact, every year, there are approximately 2,000 assaults against transit operators, and many more go unreported. This is an average of 5 assaults every day.

Transit employees have responsibility for the safety of their passengers, which makes these types of assaults dangerous for the greater public. There's a recent case that comes to mind which illustrates the gravity of such assaults. On March 26, 2014, a passenger punched a bus driver in the face in Vancouver.

At the time of the attack, the bus was travelling at approximately 30 kilometers per hour, carrying 30 passengers. The driver suffered a broken nose, broken bones in his face, continuing vision impairment in one eye, and loosened teeth. Despite all of this, the driver, whose first concern was the safety and well-being of his passengers, managed to safely bring the bus to a complete stop, and open the door so that the attacker could leave and other passengers would remain safe. Thanks to the conscientious actions of the driver, no passengers were injured in this case. However, one can only imagine how the safety of the passengers, pedestrians and other road users could have been put at serious risk.

Nos statistiques montrent qu'en 2012, près de 80 % des crimes sur les propriétés de réseaux de transport collectif ont été commis dans nos véhicules, tel que les autobus.

Il suffit tout simplement de multiplier le nombre d'incidents par une moyenne de 30 passagers à bord pour évaluer le niveau de risque et danger potentiel qu'une agression contre un chauffeur représente pour le public.



It is worth noting that CUTA and our members are already working diligently to put in place other preventive security measures such as Closed-Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV) and protective shields, additional employee training in dealing with difficult and dangerous situations, and hiring dedicated security personnel. These initiatives are certainly improving the safety and security of transit operators but they must be supported by legal measures, such as the proposed legislative change in bill S-221.

CUTA urges the committee to approve this bill for House of Commons consideration, as it will provide transit systems with an additional tool to ensure they are appropriately equipped to prosecute offenders.

CUTA and the Metro Vancouver Transit Police are currently working on gathering data in the sentencing of subjects charged and convicted of assaulting bus operators across Canada and preliminary findings reveal a lack of consistency in sentencing across the country for similar types of assaults.

To sum up, we believe this legislative change is necessary for three reasons:

1. It will provide one more level of protection for transit vehicle operators who face nearly 2,000 assaults every year;



2. It will improve public safety by enhancing the safety of passengers and other road users ;
3. It will contribute to increasing consistency and predictability in sentencing across the country for similar types of assaults.

Bill S-221 has received approval from the Senate, and unanimous consent with both first and second readings in the House of Commons. I speak for all members of CUTA when I ask this committee to approve this bill for final consideration in the House: the final push required to ensure this piece of legislation becomes an effective, informed and necessary law.

Merci. Thank You.

Michael Roschlau
President and CEO
Canadian Urban Transit Association