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## Busy year ahead for Yvonne Jones



The Northern Pen

Yvonne Jones expects to be doing a considerable amount of juggling in the coming months.

In addition to serving her constituents as the MHA for the district of Cartwright-L'Anse au Clair, she's taken on the added task of leading the provincial Liberal Party. A leadership convention is planned later this year.

In the meantime, the Mary's Harbour native has a full plate of issues and things she wants to accomplish. She recently spoke with *Pen* reporter Jocelyne Cormier for a question and answer session.

### **Pen: What was your biggest disappointment in 2007?**

*Jones: I think the biggest disappointment for me was to see the decline in the industry sectors throughout the district. In 2007, the forest sector pretty much closed down most of its operations in the district. We had sawmills that employed anywhere from 25 to 30 people and all of a sudden, went out of business and closed their doors. This was a terrible setback for us in the district. As you know, in the District of Cartwright-L'Anse au Clair, we have to be able to develop and expand on our natural resources sectors because that's what we have to work with and that includes the fishery, the forestry and the tourism industry in particular.*

*I guess the reason the logging and sawmill industries took a decline in the district in the first place was no market. With the closure of the paper mill in Stephenville, we lost huge markets for our product. We weren't able to recover from that and find additional markets.*

*It was a huge disappointment for us when we were reduced to three seats in the legislature. Anytime a political party loses that many seats, it becomes a real challenge. I really believe the Liberal Party was a strong part of our democracy for the past 50 years and I think it will continue to be in the future.*

### **Pen: What are some of the challenges the district will be facing in 2008?**

*Jones: Transportation will continue to be a huge challenge for us this year. We're close to having the highway completed between Cartwright and Goose Bay. I would like to see the entire highway from L'Anse au Clair to Goose Bay become a priority for black top or pavement. If we're going to have an all-inclusive, year-round highway that's going to stretch across Labrador, you need to ensure it's going to be up to the best standards possible. That's the standard of the Trans Canada Highway across the country. I don't expect anything less than that.*

*Also continuing to be a challenge for us is the ferry service into the smaller communities on the coast of Labrador. There have to be improvements in those services. I know they're getting smaller boats and the ferry a couple times a week. We need to look at how to extend the service, possibly getting it on earlier in the year and extending it later in the fall and also how we can have a better scheduling of the service to support the businesses and the people who live in the communities of Norman's Bay and William's Harbour, in particular.*

*I'll continue to bring up the issue about having highway connections to the other communities in my district that aren't connected by road. I still believe government needs to be given some priorities.*

*The other transportation issue we're faced with is the air services. One is the growing cost of air services. It's getting more and more expensive every time NAVCAN raises rates or every time there's a surplus tax or fees added on. It all adds up to the cost of getting in and out. I think the cost of flying in and out of the district has certainly been a deterrent in terms of bringing in visitors and tourists. That is something I would like to see us work on in terms of having an airfare system that is at least in line with other airfares throughout the province.*

*Also, in Labrador, we have a situation where government for the past four years has committed to looking at a regional airport in the area between Lodge Bay and Charlottetown. We've seen no action on that item whatsoever. Air service in that area has really deteriorated. Now, we just have a basic service to pick people up to bring them to the hospital and that's three times a week. Four years ago, government committed to look at a regional airport facility for Port Hope Simpson. It's been nowhere on the radar of government since then.*

### **Pen: What are the issues you will take up as leader of the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador?**

*Jones: I guess as leader of the party we will be focusing on strengthening the policies of government and add to those policies in terms of best representing the interests of the people. Obviously, we'll be preparing for the House of Assembly and launching initiatives of our own directed at rural Newfoundland and Labrador; directed at keeping people in the province and directed at supporting those that live in our society.*

*As the Opposition, we'll be raising issues on energy development projects such as the Lower Churchill. In addition, we will keep government's feet to the fire on issues such as the gas projects that are on the go. Also we're going to be pushing the social agenda relating to justice issues and health care issues.*

### **Pen: Will you be able to wear both hats, that of the MHA for Cartwright-L'Anse au Clair and Leader of the Liberal Party?**

*Jones: I certainly feel that I can. The leader of the Opposition is a new role for me that I've taken on. I'm getting myself oriented into that role. As the MHA for the District of Cartwright-L'Anse au Clair, the people who have elected me are the people who are first and foremost in terms of representation. I will continue to work hard for the people of my district, but at the same time, I will be working hard to move forward the policies and the initiatives of the Liberal Party to build a strong Opposition for the people of the province.*

### **Pen: How will you accommodate both responsibilities?**

*Jones: Obviously with any new position, there are new staff people. There's a support staff there for me. I'll have the assistance of the caucus. One thing that I've been really good at is being able to delegate responsibility, to be able to represent issues appropriately and to also make sure the needs of the people are met. I'll certainly continue to strive to represent my district as I have done in the past.*



YVONNE JONES