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CUPE BC president slams ambulance boss

VANCOUVER— CUPE BC president Barry O’Neill has slammed the head of the BC Ambulance Service for “fear mongering”.

O’Neill’s comments came during negotiations between striking Ambulance Paramedics of BC (CUPE 873), and the provincial government. The government delivered a “settlement offer” Monday, which CUPE 873 president John Strohmaier told his members he would present to them for a vote. He has called the offer “repugnant” and said the executive and bargaining committee will not be recommending acceptance.

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

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 in the media 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,” said O’Neill.

The two sides have been meeting since September 22nd 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 Paramedics have continued to provide services under Essential Services orders since the strike began on April 1.

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