2017 End of Year Report

Elections Office, Carleton University Students' Association

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Carleton University

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The following is the end of year report of the 2017 Elections Office, prepared by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO). This report will proceed with a summary of the Elections process covering the 2017 CUSA General Election and the proposed referendum. Recommendations have been made to ensure that the election process remains free and fair in the future.

**CUSAs General Election:**

**Timeline:**

Nominations: Jan 18 – 20th

Blackout dates: Jan 23 & 24

Campaigning: Jan 25 – 31st

Executive debate: Jan 30th

Constituent debate: Jan 31st

Voting: February 1st and 2nd

**Summary:**

Overall, the election process for this year’s CUSA general elections went relatively smoothly. 37.2% of the student body voted, and 9,849 total votes were cast. Students received ballots via their Carleton emails, and polling stations were set up across campus.

**Ranked Voting:**

Before the election period commenced, the Elections Office received a recommendation that ranked voting not be implemented this year, as the system had not been adequately tested beforehand. The Chief Electoral Officer raised this concern to Council, and Council ultimately decided to not proceed with ranked voting for the 2017 General Elections.
Nomination Period:

As in years past, the Elections Office held a pre-nomination period meeting to inform candidates and slates of the rules and practices which would be in place during the nomination period. The turnout for this meeting was relatively low. However, this meeting was a beneficial for the potential candidates who attended as they had to opportunity to ask questions and address concerns however it was a good opportunity to answer questions and address their concerns.

Once nomination period officially opened, each student seeking nomination was given a “nomination package” which included nomination sheets, policies and procedures. The Elections Office kept the front page of each potential candidates package, and once signatures sheets were completed they were attached to the candidate’s sheets.

Potential council candidates were required to have at least two signatures per faculty seat of which they seeked nomination from of students from that faculty. (i.e. FASS potential candidates required signatures from FASS students).

Potential executive candidates were required to have at least 50 student signature. Completed packages were sent to the Registrar’s Office at the end of each nomination day. Only completed packages were sent to the Registrar’s Office.

A single Electoral Complaint was filed during the Nomination Period, but the Elections Office found that no violation had occurred.

Campaign Period:

Pre-campaign meeting:

The Elections Office held a pre-campaign meeting to outline to rules and guidelines of the 2017 CUSA Elections, and to introduce the Elections Officers to the candidates. This was a good opportunity to go through all policies and to answer questions as they arose. The majority
of the questions from candidates were centered on the Social Media Guidelines, and the Official Budget Guidelines.

**Issue:** Accessibility of information provided at the pre-campaign meeting

**Recommendation:** At the campaign meeting, many technical questions were asked about policies and procedures regarding the campaign process. At the time, the Elections Office believed that simply answering the questions on the spot would be enough clarification, as the meeting was mandatory for all candidates.

One of the findings of the Election Office during the pre-campaign meeting was that no campaigning was permitted in classrooms, with the exception of class talks. Therefore, distributing material and soliciting votes by other means would not be tolerated. One candidate was given a violation for breaking this rule. However, a complaint was filed to Equity Services, because by not providing a written summary of the question period constituted a break with AODA compliance. Therefore, it is recommended in the future that a written summary of all questions asked be provided to all candidates.

**Campaign Period:**

The Campaign period was advertised in the Charlatan, as well as through CUSA’s social media platforms and the Elections Office’s own Facebook page. We made use to “boosted posts” on our Facebook page in an effort to get our messages out to more people. Additionally, the Charlatan worked with our Office to film campaign videos which were later posted on The Charlatan’s website. These videos were short, and served more as an introduction of the candidate than a campaign pitch. Candidates could also submit a short bio of themselves which was also posted on the Charlatan website.

There were many Electoral Complaints submitted during the Campaign period. Very few resulted in offences. Unlike in previous years, no candidate or slate was disqualified.
**Issue:** Use of Electoral Complaints as means of negative campaigning

**Recommendation:** In terms of violations, many complaints were filed by all teams and candidates that the Elections Office deemed frivolous. In fact, the Elections Office felt that the Electoral Complaints forms were used by some candidates as a way to slow down the work of our Office. The Elections Office was hired and ratified by CUSA Council. Therefore, the Elections Office should have the prerogative to use their judgement and purge blatantly frivolous and unsubstantiated electoral complaints. Furthermore, if no violation is found by the Elections Office in an Electoral Complaint, then the finding should be final, without additional appeal.

**Issue:** Wearing campaign-related clothing

**Recommendation:** The Elections Office found that wearing campaign-related materials themselves was not a form of campaigning. The issue arose because some candidates wore campaign pins or shirts in businesses or in the service centers, where campaigning is not permitted. We believe that campaigning is an active action. Under the current rules, actively soliciting votes in a business or service centre is banned, and we enforced that rule. However, using the services of a business or service centre while wearing campaigning materials is in itself not a violation.

With that being said, there is a fear that this would permit service centre coordinators and Rooster’s staff to wear campaign related material. To mitigate this, the Elections Office recommends that council create a clear directive banning all CUSA employees from participating in the elections process, unless they take a leave of absence to do so.
Debates:

The Executive candidate debate was very highly attended. The debate questions were prepared by the Charlatan and approved by the CEO. The debate itself was moderated by the Editor-in-Chief of the Charlatan, and the CEO.

The councilor candidate debate was not as well attended. The CEO asked those candidates who were interested in attending the debate to RSVP with the Elections Office so that suitable questions could be prepared.

The Executive Debate was covered extensively by the campus media. The Charlatan had many reporters on the scene as the debate progressed, and the debate was streamed live via Facebook.

In order to book the space in the atrium, a Risk Management Form had to be completed with Campus Safety. Be sure to do this far enough in advance because they can take some time to be processed.

**Issue:** Crowd control / Noise

**Recommendations:**

Although very well attended, this year’s Executive Debate resembled more of a rally than a clear debate. Some students brought drums and whistles to cheer their preferred candidates with, and often times the crowds noise levels exceeded the decibel meter. Although enthusiasm and excitement is much appreciated in the process, it is recommended that in order to maintain crowd control that the debate take place in a setting like the Kailash Mital Theatre, where seating can be controlled. In order to maintain fairness, it is recommended that each executive candidate receive a set amount of tickets that they can give to their supporters to attend, while also having a large pool of tickets available to the general public.
**Issue:** Targeted questions during the open mic period.

**Recommendations:** Students should have the opportunity to ask candidates questions. However, at this year’s executive debate it was evident that an open mic can turn controversial. We maintained a clear policy - only policy and platform related questions would be tolerated, and as soon as this was breached we decided to end the open mic period. Therefore, it is recommended to hold a “meet and greet” type event for students where they may ask candidates the questions that they have.

**Voting Days:**

Once again, voting took place through students’ Cmail via the online ballots developed and distributed by Carleton’s ORIP. Emails containing the undergraduate ballot were sent out February 1st, 2017 between 6:00AM and 7:30AM.

There were ten polling stations across campus during the general elections to help facilitate students participation. Voter turnout was very high for this election, with an overall participation rate of 37.2%.

At the close of voting, each candidate was allowed a scrutineer to come to the meeting with the ORIP analyst and view the results of the election. The Unofficial Results were posted roughly an hour after polls closed.

**Issue:** Vote of No Confidence:

**Recommendation:** This year, the Elections Office included the option of “vote of no confidence” on the ballot, which was treated similarly to an abstention. This “vote of no confidence” was added because it was an opportunity for students to voice their dissatisfaction with the Association. Given how popular of a choice it was, the Elections Office recommends that this option be available in future elections.
Final results - 2017 CUSA General Elections

Executive:

President: Zameer Masjedee
Vice President (Finance): Gavin Resch
Vice President (Internal): Cat Kelly
Vice President (Student Services): Alexis Oundo
Vice President (Student Issues): Alexandra Noguera
Vice President (Student Life): Abdullah Jaber

Constituency Representatives:

Sprott School of Business
Daniel Giacca
Tom Whyte

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Kennedy Aliu
Lily Akagbosu
Claudia Calagoure-Perna
Julia Van Drie

Faculty of Engineering and Design:
Michael Aide-Akhibi
Mahmoud Sabry
Katerina Kouloufakos
Andre N. Lawrence
Emma Maddock
Andrew Vincencio

Faculty of Science:
Nima Dadar
John Haddad
Yvonne Osagie
Hassan Zafar

Faculty of Public Affairs:
Ryan Clancy
Jenny Giang
Brittanie Jonidi
Julia Parsons
Connor Thibodeau
Cameron Wales
Hannah Waye

Special Student: Brendan Mcloughlin
Referendum:

This year, the Elections Office did not hold a referendum. However, it is important to note that the CPRC did submit an official question on behalf of the Student Alliance for Mental Health (SAMH). In March, the CEO was informed that SAMH had decided to withdraw their question.

The question was:

"Do you support the Student Alliance for Mental Health in becoming a levy organization, at an annual fee of $1.75, attached to CPI, and with the choice to opt-out, to help expand its mental health programming with the goals of acquiring an office space, creating two part-time student work opportunities, and establishing a peer support network?"

Issue: Collection of signatures.

Recommendation: There was a question regarding when student signatures for referendums are to be collected. Our interpretation was that pursuant to Section 10.7 of the Electoral Code, at least 1000 signatures would need to be collected in the nomination period for any referendum question dealing with the collection, alteration, and / or reimbursement of student fees. However, there is confusion as to when this nomination period occurs - whether it is before or after a question is submitted to the Elections Office.

The interpretation of the Elections Office is that a nomination will occur following the presentation and approval of the writ of referendum to council. Therefore, we operated under the assumption that as no writ of referendum had been brought to council, the nomination period had not occurred. Signatures need to be collected during the nomination period.

It is recommended that Council provide a directive that explains the following process: Referendums are initiated by a question, which is brought to the Elections Office.
Office then prepares a writ of referendum that is approved by Council. Following approval from council, signatures are then collected in the nomination period.