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B.C. Police Association seeks reform of Workers Compensation Act: Broader definition of causes of mental stress needed

VICTORIA, March 24 /CNW/ - The British Columbia Police Association, (BCPA), is seeking reforms to the Workers Compensation Act that will permit appropriate treatment for police officers suffering from mental stress.

BCPA President, Tom Stamatakis, says he is "encouraged" by the response from provincial MLAs to the Association's request at meetings in Victoria over the past two days.

"I believe that government and opposition MLAs we met with understand that the stress our officers face on the job isn't always the result of what the Workers Compensation Act calls a 'single, sudden and unexpected event.' We want the Act amended to reflect the reality that mental stress also occurs as a result of an accumulation of events," says Stamatakis.

"Just as repeated concussions and blows to the head lead to brain damage in hockey players, or other athletes, the cumulative effects of stress can cause chronic psychological injuries, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, in police officers," he adds.

The BCPA wants the province's Workers Compensation Act reformed to bring it into line with Ontario's legislation and with the rules governing the RCMP and the Canadian Armed Forces in the area of stress claims.

Stamatakis notes that the reforms proposed would eliminate the legal and health costs associated with lengthy appeals for compensation for stress, will lead to appropriate care being delivered sooner and result in a shorter time off work.

The 2,500-member British Columbia Police Association (BCPA) represents the members of the province's 12 police associations and unions. Its aim is to encourage improvements in the working conditions, equipment, training and compensation of its members, and, by so doing, improve policing service to the public in B.C.'s municipalities. Its motto and mission statement is, "To Protect Those Who Protect Others."

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