

Public must be part of a global solution to COVID-19, says MPP



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By Nate Smelle

Last week The Bancroft Times' reporter Nate Smelle sat down with MPP Daryl Kramp to discuss the rapidly changing situation with COVID-19. The following conversation provides insight into the global pandemic and the response from the provincial government, businesses, communities and individuals. **Smelle:** Hi Daryl! I wasn't sure if you would be in with everything going on, but I saw your truck and thought I would drop by to say hello, and see if you had time to talk about the situation with COVID-19. Thanks for making some time to chat. People definitely have a lot of questions. **Kramp:** Hi Nate! No problem. Come on in and grab a seat. **Smelle:** So, how are things going with the response to COVID-19? **Kramp:** This morning when I came up here there was a line of about 30 people waiting to get into the bank, but it was good to see that everyone was maintaining distance up the street. I am so encouraged to see that people are abiding. **Smelle:** I would imagine things are pretty intense right now for you; how have things changed in your day-to-day routine? **Kramp:** Like a lot of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, right now we are busier than we have ever been because people are concerned, they're calling, they don't know what to do, they need resources. So, I said to my staff if you're not comfortable you go home. If you are comfortable, and we can maintain distance, you can make calls on the phone, follow up with people and get things done. I am very thankful to have such tremendous staff. **Smelle:** Considering how fast the situation has been evolving, how has it been working with the other parties in responding to the pandemic? **Kramp:** This is one of the things I am really encouraged to see ? no BS politics. We have two people who are remotely different like Andrea [Horwath] and Doug [Ford] who surely don't see eye to eye; except the thing is they both came together with this situation. There have been no political games, as they both understand the severity of the situation ? We have brought forward issues only to deal with this [COVID-19], and the opposition has been strong. To my mind we are seeing the best of politics ? because we have all seen the worst of politics. This is tremendously encouraging to see what is taking place provincially and I work with all sides from all parties. **Smelle:** Yes, this is definitely not a time for partisan BS. **Kramp:** None whatsoever. This is too serious a situation ? This is a time that we have not experienced before in our lives. I went through SARS, and fortunately I didn't have it, but I saw firsthand the government's dealings with that. I saw how people would go through various levels of information and lack of information, panic. Most challenges happen when people do not have access to information, because they feel rudderless. Once people have a clear direction they are a bit more understanding and considerate. I am proud to be a Canadian when I see the reaction of the everyday citizen. They are really recognizing that they have to be part of the solution to this. **Smelle:** I have noticed that as well. When this all really started to get serious for us here in Canada a few weeks back, I had family and friends who work in retail tell me about how they were getting people coming in to their workplaces telling them that they were just picking up a few things before they were going to self-quarantine. Now we are seeing tape or markers on the floor reminding us to stay six feet apart, Plexiglass at the grocery store cashier stations. It seems like people are taking COVID-19 more seriously now. **Kramp:** People have got the message. The

daily communications coming from the medical officers of health and the leaders has been solid. All I am trying to do in my line is let everyone know I am here. So, I made it voluntary with my staff because if you are in the workplace and you are not comfortable ? unfortunately there are always these people who will abuse the situation ? you always have to err on the side of safety no matter what. I have a grandson who works in a food store. He's off school so he is working five or six days a week right now. So he's in there and to their credit the staff and management are taking all the precautions. They understand that it is not airborne, it's droplet-borne, and that they have to pay attention to these things. People are in handling the stock, so now you don't just go up with bare hands and turn the cans around. The one day they ran really low over there, so they worked a whole midnight shift sanitizing all the shelves. They pulled everything of, wiped every can, and put everything back, shelf after shelf. **Smelle:** That is good to hear. It really is incredible how fast the world is changing ? and how people are responding. With the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001 or SARS I remember there were a lot people who were afraid, but I don't remember seeing this level of fear, anxiety and panic.

Kramp: What I am trying to do as much as possible is alleviate that panic. I was with my own family the other day, and we were walking, keeping our distance and I said 'You know, we actually have the freedom to be able to spend a bit more family time together, my goodness.' So let's relish in it. We are actually communicating, talking back and forth. Generally I don't have time for all that, so we are trying to make the best of it. **Smelle:** That reminds me of a clip I heard from the Premier on the radio the other day where he told people to go out and watch the birds. [Both laughing] That's something I never thought I would have ever heard Doug Ford telling people to do. I laughed and thought to myself wow the world really has changed. **Kramp:** It has [laughing] ? this is not just one country's problem, it's a global problem. It has changed the word as we know it. We are all going to have to be a part of the solution. Once again, this will have to transcend politics. We are going to have to take a Canadian approach to that, as we have taken a Canadian approach to deal with this here health crisis. **Smelle:** Well, crisis always seems to bring people together. You see it when there are floods or fires and the community is always right there. **Kramp:** It's just wonderful the way that happens. **Smelle:** Is there anything else that you would like to let the public know regarding the current situation with COVID-19? **Kramp:** I'd like to let people know that they are not alone. Fortunately, there are all the different agencies, service clubs, organizations, individuals, neighbours ? reach out. If you don't know where to reach out, certainly give our office a call [1-855-229-6676] and we can try to help direct you ? I don't think we should be frightened. I think we should be aware. Take advantage of the change in lifestyle to basically appreciate some of the things a lot of us aren't taking time for ? read a good book.