

February 26, 2026

Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
Suite 200-275 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg MB, R3B 2B3
Attn: Grand Chief Kyra Wilson
Attn: Natalie Ballentyne, Senior Political Advisor
BY EMAIL

PC Party of Manitoba
640-5 Donald St
Winnipeg, MB R3L 2T4
Attn: Mr. Peter Smith, President
BY EMAIL

Rejeanne Caron
c/o PC Party of Manitoba
BY EMAIL

Dear Grand Chief Wilson, Ms. Ballentyne, Mr. Smith and Ms. Caron:

In the last Manitoba general election, Réjeanne Caron ran as the PC candidate in the riding of Fort Rouge. The NDP candidate in Fort Rouge was Wab Kinew. I received four complaints about advertisements run by the PC Party, either depicting Ms. Caron or using her voice, that were critical of Mr. Kinew and of the NDP's stance on crime. Three of the complaints were from individuals and one was from the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC).

The Complaints

The first complaint was about a billboard advertisement that depicts Ms. Caron and states: "UNDER WAB KINEW VIOLENT CRIME WILL ONLY GET WORSE." The complainant believed that this billboard was "an outright lie".

The second complaint was similar. although it involved radio ads voiced by Ms. Caron. There were three separate ads, the text of which was as follows:

I see violent crime every day and it will only get worse under Wab Kinew. I am PC candidate Réjeanne Caron, Mum, Metis and a 30-year police officer. We are the only team fighting to defend, not defund, the police. Authorized by the official agent for the PC Party of Manitoba.

The Wab way is the wrong way. I am a 30-year police officer, Mum, Metis and PC candidate Réjeanne Caron. It's Wab's troubled background, run-ins with the law, bullying ways, even today. Authorized by the official agent for the PC Party of Manitoba.

I see it every day as a 30-year police officer. Violent crime that will only get worse under Wab Kinew. I am PC candidate Réjeanne Caron, Mum, Metis and Wab's competition in his own seat. For many, it's Wab's troubled background, run-ins with the law and bullying ways, even today. Whatever the reason, the Wab way is the wrong way. Authorized by the official agent for the PC Party of Manitoba.

The complainant in this case objected to the intimation that the NDP was in favour of defunding the police and objected to the ads "slagging WAB as a criminal which is personal and is also against the ad guidelines."

The third complaint was that Ms Caron had purchased an ad on a bus bench that was outside her constituency.

A fourth complaint, from the AMC, concerned the same bus bench, but the AMC's concerns were not about its location. The AMC's described their complaint this way:

Misleading Representation: The advertisement portrays Constable Rejeanne Caron exclusively in her capacity as a Winnipeg Police officer, with no identification as a PC electoral candidate. This deliberate juxtaposition leads the observer to interpret her as an official spokesperson for the Winnipeg Police, which implies an endorsement of the Manitoba PC party's "Fighting Violent Crime" platform.

Harmful Association: The ad's messaging and visual representation associate "WAB WAY" with violent crime through calculated visual and verbal framing. This alludes to Wab Kinew, who holds positions as an MLA, NDP Party leader, and self-identified Indigenous individual. The capitalization and alliteration used in the ad accentuate the negative framing of "WAB WAY" as "WRONG WAY," damaging not only his political identity but also his personal character.

Suppression of Election Context: The advertisement intentionally suppresses the broader election context, creating an erroneous impression that the Manitoba PC party and the Winnipeg Police are allied in their fight against violent crime. This misrepresentation perpetuates an environment where the ad's impact persists, regardless of the election context.

In light of these concerns, the AMC felt that the ad contravened "the Code of Ethical Conduct outlined by Elections Manitoba"

Section 181(2)

The relevant provision of *The Elections Act* is section 181(2):

False statement of candidate's character

181(2) A person who, during an election period, knowingly makes, distributes or publishes a false statement of fact about a candidate's character or conduct for the purpose of influencing the election is guilty of an offence.

The section refers to a statement of fact. I understand this to be different from a statement expressing an opinion. *Halsbury's Laws of Canada* makes the following distinction between statements of fact and opinion:

The essence of a statement of comment as distinguished from a statement of fact is that a comment contains an element of subjectivity incapable of proof, while a statement of fact is capable of being determined to be accurate or not.

Statements of opinion would, in my view, include most statements predicting some future state of affairs.

Section 181(2) does not prohibit every false statement of fact - the statement must be about "a candidate's character or conduct." I understand that to be different from statements about a party's platform, or a candidate's views on the issues. Statements about a candidate's views might indirectly reflect on his or her character, but I do not believe the legislature intended the Commissioner of Elections to be reviewing every such statement for its accuracy. In my view, section 186(1) was intended to apply to obvious and direct attacks on an individual.

In *Ammeter v. Perrier* ([1999] MJ No 306) Justice Monnin, in the Queen's Bench, referred to Justice Gibson's judgment in *The North Louth Case* ((1911) 6 O'Malley & Hardcastle 103.), which dealt with a provision similar to our section 181(2). He quoted Justice Gibson as saying:

A politician for his public conduct may be criticized, held up to obloquy: for that the statute gives no redress; but when the man beneath the politician has his honour, veracity and purity assailed, he is entitled to demand that his constituents shall not be poisoned against him by false statements containing such unfounded imputations. (page 163)

Analysis

The first complaint was about the statement "UNDER WAB KINEW VIOLENT CRIME WILL ONLY GET WORSE.". That is a statement about the future and is, in my view, a statement of opinion, not a statement of fact. It therefore does not contravene section 181(2).

The second complaint concerned the three radio ads. The first ad implied, though it did not explicitly state, that if elected the NDP intended to defund the police. That might qualify as a false statement of fact, but it is a statement about a party's position, not a statement about a candidate's character. The ad also said that violent crime will only get worse under Wab Kinew. Again, I think that is clearly a statement about the future and is an opinion being expressed by Ms. Caron.

The second and third ads contained the statement that "The Wab way is the wrong way." In my view, that is simply a political slogan, and quite clearly a statement of opinion.

The ads also referred to Mr. Kinew's "troubled background", "run-ins with the law", and "bullying ways". In an earlier investigation I reviewed news reports from at or before the time of the election which concerned run-ins with the law that Mr. Kinew had in his youth. Although I recognize that many people found the emphasis placed on those incidents in many pre-election ads to be offensive and unfair, the statement made here that Mr. Kinew had "run-ins with the law" was true. That Mr. Kinew's ways are "bullying" is, in my opinion, a statement that contains a considerable element of subjectivity and is therefore not a statement of fact within the meaning of section 181(2).

The third complaint was that Ms. Caron had put an ad on a bus bench outside of the riding in which she was running. But the ad appears to have been placed by the PC Party, not Ms. Caron and in any event, there is no prohibition in *The Elections Act* against candidates placing ads outside of their riding.

This leaves the fourth complaint by the AMC. I note at the outset that the AMC's complaint was that the bus bench advertisement breached the Code of Ethical Conduct. The Code, which is posted on the Elections Manitoba website, is "a set of expectations and commitments" that the political parties have agreed to. The Code is self-regulated, meaning that there is no formal complaint mechanism, other than to a designated authority within each political party.

I have also considered whether the concerns raised by AMC suggest a breach of *The Elections Act*. The AMC says that the ad on the bus bench identifies Ms. Caron as a police officer but does not identify her as a PC Party candidate. That appears to be correct. The AMC says this is misleading and that it suggests Ms. Caron is speaking in her capacity as a member of the Winnipeg Police Department. I agree that someone might form that impression. They also say that the ad implies that the Manitoba PC party and the Winnipeg Police are allied in their fight against violent crime. Even if the AMC's allegations are correct, however, there is no prohibition in *The Elections Act* against advertisements that, though they say nothing false, are nevertheless misleading.

The AMC also objects to the statement that "The Wab way is the wrong way". As discussed above, I believe this is a statement of opinion and is not a breach of section 181(2).

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined, I do not believe any of these advertisements amounted to a breach of *The Elections Act* and I will therefore be closing my file.

Yours truly,



Bill Bowles
Commissioner of Elections for Manitoba