

## Jones pleased with Brown as new PC party leader

By Bill Rea

He wasn't her first choice, but Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones is doing little complaining over choice of Patrick Brown to lead the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party.

The MP for Barrie who will be 37 later this month, Brown was comfortably ahead of veteran MPP Christine Elliott in the vote over the weekend.

Reported results stated he received 61.8 per cent of the vote from Tories across the province, to 38.2 per cent for Elliott.

'I think it's great that we have a new leader,' Jones commented, adding he picked up support from all over the province. 'I'm pleased that his mandate is so strong.'

Jones had been a supporter of Elliott, and hosted a meet and greet session for her in Orangeville in December. She said she had worked with Elliott since she was first elected to the legislature, but she accepted the strong mandate Brown received from the party membership.

'I think they wanted a new face; change the page, so to speak,' she commented.

Jones also said she was impressed with Brown's ability to reach out to new communities in places where the party has not been strong.

As well, Jones doesn't expect there will be any immediate changes in the PC caucus at Queen's Park. She said there have already been meetings, and critics are going to be keeping their current assignments, at least until the House rises for the summer next month.

'That will give him time to rejig,' she remarked.

Jones was also speaking confidently about Brown's chances to form the next government.

'I think we need to form the next government,' she declared. 'From what I've seen of Patrick's abilities, we can do that.'

Brown does not have a seat at Queen's Park, but Jones didn't see his election as leader as a rejection of the party establishment. She wouldn't even use the word 'reject.'

'They were certainly looking for other options,' she observed.

Jones added there's been no word yet as to when or where Brown will seek a seat.

Brown was promoting his status as an outsider during his bid for the leadership.

That was one of the points he made when he addressed some of the party faithful at a function in Palgrave in November.

Councillor Jennifer Innis was at the event, and as a backer of Brown, she was pleased with the way things turned out over the weekend.

'I'm excited,' she declared. 'I think that the party is going to rebuild from the grass roots and truly represent Ontarians.'

Innis said that she has known Brown for many years.

'I know he's a hard worker,' she said. 'I know he's a good listener. I know he's a true leader.'