

No reason to apologize

Liberals say Jones did not breach privilege

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— Photo by Keith Gosse/The Telegram



Liberal Opposition Leader Yvonne Jones speaks to the media following question period Wednesday.

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THE TELEGRAM

Liberal

Leader Yvonne Jones didn't apologize to Speaker Roger Fitzgerald Wednesday.

In fact, Opposition House Leader Kelvin Parsons took about an hour to plead the Liberals' case why the apology wasn't warranted.

When the House of Assembly opened Tuesday, government House leader Joan Burke asked for the apology.

Accused of breaching privilege

Burke accused Jones of breaching privilege by questioning the Speaker of the House's impartiality in a news release and in news reports by CBC, VOXM and The Telegram.

Jones' comments were made after Fitzgerald, who is also the chairman of the House management commission, voted with the other government members on the commission to deny extra funding to the Liberal caucus, last week.

The vote was deadlocked after an October meeting with the NDP and Liberal members voting for the funding.

Extra funding for the government and the NDP was passed at the earlier meeting.

After Fitzgerald broke the deadlock, Jones called the process biased when speaking with reporters

"It is unfortunate that the Chair was willing to participate in such an attack on the democratic principles of our democracy," Jones also wrote in a news release.

"We would submit, Mr. Speaker, that there is no valid point of privilege raised by the government House leader for several reasons," Parsons said Wednesday.

First, he said, Burke failed to comply with procedures because the full reports and news release weren't tabled in the House.

He also said the statements were made in the context of Fitzgerald's role as chairman of the commission and not as the Speaker.

Finally he pointed out that nowhere in the legislation does it say how a tied vote should be settled.

Parsons says Fitzgerald made that point himself at the commission's meeting in October.

Burke also spoke on the issue Wednesday and maintained the Speaker is the Speaker at all times and should never be accused of being partisan or biased.

Ruling today

The Speaker will rule on whether he deserves an apology today and if Jones will receive a reprimand.

Jones also spoke to reporters outside of the House Wednesday.

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Jones also spoke to reporters outside of the House Wednesday.

"Obviously, if the Speaker feels that it is a point of privilege, and he's the one that's in the middle of this conflict ... then it's up to the House of Assembly to decide what the reprimand will be," said Jones.