

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Health services minister misses own deadline**

SALMON ARM – Minister of Health Services George Abbott failed to meet with striking B.C. ambulance paramedics yesterday as promised.

Ambulance Paramedics of BC president John Strohmaier met with Abbott last week in an effort to restart stalled contract talks. Strohmaier said that while Abbott steadfastly refused to discuss any monetary issues, he did agree to continue discussions Wednesday after getting more information from his staff. Strohmaier said Abbott pledged to “work on developing a framework for a process that could lead to enabling the resumption of collective bargaining with a facilitator/mediator.” That meeting didn’t happen yesterday.

The 3,500 CUPE 873 members have been on strike since April 1. They have been pushing Abbott to agree to an independent mediator to get back to the bargaining table and negotiating a new collective agreement. An (LRB) mediator booked out of the dispute weeks ago.

The paramedics are fighting for adequate ambulance staffing levels to ensure better emergency response times, wage parity with other emergency response workers and a multi-year deal for stability and public confidence. The BC Ambulance Service’s last offer was only a one-year deal with a three-per-cent wage hike.

To publicize their plight, paramedics are holding a march and rally Friday at 12 Noon in Victoria that will pass the B.C. Legislature on its way to a “temporary” ambulance station housed in a hotel for the past eight years.

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