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Harvey Oberfeld speaks up about paramedic dispute

VANCOUVER—Respected television and print journalist Harvey Oberfeld has added his voice to those urging government action to bring the BC Ambulance Paramedic's strike to an end.

Oberfeld commented that being forced to work overtime through essential services was "almost like slavery" when speaking this morning on CFUN 1410.

Oberfeld called on the government to appoint an independent mediator to bring a resolve to the dispute that is now in its 118th day. Oberfeld also criticized the unfairness of essential services on his popular blog, "Keeping It Real."

Oberfeld is a retired journalist who worked with both the Vancouver Sun, where he was promoted to Victoria Bureau Chief, and BCTV (now Global) where he did political and investigative reporting.

CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill, who was also a guest on the CFUN morning show notes, "This government continues to stall instead of working with ambulance paramedics to find solutions to the crisis in B.C.'s ambulance service. It's obscene that there is no system in place for an automatic third party arbitrator to end disputes like these."

Ambulance paramedics have now been on strike for 118 days but continue to work under an essential services order. Members of CUPE 873 want the government to negotiate so that improvements can be made to how services are delivered. Chronic understaffing and long response times continue to be the biggest issues paramedics want the government to address. Ambulance paramedics are concerned that government stalling is putting patient's lives at risk.

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