

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Government misses emergency call

VICTORIA—The Liberals ignored B.C.'s deteriorating ambulance service in today's budget speech, despite the five-month-long strike by the province's 3,500 paramedics for better services.

Ambulance Paramedics of BC president John Strohmaier called the government's failure to address the crisis in the budget speech "another missed opportunity," adding, "the BC Liberals keep saying they won't intervene, but their failure to intervene is what is keeping us from a fair settlement."

The paramedics have repeatedly asked the provincial government to appoint an independent mediator and get back to the negotiating table.

"In today's budget speech, Finance Minister Colin Hansen said, 'When someone needs help in an emergency, we're there', but he obviously wasn't talking about someone waiting for an ambulance in many communities in B.C.," Strohmaier said. The union has been warning that the ambulance service is in critical condition and response times are suffering due to a shortage of ambulances.

"On the same day," Strohmaier pointed out, "B.C. became the province with the lowest minimum wage in Canada at \$8/hour – and our on-call members get only \$2/hour!"

CUPE 873 members have stepped up their campaign of asking MLAs to press the government to either get back to the table or appoint a third party arbitrator.

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