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## **Paramedics apply to Falcon for arbitration**

VANCOUVER - Ambulance Paramedics of BC president John Strohmaier is calling on Health Minister Kevin Falcon to intervene in the stalled paramedics' dispute. He says the matter "could place the BC Ambulance Service and the patients it serves at extreme risk."

Strohmaier has written to Falcon calling for a meeting as soon as possible "to convey our union's strong support to terminate this strike immediately in return for a fair process for resolution."

Repeated efforts to get the employer to stay at the negotiating table and appoint an independent mediator have failed. Today's letter comes after the Emergency Health Services Commission declined to respond to a comprehensive proposal presented at talks initiated by the union last week.

"It is you who will be ultimately responsible for the failure to deliver the high quality, reliable and timely emergency care that the taxpayers of this province need and deserve, Strohmaier tells Falcon, "I therefore urge you to act immediately on this important issue."

The 3,500 members of CUPE 873 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 employers' dependence on part time workers, unpaid travel time and chronic overtime has stretched the paramedics to the limit.

The paramedics, Strohmaier tells Falcon, are "simply asking for the same process afforded police officers and firefighters that is contained in the *Fire and Police Services Collective Bargaining Act* which states in part that "If a fire fighters' union or a police officers' union and an employer have bargained collectively and have failed to conclude a collective agreement or a renewal or revision of a collective agreement, the trade union or the employer may apply to the minister for a direction that the dispute be resolved by arbitration."

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