

What's in the City's Naming Rights Deal?

A detailed look at the City of Pickering's naming rights agreement with Dorsay Development Corporation, obtained through a Freedom of Information request. Prepared by Shaun Rickard, Candidate for Mayor, City of Pickering.

Overview

In August 2025, the City of Pickering signed a fifteen year Naming Rights Agreement with Dorsay Development Corporation, a private real estate developer, covering the community centre at 2365 6th Concession Road. Under the agreement, the building's official name became the Dorsay Community and Heritage Centre. This report is based on a full copy of the signed agreement, released without redactions through a Freedom of Information request to the City Clerk's office (Request No. 2026-38).

The purpose of this report is to explain, in plain language, what the City committed to, what it received in return, and which parts of the agreement raise questions that residents and Council should be able to have answered.

Background

This agreement is one of several City records being reviewed as part of an ongoing series of Freedom of Information requests into City spending and governance, alongside requests covering Council and Mayor expenses, integrity commissioner costs, meeting security costs, Northeast Pickering servicing costs, and the City's ownership interest in Elexicon Corporation. This report focuses specifically on the naming rights agreement, since it is the first record received in full.

Who Is Dorsay Development Corporation?

Dorsay Development Corporation is a Toronto based real estate development and investment company active in both residential and commercial real estate, with a portfolio of high rise and low rise residential developments across the Greater Toronto Area. According to the City's own announcement of this agreement and Dorsay's public materials, Dorsay has led and proposed a number of real estate projects specifically in Northeast Pickering, the same emerging growth area the new community centre is intended to serve. The agreement was signed on Dorsay's behalf by Geoffrey Grayhurst, Chief Executive Officer, and Amanda Santo, Vice President of Development.

What Dorsay Pays the City

- A total contribution of \$1,000,000, plus HST, paid over the fifteen year term.
- That works out to equal annual installments of \$66,666.66, plus HST.
- The first payment is double that amount, \$133,333.32, to also serve as a refundable security deposit in case the City ever needs to remove Dorsay's signage.

- If no removal is required within the first four years, the City either refunds the security in full or credits it toward the Sponsor's fifth year payment.

What the City Commits To

- Exclusive naming rights. The City is contractually required to use only Dorsay's chosen name for the building, for the full term of the agreement.
- A fifteen year lock in, running from June 1, 2025 to May 30, 2040, with an option for both parties to mutually agree to a further fifteen year extension.
- Insurance coverage. The City purchases and maintains comprehensive general liability insurance for the facility of not less than \$10,000,000 per occurrence, at its own cost, and must add Dorsay as an additional insured on that policy.

In practical terms, this means Pickering taxpayers are funding liability insurance that protects a private company's interest in a municipal building, in addition to the value of the naming rights themselves. The dollar amount of the insurance premium tied to this requirement is not disclosed in the agreement.

Two Details That Deserve a Closer Look

1. The agreement was signed after its term had already begun.

The contract states that it was made as of June 23, 2025, and that its term begins on June 1, 2025. The signature page, however, shows the agreement was not actually signed by either the City or Dorsay until August 31, 2025, roughly two months after the term had already started running. For that period, the City and Dorsay appear to have been operating under terms that had not yet been formally executed by either party.

2. A broad, subjective termination clause.

Section 7.1(b) of the agreement allows either the City or Dorsay to treat the other as in default, and potentially terminate the agreement, over any statement or event connected to the agreement that the other party, in its own opinion, acting reasonably, considers immoral or offensive, or that may result in a negative public perception of that party, regardless of whether the statement reflects that party's actual views. This is an unusually broad, opinion based standard to include in a municipal contract, and it applies equally to both the City and the private sponsor.

Who Really Benefits: The City or the Developer?

The City's public framing of this agreement, from Mayor Kevin Ashe's July 2025 announcement, describes it as a creative, fiscally responsible way to generate alternative revenue, allowing the City to invest in core services and programs. On paper, the City received \$1,000,000 toward a facility reported to cost \$65,000,000 in total, or roughly one and a half percent of the project cost, paid out over fifteen years.

Whether that exchange is balanced looks different once Dorsay's own business interests are considered. Dorsay has led and proposed several real estate projects specifically in Northeast Pickering, the same emerging community the new centre is designed to serve as a hub for. That means a building carrying Dorsay's name, prominently sited as the gateway to a growing residential area and used for weddings, concerts, and community events, functions as sustained, highly targeted brand exposure to the exact population Dorsay is building homes to sell, for up to fifteen years, with an option to extend to thirty.

For comparison, \$66,666.66 a year is a modest sum next to the advertising and reputational value of having a company's name permanently attached to a landmark civic building in the exact market it is selling into. The City, meanwhile, also bears the ongoing cost of insuring the facility with Dorsay named as an additional insured, a cost not offset by the \$1,000,000 contribution and not disclosed in the agreement.

None of this means the agreement is improper. Naming rights sponsorships are a standard municipal financing tool, and a sponsor receiving brand value in return for its contribution is the normal, intended structure of this kind of deal. But the comparison is worth making plainly. The City gains a modest, fixed revenue stream toward a \$65 million facility. Dorsay gains fifteen to thirty years of prominent brand placement at the centre of the exact community it is actively developing and marketing homes in. Residents can reasonably ask whether \$1,000,000 reflects the real value of that exposure, or whether a larger contribution was warranted given Dorsay's direct commercial stake in the surrounding area.

What We Do Not Yet Know

- This agreement was approved by Council in an open, public session on June 23, 2025, and publicly announced by the City on July 1, 2025. What has not yet been reviewed is the underlying staff report, including whether it contained a market valuation or comparable naming rights benchmarks supporting the \$1,000,000 figure.
- The actual dollar cost to the City of the liability insurance required under the agreement.
- Why the agreement was not signed until nearly two months after its term had begun.
- Whether Schedule B, the signage and drawing schedule referenced throughout the agreement, was included in the City's file, since it was not part of the eleven pages released.

Why This Matters

Naming rights agreements are a common way for municipalities to offset the cost of building public facilities, and there is nothing inherently improper about a City entering into one. But a fifteen year, seven figure commitment, with an option to extend to thirty years, is a significant, long term obligation made in residents' name. Residents deserve to see exactly how it was structured, what it costs the City beyond the headline number, and how it was approved.

This report is part of an ongoing effort to make City of Pickering spending and governance more transparent to the people who fund it. Further reports will follow as additional Freedom of Information requests are answered.

Source and Methodology

This report is based on a single record, the signed Naming Rights Agreement between the City of Pickering and Dorsay Development Corporation, released in full and without redaction by the City Clerk's office in response to Freedom of Information Request No. 2026-38. The full agreement is a public record and is available to any resident on request. This report reflects a plain language reading of that document. It is not a legal opinion, and it does not allege that any individual or organization acted improperly. It is intended to help residents understand the actual terms of an agreement made using public assets.