



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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BC Ambulance Service

ESSENTIAL SERVICES ORDER FILED IN BC SUPREME COURT

VICTORIA – The BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) has asked the Labour Relations Board (LRB) to file the Essential Service Order with the Supreme Court of BC to help ensure that the public continues to receive ambulance service. BCAS is currently experiencing significant challenges staffing ambulances in the Fraser Valley and Lower Mainland due to escalating and illegal job action by striking paramedics, members of CUPE Local 873.

“The employer is deeply concerned by this latest job action and has been making every attempt to fill shifts, making hundreds of telephone calls, and moving ambulances from other parts of the province to ensure service is maintained,” said Lee Doney, acting CEO of the Emergency and Health Services Commission. “CUPE 873 job action is now directly impacting service to the public. We need to work with the LRB to make sure that the union and its members are fulfilling their obligations under the Essential Services Order and patient care is not compromised as a result of this labour dispute.”

The type of staffing shortages BCAS is currently experiencing are a clear breach of the Essential Services Order, which places a responsibility on the employer, the union, and individual employees to maintain ambulance service levels and make themselves available for work as per their historical pattern of availability. The current significant shortage is due to staff not submitting availability for shifts, short notice book offs, calling in sick, and not answering calls for mandatory recall provisions.

“We are aware of reports of bullying, harassment and intimidation of employees by union representatives, contributing to the short notice book offs and sickness,” said Doney. “That type of behaviour is simply unacceptable.”

In response, BCAS has asked that the LRB file the Essential Services Order with the Supreme Court of BC, making the order enforceable in law, and further breaches can be considered as contempt of court and lead to serious sanctions by the court.

The union and its members have a legal and ethical responsibility to maintain ambulance services to the public as per the Essential Services Order.

A hearing involving BCAS and CUPE Local 873 is scheduled today at the LRB to review compliance with the Essential Services Order and to try and address the challenges being experienced in maintaining critical ambulance services.

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