

PM orders probe into allegations against MP Adams

Mississauga-Brampton South MP Eve Adams stands accused of abusing Conservative Party and House of Commons resources in her bid to grab a new seat. She's been accused of insulting and bullying board members in the new riding, and of threatening the riding association's 2015 election plans.



Eve Adams

Yet, it may be news of her December tantrum over a \$6 car wash at an Ottawa gas station that will turn out to be the tipping point in her political career.

John Newcombe, a Conservative supporter and the owner of the Island Park Esso station in Ottawa's west end, said he contacted the Prime Minister's Office in January to complain about an incident with Adams in December 2013.

According to Newcombe, Adams was upset about a car wash she felt was unsatisfactory, and parked directly in front of a pump lane at the busy station, backing up traffic behind it on a busy Ottawa street.

Newcombe said the dispute was about a thin layer of ice that

remained on the rear bumper of the MP's vehicle after a car wash.

"I have never experienced anything like this," Newcombe, who has been in the business for 40 years, said in an interview Wednesday. "Ms. Adams just was adamant in refusing to communicate. It was the rolled up window, I'm staying put until I get my refund."

"And she said, 'By the way, I'm timing how long it takes before I get my refund,'" Newcombe said.

Newcombe said he was visited by PMO staff after the incident, and Adams has since contacted him and apologized — an apology he felt was insincere. But after news of Adams' alleged bullying tactics in her bid for the Conservative nomination in the new Oakville North-Burlington riding, Newcombe said he decided to release security camera footage of the incident to *The Canadian Press*.

In an interview with *CP*, Adams disputes Newcombe's version of the events. She said she moved her car twice at the request of attendants before parking where she did, and that she regrets the incident and portrayed it as a misunderstanding.

"The entire time I simply said, look, if I could simply go through the wash a second time, or if not, could they kindly refund the unused car washes I had just bought moments ago," Adams told *CP*.

Adams has also denied any inappropriate actions in her push for the Conservative nomination in Oakville North-Burlington. And yet, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has now ordered an investigation by the Conservative Party's national council into Adams' behavior, after receiving a damning letter of complaint by Mark Fedak, president of that riding association.

It all comes just days after Harper fired Adams' fiancé Dimitri Soudas as executive director of the Conservative Party over meddling in the riding on her behalf, contrary to Soudas' employment contract.

But Adams' immediate problem is the antagonism she's stirred up with members of the riding association of Oakville North-Burlington.

A letter sent to Harper, senior party figures, and the Ontario Conservative caucus by Fedak outlines five allegations of improper behaviour in a nomination race that hasn't formally begun.

The letter specifically alleges that Adams:

- "Vetoed" the new riding association's pre-election plans to hire a private company to provide a poll-by-poll demographic map of the seat as part of its 2015 campaign strategy.

- Improperly used her House of Commons mail-out privileges to

send a "constant flow of mail" into the riding to solicit support, possibly "wasting taxpayers' money" for personal gain, if not violating Elections Canada rules for nomination races.

- Improperly used the party's database known as CIMS to contact board members in a riding she does not yet represent.

- Launched personal attacks against board members at a March 19 meeting, to which she wasn't invited, and proceeded to "filibuster" despite nine requests to leave.

- Was the real reason behind the dismissal of long-time regional organizer Wally Butts after Fedak asked Butts to intervene for the riding.

Adams has said accounts of the meeting have been exaggerated by board members who support nomination bid by rival Natalia Lishchyna.

As for the allegation about mail-outs, Adams and her campaign manager insist she has followed all the rules, and has verified with Elections Canada that the mailings were allowed.

Fedak warned Adams' actions



Dimitri Soudas

are hurting party morale and the Conservative brand, and may amount to violations of the party's constitution if not Elections Canada rules for nomination campaigns.

In a statement, Harper's spokesman Jason MacDonald said Harper "has asked National Council to review the letter and to follow up with the riding association."

"Until that review has happened we won't speculate about possible outcomes."

Jeff Knoll, one of 14 members who signed Fedak's letter of complaint about Adams, says most on the Oakville executive felt they had nowhere else to turn but to the prime minister to rein Adams in.

But he does not believe Adams should be prevented from running.

Knoll said if it turns out that Adams was breaking Commons rules and using tax dollars inappropriately, it might be an argument to bar her candidacy — but he stressed his goal was to level the playing field for all comers, including Lishchyna, whom he supports.

Adams represents Mississauga-Brampton South, but last year moved to Oakville with Soudas, her common-law partner. She wants to run there instead.

— *Torstar Network*