

Liberals will rise again

By YVONNE JONES

I'm writing in response to your editorial ("Grits: get it together") published Feb. 13, on the Liberal Party's decision to reschedule our leadership convention to spring 2010.

The decision of the Liberal Party executive board to delay the leadership convention does not mean that the Liberal caucus will be sitting on the sidelines for the next two years. Nor does that mean the party will be putting off any meaningful action until then.

As a caucus, we take our constitutional role as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition as a serious responsibility to be discharged with integrity, tenacity and a coherent vision for the future of the province. We have no intention of giving government a bye

for the next two years, two months, two weeks or even two days.

Perhaps you have failed to notice that Kelvin Parsons, Roland Butler and I have been vigorously advocating issues and positions on a wide variety of issues. This includes the failure of the government to manage paper recycling, the error of appointing Andy Wells to the PUB, government mismanagement of local water purification and the negligent loss of public money in murky private company equity stake deals. We have also raised new issues to the public for consideration, such as our proposal to consider mandatory snow-tire use, and that's all just in the last month.

This is in spite of the fact that the government has taken every action possible to limit our effectiveness by restricting the resources available to

us to do our job, including staff funding. By refusing to open the House of Assembly until almost the end of this fiscal year, they have sought to deny the Opposition MHAs the platform of question period, the daily debates and the associated media attention. However, despite those impediments, we have succeeded in raising substantive issues and articulating a responsible opposing point of view.

Make no mistake, the process of party renewal has not been delayed; it is already ongoing both internally and externally. Obviously, a critical part of this process is resolving the issue of leadership. I support our board's decision to hold the leadership convention 18 months before the next election.

First, we want to ensure a fair, open and vigorous race among

strong and credible candidates. The time between now and then will give us the opportunity to grow the party and to put in place the resources and structure to achieve that; we need to organize our district associations, strengthen our provincial organization and expand our financial resources.

Second, the period of 18 months between the leadership convention and the election allows ample time to prepare.

While you are quick in your editorial to dismiss that idea, I should note that both Premier Danny Williams and Premier Clyde Wells were selected leaders of their respective parties 18-24 months before they were elected premiers.

On one side you charge us with offering "old school" candidates,

while in the next sentence you criticize us for putting forward "new, untested and untried face(s)." Clearly you will damn us if we do and damn us if we don't.

The Liberal Party has challenges to overcome, no doubt about it. But we are taking the steps, one at a time, to put the party back on the path to where it belongs.

The Liberal Party has played a long and distinguished role in the history of our province, both before and since Confederation. It continues to play a vital role as the voice of responsible and loyal opposition. It will continue to play a vital role in the future as a responsible governing party for the province.

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