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Electoral violations mark early CUSA election

By Jane Gerster January 17 2013.

Tags: [A Better Carleton](#), [Alexander Golovko](#), [cusa](#), [CUSA elections](#), [health plan](#), [michael de luca](#), [Sunny Cohen](#)

Two electoral violations have been handed down before official campaigning for the Carleton University Students' Association (CUSA) elections is scheduled to begin Jan. 23.



CUSA council voted to move elections up to the end of January, instead of the usual February. (Photo by Oliver Sachgau)

Chief electoral officer Sunny Cohen has given one electoral violation to current CUSA president and presidential nominee Alexander Golovko Jan. 16 for a letter sent days earlier to members of the union's health plan.

The other violation went to councillor candidate Arun Smith for gathering nomination signatures too close to the CUSA office.

Golovko's letter mentions his previous slate "A Better Carleton" and runs with the profile shot of the CUSA president that has been synonymous with most CUSA campus advertisements.

Golovko wrote, "Last winter my team and I ran in the CUSA election under the banner of 'A Better Carleton.' We promised great things for our University, our Students' Association and for you . . . this is the first time that CUSA has lived up to its promise of fighting for lower student fees."

The issue was raised by political science student Sam Heaton Jan. 14, who accused Golovko of early campaigning and vote-buying through the \$20 medical rebate letter.

"The successes claimed in the letter are not attributed to the association, but to Golovko personally and to his election slate, A Better Carleton," Heaton wrote in an email. "Coming only two days before the beginning of the nomination period, this letter is clearly an attempt to gain an unfair advantage over potential competitors."

Golovko called the violation "unfortunate." He said he intends to appeal and would not comment further.

The violations mark the start of an earlier-than-usual CUSA election.

A Jan. 9 decision from CUSA council means eligible undergraduates are being asked to participate in two student elections at the end of the month.

In recent years, the elections and events have been scattered over the last three months in school, with CUSA elections typically falling in February and the Rideau River Residence Association (RRRA) elections falling in March.

But attempts this year to alleviate pressure on students around midterms is resulting in concurrent elections jammed into the same end-of-January timeframe.

Voting for the RRRA elections will take place on Jan. 24, and voting for the CUSA elections will be from Jan. 30-31.

The CUSA's elections office has already received nine complaints of pre-campaigning, lobbying for votes, and other electoral infractions.

Two of the other complaints resulted in two verbal warnings, Cohen said, adding that four investigations are still ongoing. Another two, one also lodged against Golovko, have been closed without violations.

Heaton lodged a second complaint via email Jan. 16 after the CUSA website was updated to include a new photo of the current executive, several of whom have been seen seeking nominations.

"Clearly for the purpose of promoting the name and image of those current CUSA executives who are attempting to run for positions again," Heaton wrote.

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Cohen said Heaton made "errors in his complaint," and said there would be no violation since the change in photos isn't "indicative of pre-campaigning" because there have always been photos of the executive on the website. He said it's simply a new photo of the same people.

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Currently, there is no electoral board for candidates to appeal their violations to.

Cohen said investigations into the four pending complaints could take any amount of time.

The CUSA electoral code stipulates that two individuals, in addition to the ombudsman, will make up the electoral board that "shall be struck by CUSA council at or before the presentation of the writ of election or referenda."

Cohen presented the writ at the Jan. 9 council meeting, but an electoral board wasn't set up.

CUSA vice-president (finance) Michael De Luca said he isn't concerned, calling it a "non-issue" since an emergency meeting was called for Jan. 17 and an electoral board is expected to be set up at that time, well in advance of the Jan. 23 start of campaigning.

Candidates can appeal any of the elections office decisions, according to the electoral code, as long as the appeal is made in writing within seven days to the electoral board.

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