



TEAMSTERS CANADA RAIL CONFERENCE DIVISION 320



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November 8, 2009

Subject: Back to Work Legislation for BC Paramedics (update 1)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This office received the appended message from C.U.P.E today. The BC Liberals have flown their true colours once again. Shame on them.

In Solidarity,

Murray Douglas
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S&C Officer
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Paramedics' legal strike ended by force

November 7, 2009 01:03 PM

VICTORIA—The Liberal government has forced an end to the Ambulance Paramedics legal strike following an all-night session in the B.C. Legislature.

The final vote took place early this morning despite a four-day battle by the Opposition NDP to stop Bill 21 - the Ambulance Services Collective Agreement Act.

[CUPE BC](#) president Barry O'Neill called the government's action "the most gutless thing I have ever seen in the Legislature - when virtually every Liberal government MLA showed how spineless they are by refusing to speak up for workers' rights".

"That (Health Services Minister Kevin) Falcon had the nerve to stand up and claim he values the work of our ambulance paramedics and then pass this Bill was disingenuous. It's an insult to our paramedics and to all working people for them to say they respect paramedics and then vote to make this attack on the democratic rights of collective bargaining."

O'Neill said he and other labour leaders are now meeting to decide where to go from here to "make this repressive government understand that they cannot continue to trample the rights of working people."

The Bill sends 3,500 Ambulance Paramedics, members of [CUPE 873](#), "back to work" after a seven-month strike that started on April 1. Throughout the dispute, the paramedics have been working under Essential Services orders.

Bill 21 is a shameful first in Canadian Labour history – the first time a government has forced its public employees back to work while the workers are in the middle of voting on a contract offer from that same government.

Paramedics' spokesperson BJ Chute called it "a sad day for democracy when our legal right to strike is removed but nothing has been done to end the labour dispute." He said CUPE 873 members are now even more frustrated and upset than when they were just trying to get the government to improve ambulance services.

The imposed retroactive one-year contract gives the paramedics a three-per-cent wage hike but does not address staffing, training, or equipment issues. Chute said they expect to be back at the bargaining table in less than a month from now.