

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? A week is a lifetime in politics

British Prime Minister Harold Wilson said, "A week is a long time in politics."

In today's world of social media, I think you could update that to add, a day is a lifetime. Last week I, together with my colleagues, learned of some very disturbing allegations about Patrick Brown.

That same evening, the PC team of Members of Provincial Parliament unanimously agreed that Brown step down immediately. It was the right thing for him to do. As I said last week, while Brown has the right to defend against these allegations (and he has said he intends to), he must do it as a private citizen, not while serving as the Leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party.

Some have criticized our decision because Brown has not had the opportunity for due process, but I respectfully disagree.

Individuals who choose to serve, whether leading businesses, organizations or political parties, are held to a higher standard. And frankly, they should be. There are many reasons why we choose to buy from a particular business, donate to a charitable organization or vote for a political representative. Think about who you choose to do business with, which charities you decide to donate or volunteer with.

Are you swayed by how a business owner participates in our community? Has a particularly persuasive speech you have heard from a leader of a charity influenced your decision about giving a donation or volunteering your time? Mine has. It is no different for political representatives.

I am reminded of an answer Perrin Beatty (who served our community as the Federal Conservative Member of Parliament for 21 years) gave when asked, "How can I vote for you when I don't know how you will vote on legislation?" Twenty plus years later, I think his answer was right on. To paraphrase, what Perrin said, "I don't know all of the issues I will deal with, or will have to vote on in a term of government. Ultimately, as a voter, you have to decide which of the representatives asking for your vote most closely aligns with your values, and trust their judgement."

The Progressive Conservative Caucus asked Brown to step aside last Wednesday night so that our party could move forward and choose a leader to take us into the June general election. We have to move quickly to show that we are ready, as a united party, to show the people of Ontario we can defeat the current government with people and policies that will make Ontario stronger. I believe we have done that.

As is our responsibility, as defined by the Progressive Conservative constitution, our caucus asked Vic Fedeli to serve as the Interim Leader. It was a unanimous decision. Vic has served as the MPP for North Bay and PC Finance Critic. I am confident he will do an excellent job.

The Ontario PC Executive has a legal responsibility to choose the date and set the rules to hold a leadership race that all members of the Ontario PC Party can participate in. The constitution is very specific in the need to set a date for a leadership election no later than 18 months from a vacancy in the position. Decisions will be made in the coming days, but what we know right now, is the election for leader will happen no later than March 24.

Are the timelines tight? Absolutely, but the interest is high from the members of the party, as well as the Ontario public that we have a leader and team in place to defeat the Liberals in general election, and I intend to assist in every way possible to make that a reality.

This was not a decision the PC MPPs or I took lightly. It was a decision made in accordance with the Party's constitution and the need to ensure that the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party is ready to form government June 7, 2018.

