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The price tag for seeking legal action against Elvena remains a mystery

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Vancouver law firm went after 75-year-old woman

Elvena Slump, left with husband Ernie

Penticton taxpayers might never find out the true cost of legal action against Penticton senior Elvena Slump who penned a series of letters to local politicians and senior administrators.

Just prior to the Labour Day weekend, Slump received a letter from the Vancouver law firm of Harper Grey LLP demanding an apology for critical statements made towards CAO Annette Antoniak, chief financial officer Colin Fisher and communications manager Simone Blais. The

law firm described Slump's email, which was carbon copied to the Penticton Herald (but not published) "defamatory and unfounded."

Slump refused to apologize and in turn hired her own lawyer and held a press conference on the steps of city hall. A fundraiser hosted by businessman David Prystay raised \$1,650 for her legal expenses which she instead donated to the food bank and South Okanagan Women in Need Society.

The City appears to have backed down as Slump, nor her lawyer Paul Varga of Pearce Taylor Schneiderat in Penticton, have since heard back.

Penticton Mayor Garry Litke previously stated that other citizens received similar letters quoting Worksafe BC regulations which prohibit any form of bullying in the workplace. The mayor agreed that Slump did not make any physical threats.

Litke described Harper Grey as "the top libel lawyers" in B.C. and said he was uncertain what the cost of the action against Slump would be.

The Herald filed a freedom of information request asking what the final bill was. The City responded after the 30-day deadline had expired, and the request was declined.

"With regards to your request for letters from Harper Grey LLP and the costs associated with those letters, I am unable to provide you with any information as it falls in its entirety under the exception for Legal Advice and is subject to solicitor client privilege," wrote Dana Schmidt, corporate officer for the City of Penticton.

The City also declined a request by The Herald for copies of similar letters sent to other citizens and the cost involved (with the name of the recipient blacked out.)

The Herald filed an appeal, Friday, noting that not only did the City receive "advice" but it took a definite action by sending Slump a letter.

Several lawyers contacted by The Herald on the condition of anonymity said based on Litke's description and the strong reputation of Harper Grey, the action against Slump could cost upwards of \$10,000 depending on the amount of preparation time that was required.