

Protesting Bill 21, the Ambulance Services Collective Agreement Act

And

Helping CUPE Local 873 members through Political Action

There are a number of ways you, as a CUPE member and a community activist, can protest Bill 21, the Ambulance Services Collective Agreement Act and assist the Paramedics in pressuring the provincial government to protect BC's Ambulance Service.

Even though Bill 21 has passed through the legislature and is now law, there is still value in taking political action. **With 60,000 CUPE members going into collective bargaining in 2010, we need to make it clear that CUPE will not accept legislated contracts.**

Please also encourage friends and family in your community to join you in taking action.

1 E-mail the Premier

Contact Premier Campbell at premier@gov.bc.ca. We have provided a number of key messages for you to use in your e-mail. Copy Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon at kevin.falcon.mla@leg.bc.ca

2 Contact your MLA

You can do this by e-mail, by phone, or by paying a brief visit to their constituency office. Generally, in person contact is more effective than phone calls, and e-mail correspondence is least effective in getting the attention of a politician. Having said that, if you only have time to send an e-mail, it's certainly more effective than taking no action at all! Contact information for MLAs, including e-mail addresses, can be found online at <http://www.leg.bc.ca/mla/3-1-1.htm>.

Whichever method you use to contact your MLA, it is important to identify yourself as a member of their constituency, including providing your name, phone number and address. Politicians receive phone calls and correspondence from all corners of the province, and will always prioritize their own constituents. It's also important to treat their staff person, who will usually be your main point of contact, with courtesy and respect as they generally have a lot of influence with the MLA.

Keep your message simple. Express outrage about Bill 21, which denies rights to free collective bargaining. Bill 21 also sends a clear message to public employees that this government has no respect for these charter rights. You can also express concern about the deteriorating ambulance service, the level and availability of that service in your community, about the recruitment and retention of skilled Paramedics, or one of the other messages from the summary we've provided.

Ask the MLA to pledge their support to free collective bargaining for the 200,000 public employees whose contracts expire in 2010.

3 Meet with your MLA

When you take the initiative to contact your MLA, consider asking for a meeting in their constituency office.

If you would like to pursue a meeting with your MLA, it's important to contact their office well in advance. MLAs have very busy schedules, and their time is often booked weeks in advance. If your MLA happens to be a cabinet minister, getting a meeting will be even more difficult.

If you are unable to secure a meeting with your MLA, advise our Legislative Coordinator. She will keep a record of meetings refused. Likewise, if you are able to schedule a meeting, contact the Legislative Coordinator (contact information below) in advance of your meeting and she will be able to provide you with some specific information about ambulance services in your community and the standard message we are trying to convey to all provincial politicians. She will also answer any questions you may have about what to expect in the meeting.

4 Collect signatures on a petition

The attached petition is in support of the BC Ambulance Service. Print the petition and get members of your Local and/or community to support the petition with their signature. Completed petitions will be sent to Members of the Legislative Assembly for presentation in the Legislature.

We are asking you to get as many names and signatures on the petition as soon as possible, and return completed petitions to Tania Jarzebiak, Legislative Coordinator, at CUPE's BC Regional Office (500 – 4940 Canada Way, Burnaby BC V5G 4T3). She will coordinate the distribution of these petitions to MLAs. **Please mail your petitions in as soon as they are completed** – faxed or photocopied petitions cannot be presented in the Legislature, so please send the originals.

5 Next steps

The Government may have legislated CUPE 873 members back to work, but all of the underlying issues that gave rise to the dispute continue. And with 200,000 public service employees going to the bargaining table within months, we will be planning more actions to protest this regressive legislation. Keep an eye on the CUPE BC website at www.cupe.bc.ca and stay in touch with your local CUPE leadership for more information.

Contact information

Please contact the Legislative Coordinator with any questions.

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KEY MESSAGES TO BE USED WITH LOBBY PLAN:

1. Bill 21, the Ambulance Services Collective Agreement Act, is regressive and shameful legislation. B.C.'s ambulance paramedics were in the process of voting on the employer's last offer—a process due to be completed the same week the legislation was rammed through the legislature. The government has trashed collective bargaining rights through the imposition of this contract.
2. The circumstances surrounding this legislation were unprecedented in Canadian labour history. This is the first time a government has imposed a contract while the union was in the middle of voting on an offer from that same government.
3. The government claims its dispute with the paramedics is an isolated labour issue. In fact they used the legislative hammer of Bill 21 to send a message to 200,000 public sector workers who are preparing for collective bargaining in 2010.
4. The government needs to reassure BC's public employees that it will respect their charter right to free collective bargaining and will not use legislation to impose contracts on any public sector union in the coming years.
5. The labour dispute between BC Ambulance Service and CUPE Local 873 has always been about providing the best ambulance service possible to all British Columbians. But the service remains in critical condition, and the government's action of imposing a collective agreement has done nothing to address serious flaws in the system.