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Carleton U candidates surprised to be disqualified over receipts; Party politics behind move, some suggest

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After a week of campaigning, Delroy Dyer woke up Friday morning hoping to learn he'd been elected to the undergraduate students' council at Carleton University.

Instead, the second-year public affairs student discovered he had been disqualified.

"I was shocked," he said. "The grounds they gave in the e-mail were extremely vague."

Dyer, 20, wasn't the only one surprised by the news. In fact, 29 out of the 64 candidates vying for 26 seats representing their respective faculties were disqualified.

Dyer said his troubles relate to allegedly falsifying a receipt he submitted with his expense report at the end of the campaign.

According to him, he paid a high school student \$20 for a photo that appeared on his campaign posters -- the same price he paid last year and a higher rate than what he would have paid had he used the on-campus photo studio.

Dyer said he submitted a receipt, but was told by Sagal Osman, the student association's chief electoral officer, that it wasn't an official receipt and he hadn't paid fair-market value for the photo.

Dyer, who said he was never told what the fair-market value rate would be, then re-submitted a second receipt that included information missing from the original.

But Osman maintains the receipts still appeared to be phoney.

According to her, when the 29 candidates submitted their final campaign spending reports, the receipts related to campaign photos "weren't real" -- they were only typed up and didn't contain tax or GST information.

Osman said she gave candidates until 10 p.m. on Feb. 11 to re-submit the receipts, so that the candidates could be reimbursed 50 per cent of their \$100 campaign budget.

Twenty-three of the candidates then submitted fraudulent receipts, Osman said, and the other six did not re-submit any.

Under the electoral code, candidates are immediately disqualified for presenting "a fraudulent or inaccurate

final report of expenditures."

That explanation didn't wash with Dyer, who suspected there may be other forces at play.

"They don't like our politics, that is why we were targeted," he said.

Many of the disqualified candidates tend to support either the Liberal or Conservative parties, while the students' association leadership tends to be more left leaning, he said.

"If you're not with them, you're against them and there is no dissent allowed," Dyer said.

Chris Gillen, a third-year science student seeking re-election to the council, agreed.

"For student politics, it really shouldn't be so partisan, it's trying to get things done for students," he said.

Osman said she could not discuss the specifics of the disqualifications because the candidates may go before the elections appeal board if they appeal the decisions, which they have 10 days to do.