

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Kootenay paramedics picket for public safety**

TRAIL—Ambulance Paramedics of BC are picketing at the Castlegar District Health Centre (Unit 709 – 10th Street, Castlegar) this morning in response to the BC Ambulance Service taking the only Critical Care paramedic in the West Kootenays off shift without notice.

“The decision to pull Trail’s only highly-trained paramedic is irresponsible and shortsighted,” says Ambulance Paramedics of BC vice-president Bronwyn Barter.

Barter notes that the paramedic was not advised that he would be expected to meet with a mediator today and tomorrow rather than staff the ambulance.

“This is the only Critical Care ambulance serving the whole of the West Kootenays. BCAS could have scheduled someone else to ensure that there is coverage for residents. Instead they waited for the crew to show up at work to find out they would not be working and no-one would be there in their place for two days.”

The paramedics have been trying to address problems of a deteriorating ambulance service since they began bargaining in December 2008. They have not been able to get back to the bargaining table since March 25 and have no process to reach a settlement because of the government’s intransigence. They have been working while on strike for 139 days.

“We’re picketing to keep this ambulance staffed and serving Kootenay residents,” says Barter.

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.

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