

October 10, 2024

Elections Manitoba  
120 – 200 Vaughan Street  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 1T5  
ATTENTION: Ms. Shipra Verma

Ms. Gabrielle Simard-Nadeau  
BY EMAL

Dear Ms. Verma and Ms. Simard-Nadeau:

### **Re: Forged Signatures on Nomination Papers**

On September 24, 2023, Elections Manitoba notified me that Ms. Simard-Nadeau, the Green Party candidate in Steinbach, had submitted a nomination paper containing two forged signatures. The forgeries were discovered by the Returning Officer in Steinbach, who knew the supposed signatories personally.

Section 183(5)(a) of *The Elections Act* (the “Act”) makes it an offense to knowingly provide false or misleading information when required to do so by the Act.

### **The investigation**

Ms Simard-Nadeau was asked to run for the Green Party in Steinbach. To be eligible as a candidate, she needed to submit a nomination paper that included at least 50 signatures from residents of the Steinbach constituency. As the deadline approached, she began to have trouble collecting the number of signatures she required. She asked a friend if she could suggest people who might be willing to sign the nomination paper. The friend suggested her parents-in-law, who were also known to Ms. Simard-Nadeau.

Ms Simard-Nadeau spoke to me and an investigator via Microsoft Teams on October 5, 2023, under caution. She decided not to have counsel present for the interview and confirmed that she understood that whatever she told us could be used as part of a prosecution under the Act.

Ms Simard-Nadeau admitted to forging the the signatures. She told us that she was in a rush to submit her nomination paper just before the deadline and decided to forge the signatures, because she did not feel that she had time to arrange to meet with the people in question. She did not deflect blame or minimize or rationalize her actions. She gave a sincere apology and, in my view, took appropriate responsibility for her own bad decision.

## Conclusion

Forging signatures on a nomination paper is a serious offence and in most cases would result in a prosecution. I have considered carefully whether a prosecution would be warranted in this case, and have decided it would not. There are several factors I have considered, none of which amount to a justification for what Ms. Simard-Nadeau did, but which do, in my view, suggest that a prosecution is not necessary. First, Ms. Simard-Nadeau was not an experienced politician or political operative. This was her first time being involved in an election and, although she clearly knew that she should not forge signatures, I believe she did so in the pressure of the moment without much understanding of the seriousness of the offence. Second, Ms. Simard-Nadeau forged signatures of two people she knew - people that she fully expected would have signed the nomination form, if asked. (In fact, both of those people have advised our investigator that they would have signed the form.) The rest of the signatures on Mr. Simard-Nadeau's nomination papers were legitimate ones. Thirdly, as noted above, Ms. Simard-Nadeau admitted what she had done and took full responsibility for her actions. Finally, I am satisfied that Ms. Simard-Nadeau truly regrets what she did and would never make the same mistake again.

I have prosecuted an offence for forged signatures in the past and will do so when appropriate in the future. In this case, however, I am satisfied that a prosecution would not be in the public interest.

The Elections Act permits me to enter into a “compliance agreement” with someone who has breached an election law and is prepared to admit they have done so. I have spoken with Ms. Simard-Nadeau and she has agreed to enter into such an agreement. The Elections Act requires that a compliance agreement be made public and a copy, signed by both of us, is attached to this report. If Ms. Simard-Nadeau abides by the terms of the agreement, I will consider this matter to be closed.

Yours sincerely,



Bill Bowles  
Commissioner of Elections for Manitoba



