

# Quebec drives toward new bus-rating service

**NICOLAS VAN PRAET**  
*Gazette Quebec Bureau*

QUEBEC - Quebec wants to drive ramshackle bus companies out of business by offering a new bus-rating system that rewards comfort and service.

Like the five-star system for hotels, bus companies will now be able to offer five levels of certified service, from economy to super-luxurious.

The slick service and safety would be up and above the minimum standards already in place under law. Inspectors from the Bureau de Normalization du Québec would check the buses at least once a year to make sure they meet the standards.

The move will push sketchy bus companies into bankruptcy or force them to step up their service, says Transport Minister Guy Chevrette.

"This will let quality companies show that quality."

Industry insiders say several fly-by-night bus companies are still in opera-

tion in Quebec - companies that make money by ignoring safety regulations.

The companies, often owned by a single person, rack up a pile of fines for maintenance violations, declare bankruptcy, and start anew under another name.

Some bus companies welcomed the certification.

"At least it will make consumers more aware what they're dealing with," said Jack De Francesco, general manager of Coach Canada in Montreal, which has a fleet of 50 buses.

But the certification is voluntary. And Chevrette estimated yesterday that only 10 or 15 of 500 bus providers in Quebec will seek a rating.

Still, he added, those 10 companies could represent half of the industry.

When the Quebec Bus Owners Association asks operators about their safety and service, all of them say they're good, according to Romain Girard, vice-president of the Quebec Bus Owners Association.