

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Burnaby united against ambulance cuts

BURNABY—Burnaby City Council is sending the BC government a strong message - stop putting people's lives at risk with cuts to ambulance services.

The Council unanimously passed a resolution Monday night condemning planned cuts to the ambulance fleet.

Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon is expected to cut 14 Lower Mainland ambulances, reduce the hours for nine more and eliminate the equivalent of 36 paramedics next month. The BC Ambulance Service says the cuts are needed to meet a \$5.2 million budget cut imposed by the province.

The paramedics say the cuts come at a time when recruitment and retention of paramedics is at an all-time low and call volumes for ambulances are at an all-time high. CUPE 873 spokesman BJ Chute told Council the BC Ambulance Service, has said "the cuts mean that patients will just have to wait longer and paramedics will just have to work harder."

Burnaby Mayor Derek Corrigan said that "unfortunately it is difficult to appeal to Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon through normal mechanisms..."

CUPE 873, Ambulance Paramedics of BC, president John Strohmaier said that "when every second counts, longer waits can mean the difference between life and death – it's that simple." He added that the cuts are taking the ambulance service backwards.

A joint 2008 report, commissioned by CUPE 873 and the Ambulance Service, identified Burnaby as critically understaffed and called for the immediate implementation of more ambulances and another ambulance station. And while Burnaby did receive one additional ambulance in 2008, that falls "pathetically" short of the growing needs of the city. Chute noted that "there is still no plan for another ambulance station in the eastern portion of Burnaby."

The Burnaby Council voted to demand that the provincial government adequately fund ambulance services in Burnaby and committed to contact municipalities across the province to urge them to join in protecting the provincial ambulance service for all British Columbians.

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