



## Ex-Tory candidate wins lawsuit

**Party can't renege on compensation deal made when nominee agreed to step aside to make way for someone else, judge rules**

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OTTAWA—A judge has ordered the federal Conservative party to pay \$50,000 to a former candidate who agreed to step aside in last January's election in favour of a big-name recruit.

Ontario Superior Court Justice Denis Power said the party had no right to renege on the deal with Ottawa lawyer Alan Riddell, a candidate in Ottawa South.

Riddell's lawyer, Tom Conway, said Power agreed the Conservative party entered into a binding agreement to cover Riddell's campaign expenses if he would step down to make way for candidate Allan Cutler.

Cutler, who made national headlines for being the whistleblower in the Liberal sponsorship scandal, lost the election to Liberal MP David McGuinty, brother of Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty.

"It feels great because it has confirmed what I always knew, which was a legally binding agreement, and that I had chosen to step aside for the sake of the party and its star national candidate, Mr. Cutler," Riddell said yesterday.

Stephen Harper, then Conservative leader and now prime minister, and party president Don Plett denied an agreement existed. Power noted that "by the fall of 2005, Mr. Riddell was the preferred choice of a clear majority of the members of the Ottawa South PC riding for the nomination."

After Riddell, an Ottawa lawyer and party activist, who also ran for the Conservatives in 2004, launched his suit over the promised compensation, he was tossed out of the party.

Party officials first denied there was a deal and then, when Riddell went public with

details of the deal, said he had violated the agreement.

"There is no agreement and he hasn't been paid anything," Harper said in December 2005, referring to Riddell, a member of the Conservative party for 20 years. Harper also described Riddell as not an "acceptable" candidate.

Said Conway: "Not surprisingly Mr. Riddell was very taken aback by this, that the leader of the party and the president of the party were essentially telling everybody that when Alan Riddell said there was an agreement he wasn't telling the truth."

While Riddell is proceeding with a defamation lawsuit against Plett, he has not acted so far on a defamation suit against Harper, which, he says, was filed.

Yesterday, Mike Donison, executive director of the Conservative party, said in a brief statement: "This is part of ongoing court proceedings surrounding various disputes between Mr. Riddell and the Conservative party. The party continues to be willing to attempt to resolve these issues if at all possible."

In a telephone interview, Plett would not discuss the ruling. "There are a number of issues before the courts still, and they are all related, so until everything gets settled I wouldn't be prepared to make any comment."

Plett said in addition to the lawsuit against the party, there are additional lawsuits against individuals. Also at issue is the party's revocation of Riddell's membership card.

"I think it will be a while before this is all resolved," Plett said.

Riddell said the last thing he wanted to do was take the party to court. "My lawyers and I wrote five times over the course of the past 12 months to senior party officials asking them to settle this matter confidentially and amicably by private arbitration ... and each one of my requests ... was either ignored or rebuffed."

He said he hopes the party will respect the court decision "and will reinstate me because it is a party that respects the rule of law."

with files from Tonda MacCharles