

**City of Maple Ridge
Office of the Integrity Commissioner (“OIC”)**

**ANNUAL REPORT:
July 16, 2024 – December 31, 2024**

Anita K. Atwal, Integrity Commissioner

April 30, 2025

Message from the Integrity Commissioner

On July 16, 2024, I was appointed by the City of Maple Ridge's Mayor and Council as the first independent Integrity Commissioner for the City. It is a privilege to serve in this capacity and to support the City's commitment to good governance, ethical conduct, and accountability.



I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Mayor and Council for their dedication to establishing the Office of the Integrity Commissioner (OIC) and for their respect of its independence. I also wish to thank City staff for their invaluable assistance in supporting the implementation of the OIC. While the OIC is independent from the City, staff provided essential administrative and structural support when called upon, helping to bring the OIC to life.

The OIC plays a vital role in promoting public trust in local government. Residents deserve a Council that operates with honesty, integrity, respect, transparency, leadership, collaboration and accountability. The OIC is a key mechanism in upholding these principles. As I continue in this role, I remain committed to fostering public confidence that the City is meeting its ethical and governance responsibilities.

Between July and December 2024, I accomplished the following with the support of staff:

- Supported amendments to the Code of Conduct Bylaw No. 7976-2023 (the "Bylaw");
- Delivered training to Mayor and Council on the Bylaw and the legal principles underpinning key provisions of the Bylaw;
- Considered policy to support the implementation of the Bylaw;
- Considered the infrastructure to receive and manage complaints;
- Created the Integrity Commissioner's webpage; and,
- Received and responded to four inquiries/complaints.

Between July and December 2024, the foundation for the OIC was firmly established. At the start of 2025, educational resources and a complaint form along with the Privacy Policy were added to the Office's webpage. Looking ahead to the remainder of 2025, my priorities include launching public outreach initiatives, remaining available to the Mayor and Council for advice and recommendations, continuing to respond to inquiries and complaints and provide training as requested.

I am proud to serve as the City's Integrity Commissioner and remain committed to advancing the principles of integrity and accountability. I look forward to building on the progress to date and continuing to work collaboratively with the Mayor, Council, City staff, and the community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anita K. Atwal', written in a cursive style.

Anita K. Atwal

Integrity Commissioner

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Bylaw and Policies.....	4
Establishment of the Office.....	5
Education and Advice to Elected Officials.....	5
Complaints.....	5
Looking Ahead and Closing Comments.....	6

Introduction

The appointment of the Integrity Commissioner came after Council adopted the Bylaw in January 2024, which outlined expectations for ethical behaviour among the City's elected officials.

This annual report to the Mayor and Council includes a summary of the Integrity Commissioner's activities from the date of my appointment (July 16, 2024) to December 31, 2024. This is the first annual report. Although the Bylaw does not contemplate an Annual Report, it is being provided as a form of good governance and transparency.

Bylaw and Policies

The Integrity Commissioner operates under the Bylaw and only has the jurisdiction provided to it by Mayor and Council in the Bylaw. Pursuant to section 43 of the Bylaw, the duties and responsibilities of the Integrity Commissioner are to:

- a. Provide advice and recommendations to a Council Member on questions of compliance with the Bylaw, where requested to do so by a Council Member;
- b. Provide advice and recommendations to a Council Member, regarding their compliance or disclosure obligations under a provincial statute, such as the *Financial Disclosure Act*, or other such statute that imposes an express compliance or disclosure obligation on the Council Member due to their position as an elected official, where requested to do so by a Council Member;
- c. Deliver educational programs regarding the role of the Integrity Commissioner and the ethical obligations and responsibilities of Council Members under the Bylaw;
- d. Adopt procedures, policies and protocols as necessary to aid in the resolution of complaints under the Bylaw;
- e. Assist with informal resolution of complaints;
- f. Receive and assess all complaints to determine if the complaint must be rejected, closed, resolved informally or investigated;
- g. Investigate and conduct inquiries into violations of the Bylaw;
- h. Report to Council as to whether a Council Member has breached the Bylaw; and,
- i. Make recommendations on an appropriate remedy if a Council Member has breached the Bylaw.

Pursuant to section 10 of the Bylaw, the Bylaw only applies to Council Members, which is defined as the "Mayor and Councillors for the City of Maple Ridge." Pursuant to sections 45 and 46 of the Bylaw, complaints against Council Members may only be brought by Council Members, Staff, Committee Members or Volunteers (see definitions in section 9 of the Bylaw). At the inception of the Office, there was understandably confusion with respect to who is entitled to make complaints under the Bylaw and who complaints may be made against. As set out above, my jurisdiction solely relates to determining whether the Mayor or Councillors for the City of Maple Ridge breached the Bylaw. Ongoing education and outreach will assist in resolving the confusion surrounding the role and jurisdiction of the Integrity Commissioner.

One of my first tasks as Integrity Commissioner involved a thorough review of the Bylaw. I recommended amendments to the Bylaw to correct references to section numbers throughout. On October 8, 2024, these amendments were adopted by Mayor and Council.

To assist in implementing the Bylaw, I worked on creating a Privacy Policy, which was finalized in 2025: [Policy Number 2025-001 – Privacy and Confidentiality](#). This policy applies to all records compiled and created by the Integrity Commissioner when carrying out their duties and responsibilities pursuant to section 43 of the Bylaw.

Establishment of the Office

With the assistance of City staff, the Integrity Commissioner [webpage](#) was developed. This webpage provides information on the Integrity Commissioner's role and responsibilities, the complaints process and filing a complaint. It also includes links to the Bylaw and Policy Number 2025-001 – Privacy and Confidentiality. The webpage also includes my contact information.

In early 2025, a complaint form and additional educational information, including infographics on the complaints process, were added to the webpage. The webpage will be updated as necessary throughout the remainder of my term as Integrity Commissioner.

Education and Advice to Elected Officials

At the outset of my appointment, a top priority was delivering educational programs regarding the role of the Integrity Commissioner and the ethical obligations and responsibilities of Council Members under the Bylaw. This priority is consistent with section 43(a) of the Bylaw.

I delivered a full day of training to Mayor and Council on October 29, 2024. During this session, we worked through the Bylaw and the obligations of Mayor and Council and engaged in several scenarios requiring application of the Bylaw to fact-patterns. We also discussed relevant provisions of the *Community Charter*, SBC 2003, c 26, the *Local Government Act*, RSBC 2015, c 1 and relevant case law. There was also a specific session on conflicts of interest and the law in relation to the same.

Pursuant to sections 43(a) and (b) of the Bylaw, I continue to be available to Mayor and Council to provide advice and recommendations on questions of compliance with the Bylaw as well as compliance or disclosure obligations under a provincial statute, when requested.

Complaints

As per section 43(f) of the Bylaw, I received four inquiries/complaints in 2024. I processed each inquiry/complaint, with 3 closing prior to December 31, 2024 and one closing in January 2025. The complaint that was closed in 2025 will be addressed in my 2025 annual report.

The three inquiries/complaints that were closed in 2024 were closed following a preliminary assessment as I determined each one was outside the scope and/or jurisdiction of the Bylaw. The fact that each inquiry/complaint fell outside of the jurisdiction of the Bylaw reinforces the need for continued delivery of educational programs regarding the role of the Integrity Commissioner and the scope of the Bylaw.

As each inquiry/complaint was closed following a preliminary assessment, I was not required to investigate or conduct inquiries into violations of the Bylaw, report to Council as to whether a Council Member breached the Bylaw or make recommendations on an appropriate remedy when a Council Member breached the Bylaw.

Looking Ahead and Closing Comments

The first several months of my appointment, which included developing the complaints process, recommending amendments to the Bylaw, considering policies to support the Bylaw, delivering training to Mayor and Council, creating a webpage and receiving and closing three complaints, were a success.

Now that the complaints process has been implemented, dealing with future complaints and investigations will be more streamlined. In the next year, I look forward to delivering education, to engaging with the community and continuing to support Mayor and Council when requested by providing advice, recommendations and educational programs.

My primary goals are to uphold the objectives of the Bylaw and to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the Integrity Commissioner with impartiality and independence. I look forward to continuing my work with the City, Mayor, Council, and the residents of Maple Ridge in support of transparent and accountable governance.