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November 17, 2009

Paramedics refuse part in farce

VANCOUVER – CUPE 873 president John Strohmaier has told the provincial government that ambulance paramedics will not be taking part in a “sham” industrial inquiry commission.

The Liberal government announced the commission as part of its Bill 21, which forced the province’s 3,500 paramedics to end their seven-month legal strike on Nov. 7. The government’s version of a commission is to check into bargaining structure and possibly look at rural issues, with a final report deadline of Dec. 15.

The paramedics have been calling for a full industrial inquiry commission for the past four years that would take a comprehensive look at the “broken” ambulance service – including critical issues of staffing and workload, compensation, management structure, and deployment models in rural and remote areas of B.C.

Strohmaier called the government version of the IIC a farce. “To suggest that anything but a superficial and meaningless review could be set up, carried out and reported on in less than four weeks is ridiculous. A comprehensive industrial review takes months – and the ambulance service in B.C. needs a very serious and comprehensive review.” He added that “they haven’t even named a commissioner at this point.”

“Once again, the government appears willing to put the future of ambulance services and the people of B.C. at risk instead of really listening to emergency response professionals to save and strengthen the service.”

Strohmaier told the Ministry of Labour that CUPE 873 would “not be a party” to the commission.

“As discussed, our decision to participate would be based on whether or not the terms of reference would be meaningful for paramedics both in terms of outcomes and the issues being reviewed. We are not convinced the IIC review meets either of these objectives.”

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