

Speaker rules Jones won't have to apologize

BY DAVE BARTLETT

TRANSCONTINENTAL MEDIA

CORNER BROOK ST. JOHN'S — While her words were "inappropriate," Roger Fitzgerald ruled Thursday that he isn't owed an apology from Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones.

When the House opened for its fall sitting on Tuesday, Government House Leader Joan Burke accused Jones of breaching privilege because of comments she made about Fitzgerald's impartiality.

Jones made the comments last week after Fitzgerald — 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.

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

At that earlier meeting, all six members of the commission agreed to extra funding for the government and the NDP.

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

She also criticized the chair.

On Wednesday, Opposition House Leader Kelvin Parsons took about an hour to outline why the Liberals felt an apology wasn't in order.

Fitzgerald thanked Parsons, Burke and NDP Leader Lorraine Michael for their Wednesday submissions.

"Some were very helpful, others somewhat beyond what was needed to establish or disprove a ...case of privilege," said Fitzgerald.

"The comments made against the chair of the commission (were) certainly inappropriate," he said.

"However the comments are not in themselves a violation of the privileges of the House," he concluded.

After the ruling Jones spoke to reporters.

"Obviously the Speaker's decision was couched in some very tough language," Jones said. "However, at the end of the day the ruling was appropriate."

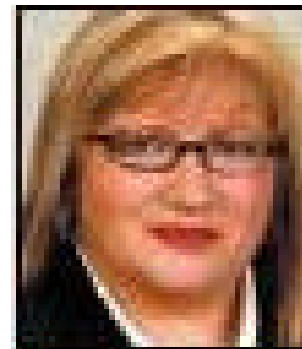
Jones also said she still feels the reason the Liberals didn't get the extra funding points to a biased process.

"I still stand by those statements," she said.

During question period, Jones asked Burke to table a number of reports on air quality in schools.

The Liberals applied through access to information for the reports but were told it would cost more than \$700.

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Yvonne Jones

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Jones said because her party has been denied the extra funding from the management commission they can't afford to pay to get those reports.

The Telegram