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Mediator adjourns paramedics' talks

VANCOUVER – Labour Relations Board mediator Mark Atkinson adjourned talks between the Ambulance Paramedics of BC and the BC Ambulance Service Friday afternoon. No date has been set for any further meetings between the two sides in the protracted dispute.

The bargaining committee for the 3,500 members of CUPE 873 met with the BCAS yesterday and today to try to get a response to a comprehensive union proposal (including monetary items) presented to the employer last week. Atkinson sat in on the talks at the request of the union.

Ambulance Paramedics' spokesperson BJ Chute said "all the employer has done so far is to keep presenting the same proposal for a one-year agreement. This time all they did was drop the original signing bonus - they didn't even change the date on the package they presented from the one they gave us in March." Chute added that the government's bargaining team doesn't appear to have a mandate to make any significant decisions. "We have been pushing for an independent arbitrator to be appointed so we can settle this dispute," he said.

The paramedics have been on strike since April 1 for faster ambulance 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 orders.

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