

PRESS RELEASE

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Striking paramedics challenge Campbell

VICTORIA - Striking ambulance paramedics made their voices heard in Victoria today. More than 200 CUPE 873 members held a noisy demonstration outside on the steps of the B.C. Legislature, while inside Gordon Campbell and the B.C. Liberals were being sworn-in to a third term.

B.C.'s 3,500 ambulance paramedics have been on strike for more than two months for faster response times, better staffing levels, wage parity with other emergency responders and a multi-year contract. The paramedics continue to provide ambulance services under Essential Services.

Ambulance Paramedics of BC president John Strohmaier challenged the Campbell Liberals to stop stalling. "What we want from this new government," said Strohmaier, "is the same respect that we treat our patients with every day."

Strohmaier used the occasion to announce a tour of the province by the CUPE 873 executive to talk with members in their communities about what direction to take to get a settlement. He said that while they are still hoping the government will act quickly to settle the dispute, they are also planning for what will happen if there is no resolution in sight.

The paramedics filled a box with tens of thousands of postcards from people across B.C. calling on the government to show respect for paramedics. "While those now inside this building were trying to get elected, the people spoke out - calling on the government to treat us fairly," said Strohmaier. "That has yet to happen – so far the minister of health has repeatedly refused to show us respect."

CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill was on hand to pledge the continued support of 80,000 CUPE members in B.C. O'Neill was warmly welcomed for his tireless efforts over the past month to get the employer back to the table.

The CUPE 873 paramedics want the provincial government and the Ministry of Health to appoint an independent mediator to help reach a collective agreement. They are scheduled to meet with government representatives Thursday and Friday to discuss outstanding issues.

For more information on the issues in this dispute directly from ambulance paramedics please visit: <http://www.apbc.ca>

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