

Jennifer Sloan enters race to represent HLA, as 'Team Sloan' launches new political party



By Nate Smelle

Last week, Hastings-Lennox and Addington's incumbent Independent former Conservative MP Derek Sloan shocked many of his constituents by announcing that he would not be seeking re-election locally. Instead, Sloan has decided to pack up his wagon and head west, to try his luck in the Alberta riding of Banff-Airdrie. Little did the public know, the Sloan family had another surprise in store.

On Thursday, Aug. 26 Sloan's wife Jennifer informed The Bancroft Times that she was entering the race in HLA by means of a media release sent out to news outlets throughout the riding. While speaking with The Times on Sunday, Aug. 29, she explained why they each decided to run in different provinces. J. Sloan said after taking a "hard look" at their resources and goals, they recognized how much national support D. Sloan had behind him. During the Conservative Party leadership race in Alberta; and, more recently, while attending several anti-lockdown rallies in the province, J. Sloan said it also became apparent how much support he had gained in western Canada. Seeing a window of opportunity, she said they both felt it was best to run in the two ridings where they had the most support.

"Derek can't be in two places at once, so it's as simple as they know Derek out there, and they don't know me out there," J. Sloan said. "It really came down to that, we were like you know what, we have two amazing spots that we have the potential to do really good work on."

Although both candidates will be on the ballot as Independents, J. Sloan said that back in May they filed papers with Elections Canada to start a new party, which they plan to call, "The True North Party of Canada." As eager as they are to officially launch the party, she said they were told the paperwork would not be ready until after the election. Noting how there are advantages to being elected as an Independent Member of Parliament, J. Sloan said "With Derek, when he was part of the Conservative Party of Canada, he had the ability to talk, maybe like I don't know, like maybe two or three times or something in the House of Commons. Just because they had as many seats as they did, then they kind of have to split it up with all the Members of Parliament. When Derek became Independent, they kicked him out to silence him. The fact is they made him grow stronger. Because, when they kicked him out, as an Independent you get as much talking time as the other parties."

Riding the "roller-coaster" with her husband over the past two years since he was elected, J. Sloan said she has supported him in every single decision he has made as a politician. Indicating to potential voters the style of politics that she will bring to the table as the riding's next MP, she said, "just look at Derek's history, and I'll be like well, then that's Jen's future."

Having studied nursing and worked as a registered nurse for 11 years, J. Sloan admitted that she did not initially aspire to be a

politician. However, upon working with her husband behind the scenes; and seeing how he was treated by the Conservative Party he once cherished, she became motivated to put her name forward.

During his term, D. Sloan did not shy away from defending his social conservative views. Ironically, these were the same views that got him elected, and eventually led to him being kicked out of the party. Recalling the events leading up to his ejection from the Conservative caucus, J. Sloan said they first met Conservative leader Erin O'Toole during the 2019 federal election. At this meeting, she said O'Toole offered advice and quickly befriended the Sloan family. During the Conservative Party leadership race, she said O'Toole even stood up for her husband when he was criticized for making what many considered to be racist remarks aimed at Canada's Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. Theresa Tam.

'Erin O'Toole he was the only one that stood up for Derek at that time. But, at the same time, he called Derek every couple days: 'How's Jen?'; 'How's the kids?'; 'Oh yeah, can you put me second on your ballot?' And Derek was like, 'Look, I'm just telling people to vote with their conscience. I'm not going to make any deals at all. I don't do that.' And then you know what, after the leadership race Derek never heard from Mr. O'Toole since... I am witness to that because I hear the phone calls. I am here, I'm dealing with the kids, and I'm dealing with the house stuff, and whatever. I hear it. I am not going to lie about that, I've heard them.'

Once O'Toole had won the leadership, J. Sloan said he basically disrespected the party's 'large supporting base.' With two of the Conservative leadership candidates 'D. Sloan and Dr. Leslyn Lewis' campaigning as 'pro-life' candidates, she said many in the Conservative Party felt 'disenfranchised' when O'Toole announced he was 'pro-choice' after claiming to hover somewhere in the middle on this issue.

How her husband was booted from the party, and what happened after that, was even more unjust, J. Sloan said. Having received approximately 1,300 donations for a total of roughly \$1.4-million while campaigning for the leadership, she said D. Sloan made a habit of calling his biggest donors to say thank you. When O'Toole forced him out of the Conservative Party for unknowingly accepting a \$131 donation from a known neo-Nazi 'a man he allegedly never met or even communicated with' she said it was a 'really muddy type of thing.'

Explaining further how the scenario unfolded, J. Sloan told The Times that, 'Derek doesn't handle any of that, so it's not like Derek's team took that money. It was the Conservative Party that did that. Then they gave him the balance minus 10 per cent. And this guy was apparently a member of the party. He voted in the leadership race, and I think he was on his way to becoming a delegate at the convention; which was wild because this was around the same time that that happened.'

Adding insult to injury, J. Sloan said, was the fact that the Conservative Party then froze their bank account, and took the \$50,000 Team Sloan had raised for the upcoming campaign in HLA. With the money they raised now in the hands of the Conservative Party, she said it will end up being used to fund her opponent Shelby Kramp-Neuman's campaign.

'This was a mishandling and a misjustice as far as I am concerned, said J. Sloan. 'There was many people that emailed the party 'like many, many people' that said 'I want my money back. I gave that money to secure Derek's candidacy and you kicked him out of the party.' Nobody got a refund.'

While J. Sloan would still describe her political views as a form of conservatism, she said 'I don't like using that word anymore, because I feel it has a negative connotation, and it leaves a sour taste in people's mouths.'

Shining a light on the underbelly of the Conservative Party of which she was once a proud member, J. Sloan continued, 'We really thought he could do some good stuff in the party, and really be a good voice. But, they didn't want to hear his voice, and that's really too bad because big party establishment, I think is, I guess I could use the word, corrupt. But, that's not really the word I'm looking for, it's kind of like a tyrannical thing where it's like just one person that's dictating what everybody else is saying. I definitely heard people calling Derek and saying, 'Hey, make sure that you vote this way,' or 'make sure you do this'!... It was unfortunate because that's what they do, right. They call you and tell you how to do it, so then you're essentially a puppet, right.'

Pointing out that Canada's democratic system is not set up to function like that, J. Sloan said that people being able to possess different views is what makes Canada great. She believes that two of the most important elements of politics are how it encourages people to embrace different views and come up with solutions that work for everybody.

According to J. Sloan, what makes her approach to politics unique is that she comes at it from the perspective of a nurse. If elected, she plans to use this approach to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Although her perspective as a health-care worker will be of assistance, J. Sloan acknowledged that "It's definitely a tricky one, and it's not an easy solution. I feel that little by little they have been developing some segregation. And I have a real problem with that as a nurse, because when you treat people differently we don't have an equal and free country any more. What we've been taught as nurses is that you treat everybody the same. And if people make different choices, it doesn't mean that they are any less of a human being. So my approach is treating everyone as a Canadian, and not labelling them with this or that."

J. Sloan also pledged to make the worsening opioid epidemic a priority, as well as the mental health issues arising from the pandemic. She also said she will also be fighting to: protect gun ownership; promote small businesses; increase support for veterans and seniors; and, address the climate crisis.

"Nurses have an impact with the climate, and can make real changes with that," J. Sloan said. "I am looking forward to lending my thoughts to the necessary people. I am against the carbon tax. I'm against the Paris Agreement. When I'm looking into it, I'm just like, OK there are things we can do on the ground level that people can see with their own eyes in our own riding. That they say, "Hey, I am going to put this piece of paper in this recycling bin; or I'm going to do this, or I'm going to do whatever. And I can see it with my own eyes that things will happen for the climate. I want to protect our freshwater. These are things that directly affect our constituents."

Acknowledging that there are many other important issues to discuss during this campaign, J. Sloan said she looks forward to hearing from citizens about what matters to them the most.

For more information on Jennifer Sloan, or her campaign, visit: www.jennifersloan.ca.