

The Telegram

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The Telegram editorial team casts an eye on the news events of the year

THE TELEGRAM

From huffin' over puffins to laying goose eggs, 2008 marked an interesting year in Newfoundland and Labrador.

There was gripping testimony at a public inquiry into botched cancer testing, a tumultuous roller coaster of economic uncertainty, and crises that the sun had shone and have-not was no more.

Here are the top 15 stories of the year in Newfoundland and Labrador, according to the Tely's crack editorial team:

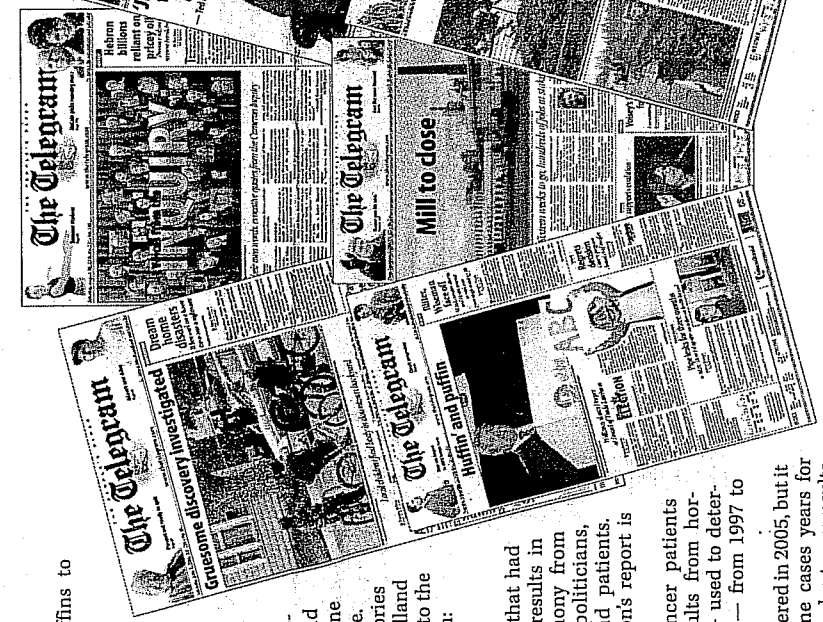
1. Inquiry minds

A breast cancer scandal that had been raging since 2005 results in seven months of testimony from health-care officials, politicians, bureaucrats, doctors and patients. Justice Margaret Cameron's report is due in the spring.

Some 386 breast cancer patients received the wrong results from hormone receptor testing — used to determine treatment options — from 1997 to 2005.

The errors were discovered in 2005, but it took months and in some cases years for patients to be informed and get new results. There are eventually apologies from Eastern Health and Premier Danny Williams.

But when the last witness, patient Elizabeth Finlayson, takes the stand,



Cameron hears the Labrador woman did not learn about her botched 2000 test until she saw the inquiry on TV in 2008 and contacted Eastern Health.

2. Done deal

The Williams government inks a final agreement with members of the Hebron consortium to develop the province's fourth offshore oil field. The long-awaited deal gives a much-needed boost to Newfoundland and Labrador's oil industry, and sees the province's energy corporation picking up a 4.9 per cent stake in the project for \$110 million.

3. Have, to hold

It was then-premier Brian Peckford who said in 1982 that "Some day, the sun will shine, and have not will be no more."

Twenty-five years later, his prediction finally comes to fruition. Stratospheic oil prices for much of the year help catapult Newfoundland and Labrador to "have" status in 2008, a year earlier than expected.

Ontario, meanwhile, will receive equalization for the first time as a

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4. Pulp friction

AbitibiBowater announces it will shut-ter its Grand Falls-Windsor mill. The Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly hastily passes a law "repatriating" timber and water rights and expropriating Abitibi's hydro assets. The paper giant cries foul, and threatens a challenge under the North American Free Trade Agree-ment.

5. Cup holder

Danny Cleary becomes the first Newfoundland-er to win the Stanley Cup, capping a remarkable turn-around in fortunes for the hockey pro-ject. A few years earlier, Cleary was nearly out of the game. In June, he was on the ice when the clock hit zero and the Detroit Red Wings were crowned NHL champs.

6. Alphabet soup

Premier Danny Williams' "ABC" campaign — Anything But Conservative — is successful in wiping off the federal Tories from the map in Newfoundland and Labrador. The goose egg means the province is now represented in the Harper cabinet by a Nova Scotian, Defence Minister Peter MacKay. Defeated Conservative MP Fabian Manning is appointed to the Senate by Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

7. Boom and bust

A crisis in the global economy trickles down to commodity-rich Newfoundland and Labrador. Among the casualties? The owners of the Come By Chance oil refinery delay a multibil- lion-dollar expansion. The proponents of a second refinery run into financing troubles that shelve the project — at least for now. And Labrador West deals with layoffs and uncertainty in the mining sector.

8. Docs on the outs

Physicians and the provincial govern-ment remain at odds throughout the year over com- pensation and work- load issues. With pub- lic concern about can- cer treatment raised by the Cameron Inquiry, the province announces hefty pay increases for medical and radiation oncologists in May. Other doctors are unhappy with the arrangement, saying their needs are not being addressed. By September, after a drawn-out public battle, the government announces a deal to keep the province's three gyne- cologic oncologists from resigning. Meanwhile, other specialists continue to say they are under- staffed and under- paid, and the New- foundland and Lab- rador Medical Association warns of a "quiet exodus" out of the province. Negotiations between the doc- tors and government are expected to begin this month.

9. Presidential politics

The search for a new Memorial University president takes an unprece- dented turn, with the Williams govern- ment inserting itself into the interview process and rejecting the search com- mittee's chosen candidate. Education Minister Joan Burke interviews two candidates for the job, and asks them questions about how they would sup- port the government's agenda. The

university's senate condemns the gov- ernment's role in the process as "inap- propriate interference". The board of regents and senate complete a report about the university's autonomy — a report that has yet to be made public.

10. Hydro(met) power

Vale Inco gives the green light to the type of technology it will use at its US\$2.17-billion commercial nick- el-processing facility at Long Harbour. The ch o i c e ? Hydro(met).

Former premier

Roger Grimes, whose admin- istration signed the Voisey's Bay deal in 2002, claims vindication. The deal had been heavily criticized by the then-Opposition Conservatives at the time.

11. Downtown slaying

Warren Patrick White, 35, is arrested in connection with the grisly murder of Amanda Power on Warbury Street in St. John's.

White faces

charges of sec- ond-degree murder and per- forming an indig- nity to a dead human body. Power's torso was found in a suitcase in a backyard by neigh- bourhood children.

12. Final salute

Pte. Justin Jones of Baie Verte joins the roll of Newfoundland soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. Jones, 21, is killed by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan on Dec. 13.

13. Humber tumble

Humber Valley Resort collapses into bankruptcy, owing creditors more than \$100 million. The resort is a col- lection of luxury vacation properties that attracted many Europeans to the provinces' west coast. In past years, the com- pany under- wrote the costs of charter jets to ferry chalet owners from London to Deer Lake.

Bankruptcy proceedings

are expected to continue into 2009.

14. Rock roll ... again

The Rock run roughshod over the Calgary Mavericks 30-6 to capture the team's third Canadian rugby champi- onship in four years. It's an unprece- dented record of success for a Newfoundland and Labrador sports team at the national level.

15. Rock it, man

Sir Elton John wows crowds during two sold- out shows at Mile One Centre. Callers trying to buy tickets clog phone lines, and lead officials to issue warnings about its potential impact on calling in 911 emergencies. Tickets go for between \$100 and \$150, with scalpers later put- ting them up for sale online at \$1,500 a pair.

And that's a wrap for 2008. Here's wishing you and yours the best for a healthy and happy 2009.