

Breaking: Half a Million Dollars, The City's Integrity and Workplace Investigation Costs

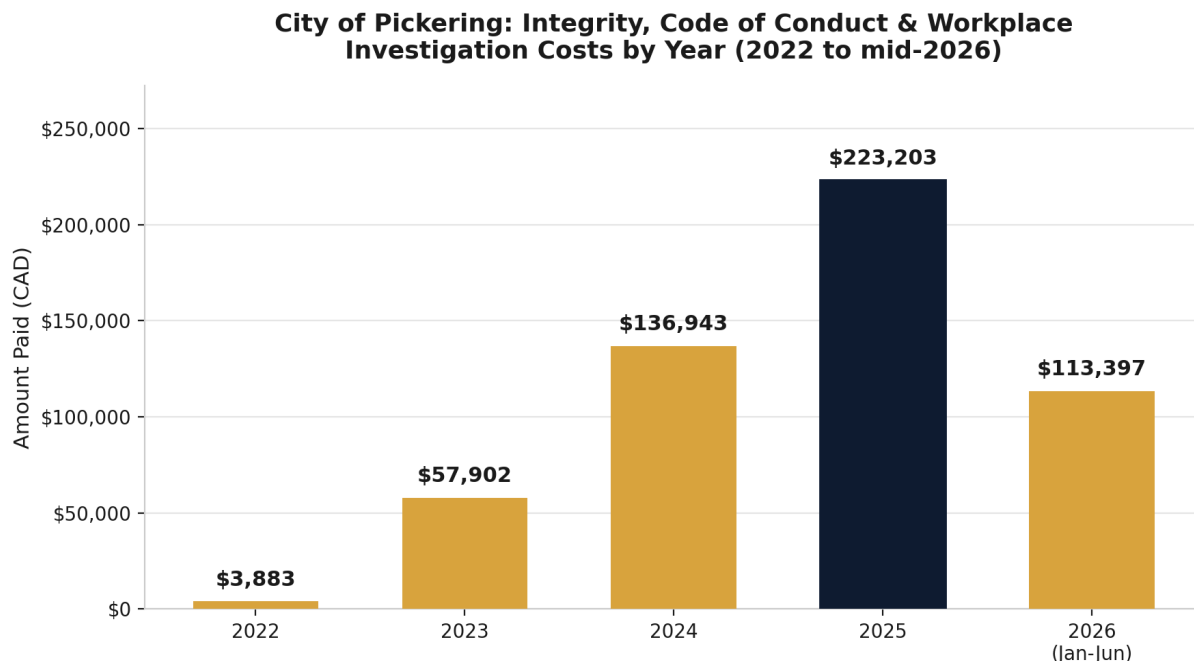
A detailed look at what the City of Pickering has spent on Code of Conduct, Integrity Commissioner, and workplace investigation matters since 2022, obtained through a Freedom of Information request. Prepared by Shaun Rickard, Candidate for Mayor, City of Pickering.

Overview

In response to Freedom of Information Request No. 2026-34, the City of Pickering released five financial records covering all amounts paid to external parties in connection with Council Code of Conduct, Integrity Commissioner matters, and related workplace investigations, for the period January 1, 2022 to June 30, 2026. The records were released in full, with no redactions, and span five City cost centres: Legal Services, Human Resources, the Clerk's Office, Council Support, and General Government.

Across those five records, the City paid a combined total of **\$535,328.55** to external firms for integrity, code of conduct, and workplace investigation related work over roughly four and a half years.

The Trend: A Steep Increase



Spending in this category has grown sharply, from under \$4,000 in 2022 to over \$223,000 in 2025, an increase of more than fifty times in three years. The first six months of 2026 alone (\$113,397.45) already exceed the full-year totals for 2022, 2023, and most of 2024 combined, putting 2026 on pace to rival or exceed 2025 if spending continues at the same rate.

Spending by Department

Department	Period Covered	Total Paid
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
Total	2022 to 2026	\$535,328.55

Spending by Firm

Five external firms were paid under this category. Principles Integrity is the City's sitting Integrity Commissioner. The other four are outside law firms retained for specific investigations and legal advice connected to code of conduct and workplace matters.

Firm	Role	Total Paid
Principles Integrity	City's Integrity Commissioner (retainer, advice, investigations)	\$191,647.19
Turnpenney Milne LLP	Harassment investigation counsel (HR)	\$126,320.99
Adair Goldblatt Bieber LLP	Outside legal counsel, code complaints and investigations	\$185,225.18
Aird & Berlis LLP	Harassment investigation counsel (HR, 2026)	\$19,175.65
Torys LLP	Outside legal counsel, code complaints and investigations	\$12,959.54

A Likely Connection Worth Confirming

City Council minutes from August 12, 2025, previously obtained through a separate Freedom of Information request, record that the City's Integrity Commissioner presented what was described as the sixth recommendation report regarding Councillor Lisa Robinson, resulting in a 90 day suspension of her Council salary. Those same minutes reference multiple staff members having been subject to allegations by Councillor Robinson.

The financial records reviewed here show 2025 as, by a wide margin, the most expensive year on record for integrity and code of conduct related spending, and show Human Resources engaging

outside harassment investigation counsel (Turnpenney Milne LLP, later joined by Aird and Berlis LLP) for the first time in mid-2025, specifically tied to a Respect in the Workplace policy investigation. The timing lines up closely enough that a connection is plausible, but the released records do not name the specific matter or Councillor involved in every case, and other, unrelated code of conduct matters may also be reflected in these totals. This is a reasonable question for the City to answer directly, not a conclusion this report draws on its own.

Items Worth Flagging

- A \$340.30 charge in the 2022 Legal Services record is included in the year's total but is not clearly itemized with its own date or description in the released record.
- The Council Support 2026 figures include a charge dated July 6, 2026, which falls after the June 30, 2026 cutoff stated in the original request.
- A \$3,288.18 charge to Council Support dated January 5, 2026 was reversed in full the same day, netting to zero. This appears to be a routine billing correction, but is noted here for completeness.
- Several records show invoices posted in a different calendar year than the service period they cover (for example, a January 2024 posting appearing in a 2023 total), which is common in accrual accounting but worth keeping in mind when comparing year to year figures.

Why This Matters

Integrity Commissioner oversight and workplace investigations exist to protect staff and uphold standards of conduct, and spending in this area is not inherently a problem. But a more than fiftyfold increase in three years, now running at over \$100,000 every six months, is a material and growing cost to taxpayers. Residents are entitled to understand what is driving that increase, whether it reflects one prolonged matter or several, and whether the City has a plan to manage these costs going forward.

What I Will Do as Mayor

As Mayor, I will act to curb these outrageous and unnecessary costs to taxpayers. Integrity oversight matters, but a fiftyfold increase in three years is not a cost of doing business, it is a sign that something in how the City handles these matters needs to change. 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 plan to bring these costs down, so that public money goes toward services residents rely on, not an ever growing legal bill.

Source and Methodology

This report is based on five financial records released in full and without redaction by the City of Pickering Clerk's office in response to Freedom of Information Request No. 2026-34, covering Legal Services, Human Resources, the Clerk's Office, Council Support, and General Government cost centres for the period January 1,

2022 to June 30, 2026. All totals in this report were calculated directly from the line items in those records. The connection drawn to the Councillor Robinson matter is based on a separate set of City Council minutes obtained in an earlier request and is presented as a plausible link for the City to confirm, not a verified fact. This report is not a legal or forensic accounting opinion.