

Jones concurs with Brown's decision to step down

By Bill Rea

Ontario Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown resigned early Thursday morning, in light of allegations of sexual misconduct, and Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones agreed with his decision.

"In the interest of the Ontario PC Party we unanimously agree that Mr. Brown cannot continue serving as the Leader," Jones said in a statement she jointly released with fellow deputy PC Leader Steve Clark.

It was reported Wednesday night that two women had alleged serious sexual misconduct. One of the alleged incidents took more than 10 years ago, and the other apparently was more recent.

Brown initially "categorically" denied the allegations, but issued a statement a couple of hours later announcing he was stepping down.

"Mr. Brown is entitled to a legal defence and due process, but he cannot lead us into an election as a result of these allegations," the statement from Jones and Clark added. "The Ontario PC Party unequivocally upholds the principle that a safe and respectful society is what we expect and deserve. We need to move forward to eradicate sexual violence and harassment across the province."

"We were shocked," Jones told a press conference that she and Clark held early Thursday afternoon, as she asserted that allegations such as this must be taken seriously.

"These women deserve to be heard," she declared.

They also said the Tory caucus at Queen's Park is due to meet Friday to discuss the future of the party's leadership.

Jones said the party "absolutely" can pull things together in time for the election, slated for June.

"We're ready to fight this election," she said. "We need to get over this."