

## **Paramedics to take 'offer' on tour**

VANCOUVER—The CUPE 873 bargaining team is taking the government's latest "settlement offer" to members across the province. Ambulance Paramedics of BC president John Strohmaier announced the tour today.

"The employer (BC Ambulance Service) has implied that our bargaining team and our executive don't represent our members," Strohmaier said, "so we have decided to consult directly with our 3,500 members on their latest proposal." Strohmaier said the executive will be strongly recommending rejection of the offer, calling it "repugnant". But he added that "it will be the members who ultimately decide on the offer by weighing in with their collective voice."

The two sides have been meeting since last Tuesday with mediator Mark Atkinson in attendance. "We had hoped to make some real progress," said Strohmaier, "but the government doesn't appear to be taking these talks seriously."

Ambulance Service CEO Lee Doney broke a mutually-agreed on media blackout today citing concerns over patient care and service levels based on his interpretation of a confidential bargaining memo from John Strohmaier to 873 members detailing plans to consult the membership.

CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill said that, "if the CEO of the ambulance service wants to back out of a media blackout, that's fine, but that he feels qualified to interpret what our members are thinking as the result of a confidential memo to union members from their president is completely over the top." O'Neill, who is involved in the talks, added that the provincial government and its representatives should spend less time fear mongering and more time working to resolve this dispute. "What we are doing is taking time to talk to our constituents for their input - maybe the government should consider doing the same."

Ambulance Paramedics have continued to provide services under Essential Services orders since the strike began on April 1.

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