

CUSA X elections

CHIEF RETURNING OFFICER RULING

Carleton University Students' Association General Elections 2026

Date of Ruling: February 17th, 2026

Ruling Code: 2026GE-ND-011

This public report is issued pursuant to Section 67(a) of the CUSA Electoral Code. It summarizes the outcome of a ruling made by the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) in relation to a review conducted during the Campaign Period of the 2026 CUSA General Election.

I. Authority

This Notice of Decision is issued pursuant to the authority of the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) under the CUSA Electoral Code, including but not limited to Sections 59, 63, 66, and Schedule IV.

II. Candidate

Aryan Singh

Presidential Candidate, 2026 CUSA General Election

III. Standard of Proof

Pursuant to Section 58 of the Electoral Code, the burden of proof for electoral offences is beyond a reasonable doubt.

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Major offences require proof of both actus reus (the prohibited act) and mens rea (the requisite intent or knowledge) beyond a reasonable doubt.

IV. Summary of Review

On February 8, 2026, the Office of the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) issued a Notice of Complaint concerning alleged conduct occurring on February 5, 2026, at approximately 2:00 PM in the MacOdrum Library (3rd floor) during the voting period of the 2026 CUSA General Election.

The complaint alleged that an individual campaigning in support of the candidate engaged in conduct including:

- Campaigning inside a university library;
- Pressuring electors to vote;
- Requesting proof of voting;
- Handling an elector's device to cast a vote;
- Directing ballot selections.

The candidate was notified of the allegations and provided full opportunity to respond. A written response was received and considered in full.

The identity of the complainant remains confidential in accordance with the Electoral Code.

V. Findings

After reviewing the complaint, clarifications, and the candidate's written response, the CRO determined the following beyond a reasonable doubt:

1. Campaigning Occurred in a Prohibited Area



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The evidence established that an individual explicitly identified herself as campaigning on behalf of the candidate while inside a university library.

University libraries are designated prohibited campaigning areas under the Electoral Code.

The conduct described constituted campaigning within a prohibited space.

2. Interference with the Voting Process Occurred

The complainant reported that the individual:

- Asked electors to open their ballots,
- Took control of an elector's device,
- Directed ballot selection,
- Requested proof of voting.

Such conduct interferes with ballot secrecy and elector independence and falls within Schedule IV, s.1(a) as actions that could reasonably be expected to interfere with the conduct of free and fair elections.

The CRO determined that the evidence established this conduct beyond a reasonable doubt.


3. Candidate Responsibility

The candidate denied knowledge or authorization and provided a timeline showing he was not physically present. However, physical presence is not required for responsibility to attach.

Under Section 1 of the Electoral Code, "campaign team" includes individuals who engage in campaigning under the reasonable foresight of the candidate, whether officially registered or not.

Additionally, during the All-Candidates Meeting, it was clearly communicated to all candidates that:

“Anyone campaigning for you = your responsibility.”



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The conduct in question:

- Was undertaken explicitly in support of the candidate,
- Occurred during the voting period,
- Materially benefitted the candidate's campaign.

Responsibility therefore attached under the Code.

VI. Repeated Nature

A prior complaint (Complaint 005) involving similar allegations had been adjudicated earlier in the election period.

While Complaint 011 was independently assessed on its own evidentiary record, prior findings increase:

- Foreseeability,
- The duty of supervision,
- The expectation of preventative measures.

This consideration does not constitute double jeopardy. It informs the responsibility analysis only.

VII. Double Jeopardy Analysis

The decision imposed demerits under two distinct provisions:

1. Campaigning in a prohibited area (location-based offence);
2. Interference with free and fair elections (ballot integrity offence).

These provisions address separate legal harms and neither subsumes the other.

No double counting occurred.



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VIII. Penalties Imposed

Pursuant to Schedule IV of the Electoral Code:

- Campaigning in a prohibited area → 5 demerit points
- Interference with free and fair elections → 5 demerit points

Total: 10 Demerit Points

Under Section 71 of the Electoral Code:

Ten demerit points shall be the threshold for disqualification of a candidate.

Accordingly, the candidate was disqualified from the 2026 CUSA Presidential Election, subject to appeal.

IX. Appeal

In accordance with Schedule IV, s.2, the decision has been referred to the Appeals Committee for review.

