

Jones takes on interim Liberal leadership

MHA becomes first woman to head N.L. Liberals

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[CBC News](#)

Veteran politician Yvonne Jones has taken over the temporary helm of Newfoundland and Labrador's flailing Liberal party.

The Liberals announced that Jones — one of three Grits to retain their seats in October's general election — will serve on an interim basis until at least next June.

Jones, who becomes the first woman to lead Newfoundland and Labrador's Liberals, said her first job will be helping to rebuild a party that was cut to a historic low at the polls.

"I am no stranger to adversity," Jones, who represents the southern Labrador district of Cartwright-L'Anse au Clair, told reporters Wednesday.

"The message that our party takes from this today is that it is clearly a time for renewal," said Jones.

A convention to elect a permanent leader will be held in October 2008.

If Jones is interested in seeking the leadership, she will have to step down as interim leader next June in order to level the playing field for other potential candidates, said party president Danny Dumaresque, who may seek the leadership himself.

"That's the fairness and balance that we wanted to see from the executive board, but at the same time not impinging on Ms. Jones's ability to do the duties now," said Dumaresque.

Gerry Reid announced his resignation as party leader on Tuesday. Last week, a judicial recount showed Reid lost his seat in the Isles of Notre Dame district to Tory Derrick Dalley by 12 votes.

Dumaresque said the party is drafting a strategic plan that will show the way back to power. It will be ready sometime next year.

The latest development puts Jones and Dumaresque at the two key positions in the provincial Liberal party more than a decade after an electoral conflict between them.

Jones, running as an Independent, defeated Dumaresque in 1996 after losing the Liberal nomination in the district to him.

Dumaresque had held the seat, then known as Eagle River, for two terms in the house of assembly.



Yvonne Jones has represented Cartwright-L'Anse au Clair, a southern Labrador district, since 1996. (CBC)



Liberal president Danny Dumaresque said the party wants to ensure a level playing field for potential leadership candidates. (CBC)

Jones later joined the Liberal caucus and served as fisheries minister and minister responsible for the status of women in the Roger Grimes government.

Weighing options

On the opposition benches, she has been a sharp critic of Premier Danny Williams's government on fisheries and rural policies.

Meanwhile, Kelvin Parsons, the MHA for Burgeo-La Poile, said he is weighing his options and may seek the party's top job.

Roland Butler, the representative for Port de Grave and the final member of the three-person Liberal caucus, said he will definitely not be a leadership candidate.

"My goal and main ambition is to carry out the duties that [are] placed before us in the house of assembly and rebuild this party back to where I want it to be," he said.