

Breaking: What's Behind Half a Million Dollars in Integrity Costs?

A plain-language look at the City of Pickering's Code of Conduct, Integrity Commissioner, and workplace investigation spending, obtained via Freedom of Information request 2026-34.

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The Headline Number

- Between January 1, 2022 and June 30, 2026, the City of Pickering paid \$535,328.55 to outside firms for Code of Conduct, Integrity Commissioner, and workplace investigation matters.
- That spending has grown from \$3,882.82 in 2022 to \$223,202.73 in 2025, an increase of more than 50 times in three years.
- The first 6 months of 2026 already total \$113,397.45, more than all of 2022 and 2023 combined.

Where the Money Went

- Legal Services (2022 to 2024): \$100,304.87
- Human Resources (2025 to 2026): \$145,496.64
- Clerk's Office (2023 to 2026): \$14,246.40
- Council Support (2025 to 2026): \$77,095.92
- General Government (2023 to 2026): \$198,184.72

Who Got Paid

- Principles Integrity, the City's own Integrity Commissioner: \$191,647.19
- Adair Goldblatt Bieber LLP, outside legal counsel: \$185,225.18
- Turnpenney Milne LLP, harassment investigation counsel: \$126,320.99
- Aird & Berlis LLP, harassment investigation counsel (2026): \$19,175.65
- Torys LLP, outside legal counsel: \$12,959.54

A Likely Connection Worth Confirming

City Council minutes from August 12, 2025, obtained in an earlier records request, show the Integrity Commissioner presenting what was described as the sixth report regarding Councillor Lisa Robinson, resulting in a 90 day suspension of her Council salary. Those same minutes mention multiple staff members who were subject to allegations by Councillor Robinson.

The financial records show 2025 as by far the most expensive year on record for this category, and show Human Resources hiring outside harassment investigation counsel for the first time in mid-2025. The timing lines up closely, but the released records do not name the specific matter behind every charge, and this report does not claim to prove the connection. It is a fair question for the City to answer directly.

Worth Knowing

- A \$340.30 charge in the 2022 Legal Services record is not clearly itemized with its own date or description.
- Some 2026 figures include a charge dated after the June 30, 2026 cutoff that was requested.
- A \$3,288.18 charge to Council Support was reversed the same day it was issued, netting to zero, most likely a routine billing correction.

What I Will Do as Mayor

As Mayor, I will curb these outrageous and unnecessary costs to taxpayers. I will push for a clear public accounting of what is driving this spending, tighter oversight of how outside counsel is retained and billed, and a real plan to bring these costs down, so public money goes toward the services residents rely on, not an ever growing legal bill.

Why This Matters

Integrity oversight and workplace investigations exist to protect staff and uphold standards, and spending in this area is not automatically a problem. But a fiftyfold increase in three years, now running at over \$100,000 every 6 months, is real money that comes from taxpayers. Residents deserve to know what is driving it and whether the City has a plan to manage it.

Where This Came From

This summary is based on 5 financial records obtained directly from the City of Pickering through a formal Freedom of Information request (Request No. 2026-34), released in full with no redactions. The records are public and available to any resident on request.

A Note on This Summary

This fact sheet reflects a plain-language reading of financial records released by the City. It is not a legal opinion, and where it draws a connection to a specific matter, that connection is offered as a reasonable question for the City to confirm, not as a proven fact.