

Bill for damages to be much higher than for the 1994 Vancouver riot

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The 2011 Stanley Cup riot will end up being four to 10 times more costly than the similar riot that shook the city in 1994, the business community says.

The bills related to structural damage, broken glass and lost stock are still being tallied, but the thinking is that the costs are going to be much greater this time because of the scale of the chaos after the Vancouver Canucks lost to the Boston Bruins in Game 7 of the Stanley Cup final last week.

The 1994 riot was largely focused on Robson Street, but the violence this year covered a much wider area of the city core. Theft and damage in the 1994 riots ran to more than \$500,000.

As for 2011? "I wouldn't be surprised if it was around \$4- or \$5-million," Wynne Powell, president and CEO of London Drugs, said Monday.

The venerable retailer's large store at Granville and Georgia figured its cost at up to \$700,000 – split almost evenly between damage to the store and loss of stock.

Mr. Powell described the loss of high-end cameras, computer equipment and other items as being "like a Boxing Day sale of people with no money," and noted that his company has, thanks to its security system, forwarded 200 discrete images of theft suspects to Vancouver police to assist in their investigation.

City hall, the police and insurance-sector officials in Vancouver said Monday that it was too soon to offer specific damage estimates, but others were not so reserved.

Captain Gabe Roder, a spokesman for the Vancouver Fire Department, said early department estimates forecast a \$500,000 cost that includes 14 vehicles set ablaze, as well as garbage cans and dumpsters set on fire, but does not include looting and broken glass.

He said the total property damages from the riot will be "substantially" higher than that, suggesting the pre-estimate he released in an interview with The Globe and Mail was just a "percentage" of the total bill.

Charles Gauthier, executive director of the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association, said the \$2-million cost forecast in some media reports struck him as a bit low given the greater number of businesses affected now than in 1994.

Bob Glass, president of the Downtown Vancouver Association, which represents a mix of business and residential constituents, said one big challenge for retailers has been the loss of summer stock, such as clothing, that may not be easy to replace given that suppliers have moved on to fall lines.

He said he calculates lost profitability into a total cost estimate of \$3-million to \$4-million.

Also, he said, many businesses lacked the proper insurance for riots. Some members will get insurance compensation for broken windows, but not the loss of stock. "That's the big devastating problem," he said. "No one expected this."

Lawyer **Marko Vesely**, a partner in litigation at the Vancouver firm of **Lawson Lundell**, said those seeking compensation from youth who may have been involved in the riot face opportunities and challenges.

Many youth will not have assets to allow for compensation, he said, so their parents might be targeted in the courts. In British Columbia, the Parental Responsibility Act makes it easier for people to recover from parents up to \$10,000 in damages caused by their children.

"Whether the parents are liable will be fact specific and will depend on the particular child and what the parents did or didn't do," he said. **Mr. Vesley** said he doubted parents could be held liable if they had a "normal" child without a history of negative behaviour and sent that child downtown.

*Editor's note: **Marko Vesely** is a partner in litigation at the Vancouver firm of Lawson Lundell. INcorrect information appeared in an earlier version of this story. This version has been corrected.*