

CUSA X elections

CHIEF RETURNING OFFICER RULING

Carleton University Students' Association General Elections 2026

Date of Ruling: February 17th, 2026

Ruling Code: 2026GE-ND-009

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

Maxwell Heroux

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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No finding of violation is made unless the CRO is satisfied that each essential element of the alleged offence has been established to that standard.

IV. Summary of Review

On February 5, 2026, the Office of the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) received a formal complaint alleging multiple breaches of the CUSA Electoral Code by Maxwell Heroux, a candidate for President in the 2026 General Election.

The complaint raised concerns regarding:

1. Intimidation or coercive messaging directed at an elector;
2. Coordinated campaign planning and candidate recruitment efforts;
3. Undermining the Electoral Process;
4. Improper handling of nomination-related materials;
5. Failure to fully and accurately disclose campaign team involvement.

The Respondent was formally notified and provided an opportunity to respond. Written submissions, screenshots, interview evidence, audio recordings, and related communications were reviewed in full prior to the issuance of this decision.

The burden of proof under Section 58 of the Electoral Code is beyond a reasonable doubt.

V. Findings

1. Intimidation to Influence Support

(Schedule IV – Automatic Disqualification Offence)



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The CRO found beyond a reasonable doubt that the Respondent engaged in communication directed toward an elector during the campaign period that:

- Linked cooperation or assistance to preventing an undesirable electoral outcome;
- Framed electoral participation in morally conditional terms;
- Occurred immediately following a formal debate event;
- Was objectively capable of pressuring the elector in relation to election conduct.

The communication referenced the Respondent's opponent and implied that failure to assist the Respondent would result in a morally unacceptable candidate prevailing.

The CRO determined that a reasonable elector could interpret this as moral pressure tied to electoral support.

Under Schedule IV of the Electoral Code, use of intimidation to influence support constitutes an Automatic Disqualification offence.

Both the actus reus (the conduct) and mens rea (intent to influence support through that framing) were established beyond a reasonable doubt.

2. Coordinated Recruitment / Joint Campaign Efforts

(No Demerits Issued)

The complaint alleged coordinated recruitment and slate-like activity involving the Respondent and individuals later disclosed as campaign team members.

The evidence reviewed included:

- Audio recordings referencing joint efforts to secure nomination signatures within a specific faculty;
- References to bringing prospective candidates to specific locations for nomination processing;
- Coordinated discussions involving 2 registered campaign team members;
- Statements from a registered campaign team member indicating involvement from January 26 (start of campaign period);

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- Statements from the Respondent indicating the same timeline of induction.

However, the audio evidence and contextual materials demonstrated that coordination discussions and recruitment efforts occurred prior to the asserted January 26 date.

The CRO determined that:

- The Respondent, and 2 registered campaign team members were engaged in joint coordination efforts;
- These efforts related to nomination logistics and candidate recruitment;
- The timeline provided to the CRO during the investigation was inconsistent with the evidentiary record.

While these findings raised serious concerns regarding transparency and accuracy of disclosures, the CRO determined that the evidentiary threshold required to impose demerits under the slate or campaign-team disclosure provisions was not met beyond a reasonable doubt.

No demerits were issued on this ground.

3. Supplementary Findings

(No Demerits Issued)

During the investigation, both the Respondent and a registered campaign team member represented that campaign team involvement began on January 26, 2026.

The audio and contextual evidence reviewed suggested earlier coordination activity. The CRO finds that statements made during the investigation were materially inconsistent with the evidentiary record. Hence, the CRO finds that both the Respondent and a registered campaign team member of the Respondent lied to the CRO.

However, because the Notice of Complaint did not explicitly charge “failure to cooperate with CRO” as a standalone offence under Schedule IV, and in order to preserve procedural fairness, no separate demerits were imposed for this issue.

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The CRO nevertheless emphasizes that full candour with election officials is essential to the integrity of the process.

4. Nomination Material Handling

(No Demerits Issued)

The concerns regarding nomination-related material and whether personal information was shared beyond authorized individuals.

While concerns were reviewed, the CRO did not find sufficient evidence beyond a reasonable doubt to impose demerits under Schedule IV in relation to data exploitation or unauthorized disclosure.

No penalty was imposed on this ground.

VI. Penalties Issued

Under Schedule IV of the Electoral Code:

- Use of intimidation to influence support is classified as an Automatic Disqualification offence.
- Automatic disqualification carries ten (10) demerit points.
- Section 71 provides that accumulation of ten (10) demerit points results in disqualification.

Total Demerit Points Issued: 10

Result: Automatic Disqualification from the 2026 CUSA General Election for President

No additional demerits were imposed.

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VII. Appeal Information

In accordance with the Electoral Code, this decision will automatically be referred to the Appeals Committee for review.

VIII. Additional Information

A full Notice of Decision, containing the complete findings of fact, analysis, evidence considered, and rationale, has been provided directly to the candidate in accordance with Section 67(b) of the Electoral Code.

This public report is provided for transparency and does not include confidential or identifying information.