



## CANADIAN COUNCIL OF IMAMS

PO BOX 68559, GREAT LAKES, BRAMPTON, ONTARIO,  
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Saturday, September 18, 2021

# Local and national Muslim community leaders call for Steven Cotter to resign from the Conservative Party of Canada as an MP Candidate in the riding of Central Nova, Nova Scotia.

On Sep. 5th, 2021, Mr. Cotter issued a public apology on his Facebook page for past Islamophobic messages. He wrote: "In the past I have shared social media posts without thinking about how these posts might hurt or offend others. I have deleted these posts and apologize unreservedly.

I recognize that what I was posted was not simply hurtful - it was animated with Islamophobic and anti-immigrant tropes.

Islamophobia has no place in Nova Scotia - and I promise that I will take time to engage in reflection and learning. Specifically, I will be reaching out this week to my local mosque to begin that process."

As Muslim community leaders, we deeply appreciated the commitment to engage with our community. We recognize that everyone makes mistakes, and the best of us repent from our mistakes. Our only question was: is this apology sincere or was this entirely an attempt at damage control?

Unfortunately, after our engagement with Mr. Cotter, we have little choice but to believe the latter.



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When Mr. Cotter virtually met with local Muslim community leaders on Sep. 15th, he began by repeating his apology even more briefly than his written statement. He then refused to say anything else.

We asked Mr. Cotter questions about how his views have changed towards Muslims and immigrants. We asked what he would do as an elected representative to address Islamophobia, racism, and discrimination against immigrants in the community. However, Mr. Cotter responded with nothing but silence.

As local and national community leaders, we have never experienced such a refusal to engage.

Despite repeated attempts by different community leaders to invite Mr. Cotter to ask any questions he had, to share any of his thoughts, to discuss any ideas, Mr. Cotter repeatedly refused to say anything at all. We were left with no choice but to understand his silence as a refusal to engage and learn as he had promised he would do.

However, even after this meeting, we still wanted to give Mr. Cotter another chance. When local and national Muslim leaders reached out to representatives of the Conservative party to communicate our disappointment in Mr. Cotter's refusal to discuss anything at all with us, and to express our openness to meet again, to find a way forward together, including the suggestion that we could invite him to a more informal conversation in person over tea, we were turned down.

Local and national Muslim leaders acknowledge recent action that the Conservative Party of Canada has taken under Erin O'Toole's leadership to condemn Islamophobia and to support human rights. However, silence as a response to Islamophobia, racism, and hate is unacceptable in our community and from those seeking to represent us in Parliament.



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Therefore, we call on Mr. Cotter to resign as a candidate today.

Signed,

**The Canadian Council of Imams**