



## **PUBLIC SAFETY ALERT: Ambulance Staffing Approaching Critical Levels**

The Ambulance Paramedics of BC - CUPE 873, who represent the nearly 6,000 dispatchers and paramedics in British Columbia are again reporting a significant number of ambulances sitting empty across the province today, and likely into the weekend as BCEHS refuses to schedule overtime in advance.

“Our members are reporting dozens and dozens of ambulances across the province sitting empty when they show up to work, and it’s not getting any better” says Ambulance Paramedics of BC President Jason Jackson. “We’ve tried to engage with BCEHS, PHSA and the government, and they still seem hesitant to admit we are reaching critical staffing levels again. We know we have hundreds of open and unfilled positions in the province. These are predictable vacancies that can be staffed well in advance. There is just no reason to wait to the last minute to start calling people to come in.”

BCEHS instituted new overtime bans on January 1<sup>st</sup> to cut costs in the face of a significant budget deficit, which has translated into frontline cuts to ambulances, affecting response times. BCEHS always runs at sub-optimal staffing levels, with 25% of their ambulances commonly unstaffed on a day-to-day basis.

“Our low acuity calls are waiting longer than ever, and BCEHS’ deployment changes are hurting patients. We’re hearing that patients are sitting for hours on the floor, or with first responders when they need to be transported to hospital by paramedics immediately. Now is not the time to cut front line services.”

BCEHS, PHSA and the government have refused to change their overtime ban policy, even after concerns were brought to them about patients waiting.

“We’re issuing this warning to the public that when you call 911, and if it’s not critical, you will undoubtedly be waiting for an ambulance, and it could be a long time.” says Jackson.

For more information, contact [info@apbc.ca](mailto:info@apbc.ca).