



Committee Report

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	February 26, 2026
Subject / Report No:	CCR-CW-04-26
Title:	Grey County Closed Meeting Investigator
Prepared by:	Brittany Rier, Deputy Clerk
Reviewed by:	Tara Warder, Clerk
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	

Recommendation

1. That Report CCR-CW-04-26 regarding Grey County's Closed Meeting Investigator be received; and
2. That Grey County terminate its agreement with LAS for closed meeting investigator services effective immediately due to the program ending in 2026; and
3. That a by-law be brought forward for County Council's consideration to appoint Principles Integrity as the closed meeting investigator for Grey County.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to appoint a new closed meeting investigator and to notify Council that Grey County's Closed Meeting Investigator, Local Authority Services (LAS), is ending their closed meeting investigator program as of December 31, 2026. This report recommends that staff terminate the agreement with LAS for these services and Grey County change their closed meeting investigator to Principles Integrity.

Background and Discussion

In February 2026, staff received notification from Local Authority Services (LAS) of the termination of their Closed Meeting Investigator program as of December 31, 2026, given the number of options now available for investigators.

Currently, Grey County pays LAS a retainer of \$250 each year and LAS retains law firm Aird and Berlis to conduct any closed meeting investigations that arise. Grey County is responsible for costs associated with an investigation which are paid directly to Aird and Berlis.

LAS was appointed as our closed meeting investigator in 2007 when the [agreement](#) was signed. The [By-law 4460-07](#) was enacted for a two-year term starting in January 2008 and has

been continuously renewed since that time. Section 239.2 of the Municipal Act, 2001, authorizes municipalities to appoint an investigator for closed meeting purposes. The Ontario Ombudsman is the closed meeting investigator for municipalities that have not appointed one.

Staff have contacted Principles Integrity to see if they are able to take Grey County on and become our closed meeting investigator and they confirmed their availability. If Council chooses to support this recommendation, there would be no additional retainer as Grey County already pays them one as part of their role as our Integrity Commissioner which is also a requirement of the Municipal Act, 2001 under Section 223.3. Grey County would continue to pay additional investigation costs on an hourly basis if there is an investigation.

County Council has the following options:

1. Continue with LAS until the end of 2026 and pursue a new investigator in 2027;
2. Pursue a new investigator prior to the year's end and save the \$250 retainer with LAS;
3. Default to use the Ombudsman as our closed Meeting Investigator where no investigator is appointed. There is no cost to use the Ombudsman's services.

Staff are recommending that County Council terminate the agreement with LAS immediately in order to transfer our closed meeting investigator to Principles Integrity. The current agreement with Principles Integrity can be amended to incorporate closed meeting investigator services with no additional retainer.

Staff are confident in their services to date as Grey County's Integrity Commissioners. They provide prompt and dependable advice and staff utilize their services from time to time to seek recommendations on how to handle certain governance matters.

Though the Ombudsman's office is a no cost service for closed meeting investigations, staff feel that there is a benefit to retaining a firm who has known, practical experience in the municipal field, is solution focused and also prioritizes cooperation and working towards best practices and improvements with the municipality.

Legislated Requirements

Section 239 of the Municipal Act, 2001, authorizes municipalities to appoint an independent investigator to review complaints regarding closed-session meetings. The Ontario Ombudsman is the investigator by default if an appointment has not been made.

Legal Considerations

There are none.

Financial and Resource Implications

The updates to this by-law will have a cost savings of the \$250 retainer fee for the 2026 year.

Any person can request an investigation of whether a municipality or local board has complied with closed meeting rules. Closed meeting costs are difficult to predict as investigations are complaint driven, however Grey County has had a total of three closed meeting investigations and costs vary depending on the nature of the complaint.

If Principles Integrity is appointed as Grey County's investigator, the same hourly rate that applies to their Integrity Commissioner services will apply for closed meeting investigations.

There would be no cost if Council opted to use the Ombudsman as the closed meeting investigator.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal –CAO's Office
 - AODA Compliance (describe)
 - Contribution to Climate Change Action Plan Targets (describe)
- External

Appendices and Attachments

None