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MEDIA RELEASE

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The Hidden Damage of the Riot: Post-Traumatic Stress in the Workplace

Vancouver, B.C. – While businesses repair and restock in the aftermath of the Stanley Cup riots, the BC Human Resources Management Association is worried business owners may be overlooking hidden damage: the impact of shock and post-traumatic stress in employees who witnessed the violence and looting.

Ian Cook, CHRP, director of research and learning with BC HRMA, is warning employers that employees could be left with long-term psychological or physiological damage. Symptoms of shock or post-traumatic stress may not be apparent now, but the conditions can develop over time, and it's an employer's responsibility to seek care for their employees.

"These employees require counselling or assistance. Otherwise, companies could be faced with employees too fearful or traumatized to return to work," advises Cook. "Don't assume everything is back to normal as soon as you flip on the 'open' sign. After witnessing an event like a riot, employers should anticipate that employees will be experiencing a form of shock. If it happened at work, and you're the employer, then you're responsible for helping them find assistance and counselling."

Cook says large employers such as The Bay, Sears and London Drugs likely have employee counselling and assistance programs already in place. Workplaces without existing protocols need to find a professional counselling firm and take their recommendations for how to help employees recover from the experience.

Cook admits that counselling support could be a bigger challenge for small, independent businesses just trying to get back up and running after the riot. Regardless, counselling is no less important for their staff. That's why Cook is pledging his support behind the smaller companies.

"The smaller businesses really need support right now. Not only are they forced to deal with the loss of uninsured inventory or replacement glass, they need to take care of their employees, too. I want to encourage everyone in Vancouver to give these small businesses a hand as they, and their employees, get back on their feet."

BC HRMA is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing professional people practices through professional development opportunities such as conference, workshops, symposiums, and mentorship and volunteer programs. The association provides leadership to more than 4,700 members and 3,000 affiliates that collectively represent CEOs, directors of HR, consultants, educators, students, HR generalists, and small-business owners. Established in 1942, BC HRMA is a founding member of the Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations (CCHRA) and the exclusive grantor of the Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) designation in British Columbia.

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