

## Elected officials speak out against Conservative MP's 'racist' remarks



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By Nate Smelle

Conservative Party leadership candidate and MP for Hastings-Lennox and Addington Derek Sloan stepped into the firing line on April 21 after making remarks on Twitter, Facebook and by email about Canada's chief public health officer Dr. Theresa Tam that many have called racist and inflammatory. The rookie MP's comments appear to parrot unfounded allegations made earlier this month by U.S. President Donald Trump who has repeatedly blamed China for the coronavirus outbreak and accused the World Health Organization of 'mismanaging and covering up' the severity of the pandemic. Suggesting in an email that Tam has been working with the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China, or CCP, Sloan alleges that Canada's chief public health officer 'dutifully repeats the propaganda of a CCP government obsessed with political control and saving face. She does this because she is involved with an organization, the WHO, which is effectively controlled by that government.' Demanding that Tam 'resign or be fired,' he states further that 'Canada's chief public health officer needs to work for Canada. Not for the WHO or any other foreign entity.' Hastings County's Warden Rick Phillips and CAO Jim Pine swiftly responded to Sloan's remarks by expressing their disgust with Sloan's 'racist' allegations, and calling for his expulsion from the Conservative Party of Canada. Since the MP's controversial comments began trending online with the hashtag #DerekSloanMustGo, several elected officials throughout Hastings County and the province have added their voices to the growing opposition forming against Sloan. Bancroft's Mayor Paul Jenkins is one of many local elected representatives who supports Phillips and Pine's position. Acknowledging the fear and uncertainty people are dealing with because of the pandemic, he said 'Now is not the time for partisan political stances, the country will not tolerate it. There has been a great deal of combined support across party lines and Canadians are very pleased with this. All levels of government and their employees have exhibited an amazingly quick ability to adapt to an ever changing situation and should be applauded. Not every decision will be 100 per cent correct but we have seen a sincere ability to listen and implement changes on the go. Reducing the spread of the virus remains a top priority of all levels of government and we must remain unified to accomplish this.' Hastings Highlands Mayor Vic Bodnar told The Bancroft Times that he has been in contact with Pine and Phillips and he agrees with their call for Sloan's expulsion from the Conservative Party. Addressing Sloan's remarks directly, Bodnar said 'The comment certainly doesn't do anything to add confidence to the government's handling of the pandemic situation. And certainly should not be brought forward by any Member of Parliament.' Hastings-Lennox and Addington's Conservative MPP Daryl Kramp expressed his concern regarding Sloan's comments, however stopped short of calling for his fellow party member's removal from the party. Saying that it is not his place to pass judgment, he said that responsibility falls on the leader of the party, Andrew Scheer. 'I don't believe that he can ignore the statements,' said Kramp. 'I won't be necessarily judgmental but I do think they can be interpreted as a perception of intolerance, and I think that we have to take that with serious concern.' Highlighting the severity of the crisis created by the pandemic, Kramp said he believes that elected officials need to be focused on dealing with the challenges ahead. Recognizing that a

lot of people are calling for Sloan to be expelled from the Conservative Party, he said it was also not his place to agree or disagree with Phillips and Pine's position regarding his fellow party member. Everybody has a right to their own opinion, but I think an elected representative has a responsibility not just simply to state their opinion, but in many cases to try to be a broad representative of the sentiment within their communities and within their riding, said Kramp. So, your personal thoughts sometimes quite frankly should not be the ones coming to the forefront. You are a representative, you are not the deity unto itself, you represent your people. I am hopeful that we will learn from this situation and move on and as I said, keep our responsibilities where they belong. The Bancroft Times reached out to Sloan for comment last week, however has yet to receive a response.