

University Students' Council of the University of Western Ontario Election Governance Board

CONFIDENTIAL

February 02, 2026

DECISION

Election Violation Submission
January 29, 2026—Mr. Ridley Smith

I. INTRODUCTION

The above Violation Submission contained allegations that a member of Ms. Mia Cameron's campaign team, Mr. Parker Kempton ("Kempton") reposted on his Instagram account on January 28, 2026 an image of a rival candidate, Mr. Steve Xia ("Xia") in a manner that contravened s. 4.7.3.3 of the *USC Electoral Code*. It was alleged that Mr. Kempton took the image of Mr. Xia and other individuals posing in the configuration of a star and added the caption "*glory to netanyahu*" before reposting it to his Instagram story.

The effect was said to have wrongly implied that Mr. Xia was a Zionist and supporter of the State of Israel. The candidate, Ms. Cameron was alleged in the complaint to be responsible for the actions of her campaign volunteer.

The Independent Investigator determined on January 30th that the complaint met the threshold requirements in s. 9.1.8. of the Electoral Code and assigned to the complaint a preliminary classification as a potential moderate electoral offence under s. 9.1.9.

The subsequent investigation was conducted by the Independent Investigator, Mr. John H. McNair and two members of the Election Governance Board, Mr. Aaliyan Asghar and Mr. Tarif Ahmed. The investigators interviewed four witnesses whose evidence was summarized in the investigation report provided to this panel along with a number of

documents referred to therein. References to the evidence in this Decision are taken from that report.

II. SUMMARY OF PANEL'S DECISION

The Panel concluded on the balance of probabilities that the repost of the image of Mr. Xia with the added words contravened the prohibition in s. 4.7.3.3. of the Electoral Code through the distribution of misleading or unverified information and another candidate that was non-defamatory and non-malicious in nature.

We were satisfied however, that Ms. Cameron did not direct Mr. Kempton's actions, could not reasonably have foreseen that the objectionable material would be reposted and could not reasonably have stopped the action. In the result, we found no violation of the Electoral Code by the candidate, Ms. Cameron.

III. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

A. Mr. Kempton's Actions

We were not persuaded by Mr. Kempton's claim that he intended no negative message when he reposted the Xia "star" image on January 28. His reply to one of his Instagram friends, Mr. Stephen Chiu immediately afterward suggested that he was aware that the star symbol to which he had attached the Netanyahu reference was significant ("*star of David reveals itself like the tank in the fog of war.*") When Chiu cautioned him that someone might "*slime*" (criticize) him for the post, Kempton replied "*Who gaf*" (gives a fuck).

We concluded that he knew that the Netanyahu post carried specific implications. Whatever Xia and his colleagues intended the posed photo of the star configuration on his campaign website to represent, Kempton's repost associated it with a Jewish symbol, and the leader of the State of Israel. It was a reasonable inference for viewers of the repost that Xia's appearance in the photo signalled his support for the State of Israel and, by extension, Israeli policy in relation to Gaza and the Palestinian cause. Kempton acknowledged that he had no basis for that suggestion. Kempton knew, or

must have known, that campus student opinion was sharply divided on Middle East issues, and that support for Israeli policy by a candidate would influence at least a portion of the student electorate against him.

We were prepared to accept that Kempton's re-post was the result of a lapse of judgment on his part. His campaign colleagues, Cameron and Rittenberg both spoke highly of his integrity. It was not, however, an unintentional, harmless act, despite his assertion to that effect.

The implicit message that Xia supported Israeli policy was without foundation and was entirely unverified, we concluded.

B. Ms. Cameron's Alleged Responsibility

The more difficult part of this investigation centred around what can be described as the vicarious responsibility analysis in s. 3.1.1. of the Electoral Code. That provision imposes responsibility for the action(s) of any campaign volunteer upon the candidate unless the candidate satisfies the EGB that they (1) did not direct the action (2) could not have reasonably foreseen that it would occur, and (3) could not reasonably have stopped it. It is clear from the language of this provision that the onus of establishing that such responsibility is avoided rests with the candidate.

We found as a fact that the candidate, Ms. Cameron gave a general direction to her key campaign staff that she wished her campaign to be conducted in a way that eschewed hostile or negative attacks upon other candidates. Cameron's evidence in that regard was supported by the contents of her message to team members on December 21, which read, in part, as follows:

"...But I just wanted to say that going into January and campaign season kindness is super important to me, I've heard so much about people having negative and toxic experiences within the USC election realm and its smth I really don't want to take part in or contribute to...lk other ppl will have shit to say and ppl may rip me apart online but I will make it a goal of mine and our teams to leave the shady behavior to everyone else heheh. I'm not worried about any of you at ALL...Cant

wait to be the nicest team ever and the best and hottest and the winning team..."

Notably, Mr. Kempton replied to this direction approvingly, saying: "*the queenmaker team to kill em with kindness.*" Ms. Cameron had at least some comfort that her message had been delivered and received, therefore.

The same commitment to running a respectful positive campaign was disclosed in Ms. Cameron's overtures to the other candidates for USC President prior to the commencement of the campaign, we observed. Cameron's message to Hunter Schulz on January 14 reflected her desire to create reciprocal positive spirit between candidates.

"Hey Hunter! I wanted to reach out as I heard you may be running for USC Pres! I'm in a similar situation myself and wanted to see if we could chat pre-campaign season! I've met with other candidates just out of respect and to go into things all good vibes. I think it'll help us to know each other a bit too!"

Cameron's general urging about respectful campaigning was adopted and amplified in more specified terms by her campaign manager, we found.

Firstly, Cameron and Rittenberg both confirmed that they took the precaution of restricting access to the campaign Instagram account to the two of them. This was to ensure control over what was posted in her name, Cameron made it clear. Social media "safety" was a central concern for her, she emphasized. The investigators were persuaded that her evidence in that regard was genuine.

Rittenberg was the person who delivered the candidate's message in that regard to the campaign team in more detail, we found. Her evidence was that she did systematic training with campaign volunteers and with the core team in particular. That training addressed compliance with the Electoral Code and potential campaign violations. Her notes of the December 4th team meeting confirm that she took participants through a succession of electoral offences, supplementing the language of the *Electoral Code* with her own blunt instructions.

Those instructions in writing specifically encompassed s. 4.7.3.3., we noted.

Rittenberg's notes contained her "take" on that provision:

"Distributing misleading or unverified information about another Candidate that is NOT defamatory or malicious.

- *(so anything produced about our opponents, could be fine or negative shit, all of it cannot be out there—incl reddit, we can respond if they post but no one from the team should be an originator.)"*

Mr. Kempton did not remember this admonition, as he told us, or else he chose to ignore it. In either case, it is difficult to discern how the Cameron campaign could more clearly have laid down rules governing social media posts and reposts. Whether positive or negative, posts about opposing candidates were to be avoided, the team was instructed.

The campaign did not police the private social media accounts of campaign volunteers and could not have found a practical means of doing so, in our view. Instead, Ms. Cameron and her campaign manager relied upon well-organized, pre-campaign training and the good faith and diligence of their team of supporters.

We found as a fact that Cameron (a) did not direct the repost on January 28, and (b) did not know of the impugned image until this complaint brought it to her attention. We further accepted that the repost was made to a private Instagram story visible only to Kempton's Instagram close friends, and that it was visible for only around thirty minutes on that date.

We were mindful of the fact that Mr. Kempton was not a casual, occasional supporter but a key player who was assigned a position of responsibility in the Cameron campaign team. We considered whether his senior campaign role imposed a higher or more difficult evidentiary burden on Ms. Cameron to avoid responsibility for his actions. Arguably, in our view, his role as a trusted core member made Kempton's decision to repost the objectionable image more unexpected, and hence less foreseeable. We were satisfied that the candidate could not have foreseen that he would flout the campaign

direction in this manner, and could not reasonably have prevented him from using his private Instagram account for that purpose.

John H. McNair

Genevieve Bonenfant

Michael Zhao