

December 8, 2025

Rochelle Squires  
c/o PC Party of Manitoba

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

BY EMAIL

Dear Ms. Squires and Mr. Smith

In the run up to the last general election I received a complaint from someone in the Riel Electoral District about a brochure, critical of Wab Kinew, distributed by the PC party, and about statements similarly critical of Mr. Kinew made by one or more persons who appeared to be working for Ms. Squires, the PC candidate in that district.

The brochure alleged that Mr. Kinew:

Was convicted of assault against a Winnipeg taxi driver

Was charged with two counts of domestic assault

Was charged with two additional counts of assault

Was charged with theft of a money order

Was charged with impaired driving, and convicted of refusing a breathalyser

Did not pay a \$606.50 fine until the crown garnished his salary

The statements made by the individuals who were canvassing for Ms. Squires alleged Mr. Kinew “beat his wife”.

This complaint was one of several that I received alleging that statements made about Mr. Kinew’s past were false and breached section 181(2) of *The Elections Act*.

## **The Elections Act**

Section 181(2) of *The Elections Act* provides:

### **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 sets out a number of conditions that must be satisfied before an offence is committed. One of them is that the impugned statement must not only be false but must have been made knowing it was false. In *Chan v. Marcelino*, 2008 MBQB 27, Justice Simonsen made it clear that the burden of proof was on the one making the charge and that the standard of proof required was “beyond a reasonable doubt”. Proving an infraction to that standard might often be difficult, but that is perhaps as it should be. For an electoral system to work without unduly restricting a free exchange of views and opinions, some allowance must be made for statements that do not fully disclose all relevant facts, and for statements that, though false, were believed by the speaker to be true, even if the statements are ones that many others would find to be offensive.

### **Mr. Kinew's legal troubles**

I have reviewed several articles about Mr. Kinew that were published by the CBC, CTV and Winnipeg Free Press before the last general election. I have accepted them as correct for the purpose of this report since the question is not just whether the statements were true, but also whether the authors of the brochure reasonably believed them to be true, and the news divisions of CBC, CTV and the Free Press are certainly reputable sources.

The articles I have reviewed suggest that when he was in his twenties, Mr. Kinew was involved in several incidents that led to criminal charges being laid. Some of the charges resulted in convictions, some of them were stayed and remain unproven. Some of them Mr. Kinew has acknowledged and some of them he denies. It appears that many, or perhaps all, of the incidents that did occur were caused or contributed to by Mr. Kinew's problems with alcohol. The last charge was laid in 2005. Sometime thereafter Mr. Kinew stopped drinking. In 2016 he was granted a pardon. The only other incident I have seen referenced occurred in 2014. Mr. Kinew was working at the University of Winnipeg and his salary was garnished because of an unpaid parking ticket or tickets.

### **The brochure**

I have quoted above the statements from the brochure that directly assailed Mr. Kinew's character. They refer to both charges and convictions, which are not at all the same thing, yet the casual reader might not have noticed the difference. They did not include the fact that all of the incidents (other than the parking ticket) occurred almost 20 years before, when Mr. Kinew was in his early twenties, nor did they acknowledge that Mr. Kinew has had a successful career since. The complainant in this case, and many others, judging from the complaints I have received, found the statements to be offensive and little more than “mudslinging”. Nonetheless, the statements all appear to be true – or at least supported by articles written in reputable news

journals. I have no difficulty in accepting that whoever wrote and whoever distributed this brochure, might well have believed the statements to be true. That being so, I don't see that the brochure breaches section 181(2).

### **The canvassers**

The complainant also referred me to statements made by one or more persons who appear to have been volunteers on Rochelle Squires' campaign. First, in a phone call, a volunteer said Mr. Kinew was a "wife-beater". Then, in an in person encounter with the complainant's husband, which was recorded, the following exchange took place:

Resident: You can take this back

Volunteer: I am not getting it. I'm not stepping on your lawn.

Resident: (Unintelligible) Why are you doing that?

Volunteer: Our leader didn't beat the shit out of a cab driver.

Resident: Oh fuck off!

Volunteer: Your leader beat the shit out of a ...

Resident: How long ago?

Volunteer: ...and his wife...

Resident: And what did you do 20 years ago or 30 years ago

Volunteer: (Unintelligible)...

Resident: Were you a pristine all good boy.

Volunteer: I didn't beat the.. (Unintelligible)... 2

Resident: He paid the price.

Volunteer: I didn't beat my wife.

Resident: You are going to drag up shit from 25 years ago?

Volunteer: A leopard don't change its spots...

Resident: Is that what they do now?

Volunteer: A leopard don't change its spots...

Resident: Ya right...

Volunteer: Put your name down and watch how that works for you.

Resident: (laughing) We'll be watching him win, I'll tell you that. And then he is going to win too.

Volunteer: (unintelligible)

Resident: Good

Volunteer: (unintelligible)

Resident: And your crap advertising is not going to change things

Volunteer: (unintelligible) ...it does or it doesn't...

Resident: You're so smooth.

I have reproduced this exchange in full because it is a good example of how tempers can flare, on both sides, during an election campaign and how statements can be made in the heat of the moment that, though believed to be true, might not have been made that way in calmer circumstances.

In both the telephone call and the in-person encounter, the volunteers alleged that Mr. Kinew assaulted his wife (this would be a reference to his former partner, not his current wife). There is insufficient evidence in the public domain to justify such an allegation. Mr. Kinew denies it. The charges against him were stayed. But did the volunteers believe it? I expect that they did. It is not uncommon in domestic assault cases for the complainant to be believed, even in the absence of a criminal conviction. Had the statements been made directly by the PC Party, the situation might perhaps be different, but I think it is quite plausible that these volunteers believed what they were saying.

## **Conclusion**

For these reasons, I do not see that there was a breach of section 181(2) in this case. I note, in conclusion, that although I received several complaints from people upset at what they perceived to be an unfair attack on Mr. Kinew's character, no complaint came from the NDP and no complaint came from Mr. Kinew. Mr. Kinew appears to have dealt with the allegations by providing his version of events and letting the voters decide. The outcome of the election suggests that a significant plurality of voters decided that these episodes from Mr. Kinew's youth should not disqualify him from elected office, or even from becoming Premier.

Yours truly,



Bill Bowles  
Commissioner of Elections for Manitoba