



The Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure, and Communities Releases the Results of its Study on Bus Passenger Safety

After conducting a series of public hearings on the issue of coach and school bus safety, the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure, and Communities concluded that there is no cure-all solution to improve bus passenger safety in all situations. Although seatbelts can improve passenger safety in some situations, they do not prevent all forms of injuries and fatalities associated with traveling by bus. Retrofitting buses to have seatbelts where there are other safety features in place, namely school buses, may actually reduce the efficiency of the present safety features putting passengers at a higher risk.

The hearings were the result of increased attention to the issue of bus passenger safety following recent fatal events, such as the Humboldt Broncos bus crash in April 2018 and the Ottawa City Transport incident in January 2019. The Committee conducted a study on bus passenger safety that reviewed the current safety standards of buses, specifically seatbelts on buses and crashworthiness of buses in Canada. The Committee heard from members of the Transportation Safety Board and the U.S. National Highway Transportation Board, bus manufacturers, emergency room physicians, coroners, as well as transportation safety advocates and stakeholders from the motor coach, school bus and public transit industry.

MCC President Doug Switzer appeared before the Committee in April. In his remarks, he emphasized the motor coach industry's commitment to continuous improvement in safety saying, "No means of travel, in fact, one could argue no human activity is ever perfectly safe. No matter how good your record, there is always more than can be done", a sentiment that flows throughout the Committee's report.

The report released by the Standing Committee details its review of the issues related to bus passenger safety and proposes nine recommendations for consideration of the House of Commons. Although the current evidence regarding school bus safety is inconclusive, Transport Canada's Task Force on School Bus safety is currently conducting a thorough study on the subject and the Committee recommended that the Government of Canada seriously consider the implementation of any recommendations that are made based by the Task Force.

Other recommendations include improving the accuracy, detail, and transparency of future studies on vehicle safety, developing a national standard for entry-level commercial drivers and for the crashworthiness of large passenger buses, and the consideration of alternative seat designs to improve passenger safety for children.

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