THE PEOPLE'S PAPER

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St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

Christmas raffles and more
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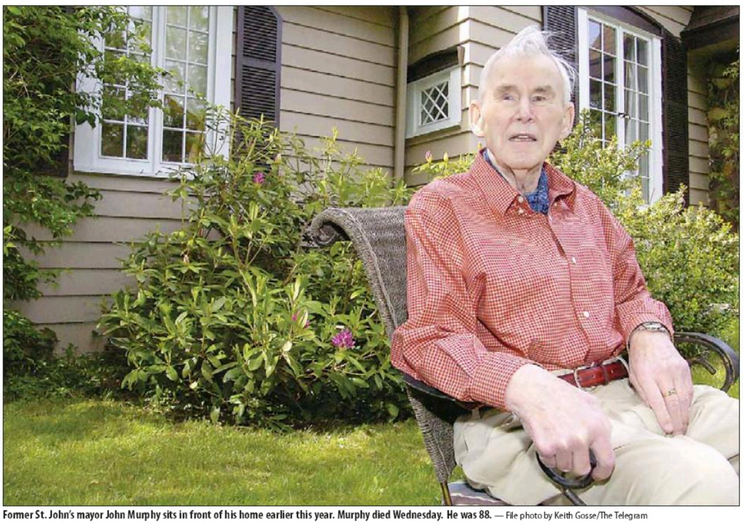
Former mayor remembered for love of city



Former St. John's mayor John Murphy sits in front of his home earlier this year. Murphy died Wednesday. He was 88. — File photo by Keith Gosse/The Telegram

Tributes rolling in following news of John Murphy's death

By Ashley Fitzpatrick
THE TELEGRAM

Former St. John's mayor John Murphy passed away Wednesday afternoon.

Murphy, who was awarded the Freedom of the City earlier this year, was first elected to the mayor's chair in 1981. He would win by acclamation the next time the people of the city went to the polls.

While in the mayor's position he would, among other endeavours, push to jumpstart the construction of social housing and neighbourhood improvement programs that would see everything from trail improvements to the laying of sidewalks along city streets.

Murphy left politics for a short time in the early 1990s, when his first wife became ill, but would return to reclaim the mayor's chair in 1993.

He lost to Andy Wells in the next election, but continued to speak publicly of his love for the city — particularly its hills and heritage areas. He was known as an avid walker of the city streets. He also remained active with community organizations, including the Rotary club.

According to current Deputy Mayor Shannie Duff, he would occasionally call in to city hall with advice on issues facing the city. Duff was Murphy's deputy mayor for nine years. "He was an absolute pleasure to work with because he was always a gentleman and always very upbeat," she said Wednesday.

"He was also a person who encouraged other people. He was not concerned about putting people down."

Duff said Murphy was passionate about learning — and having others learn — the history of the city.

"He also was fun to work with, partly because he had a great love of life. John, several times a year, he would have parties — often in his own home and at his own expense and invite the council and the senior staff, so it created a level of congeniality which I have found missing in recent years," Duff said. "It was an atmosphere ... how do I say this ... you had the sense you were on the same team."

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JUSTICE/POLITICS

Bagby bill becomes law

Bill sparked by toddler's death gets royal assent

By Daniel MacEachern
THE TELEGRAM

It has been seven years since 13-month-old Zachary Turner was killed by his mother, Shirley Turner, when she walked into the waters off Conception Bay South, drowning them both.

At the time, Shirley was out on bail, accused in the murder of Andrew Bagby, Zachary's father, and awaiting extradition to the U.S. to stand trial.

The deaths sparked criticism of the Canadian legal system for allowing Turner custody of the son she had with the man she was accused of killing.

David and Kate Bagby, Andrew's parents, became advocates for Canadian bail reform after the death of their grandson.

On Wednesday, Gov.-Gen. David Johnston gave royal assent to Bill C-464 — championed by the Bagbys and put forward by Avalon Liberal MP Scott Andrews two years ago.

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HEALTH

Doctors reject offer

NLMA sets Christmas as deadline to reach deal with government

By Deana Stokes Sullivan
THE TELEGRAM

The Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association (NLMA) has set Christmas as a deadline for attempts to reach a deal with the provincial government after an 86 per cent vote by doctors to reject the government's latest offer.

NLMA president Dr. Patrick O'Shea said Wednesday 861 ballots were returned out of 1,195, for a participation rate of 72 per cent.

"We feel these results sent a clear message to government that physicians in the province want a contract that is fair and addresses the deficiencies in the system," O'Shea told reporters after releasing the vote.

He said the government's offer failed to address the many challenges doctors in the province face in delivering safe, quality care to their patients.

"Our members are in agreement that if we want to attract new doctors to our province and keep those that are already here, we have to be competitive with our colleagues in the other Atlantic provinces," O'Shea said.

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TRANSPORTATION

Second Metrobus rally attended by planners — and no one else

Organizers say they're disappointed, not surprised; still have weekend rally in the works

By Daniel MacEachern
THE TELEGRAM

Metrobus rally organizers Deborah Jackman and Natalee Brouse were disappointed with the turnout for their first demonstration calling for an end to the Metrobus strike.

Only about 15 people showed up to hold signs and chant slogans at passing motorists Dec. 9 in front of city hall, a rally intended to give stranded riders a voice — rather than pick sides — in the six-week-old strike.

Hoping for a bigger crowd, Jackman and Brouse scheduled their next rally for Wednesday night at a bus stop on Elizabeth Avenue in front of Memorial University, hoping for better attendance from students stuck without public transportation.

But this time, Jackman and Brouse were the only two people who showed up.

"We'd like to see more people, but ... this is the reality of the strike. People have to work, and they have to walk more, they're tired, it's the evening," Jackman said.

And while she isn't siding with bus drivers or management, she is disappointed in elected officials.

"I'm so appalled we're still not hearing from the politicians. And now here we are, the two of us are here, and we're afraid that we're going to lose credibility," she said. "Nobody is understanding that I wouldn't be able to come here tonight if I couldn't get a ride. Luckily I had a friend who dropped me off, and she wasn't well herself, nor was her little girl, but she brought me up here with a big heart because she knows that I believe that this has gotta change. It's gotta end."

Deborah Jackman (left) and Natalee Brouse organized a Wednesday night rally to bring attention to the effects of the Metrobus strike. Despite the fact they were the only ones in attendance — other than the media — another rally is planned for Sunday. — Photo by Joe Gibbons/The Telegram

Jackman urged drivers and management to get back to the negotiating table, and said she was heartened when St. John's Mayor Dennis O'Keefe earlier this week called for an end to the strike by Christmas.

"When I heard that, it was a little bit of a relief, little bit of weight off my shoulders. But I have to wait to see it to believe it," she said.

Brouse said they're trying to hold rallies at varying times of the day — the next rally is scheduled for Sunday at 2 p.m. across from the Metrobus head office on Freshwater Road — to give people an opportunity to come out at a time that suits their schedules.

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Bagbys excited at news ... Continued from page A1

It's a law Zachary's grandparents hope will prevent what happened to their grandson from ever happening to anyone else, by giving courts the right to refuse bail to those charged with serious crimes in the name of protecting their children.

Andrews decided to put forth his private members' bill when he saw a documentary — "Dear Zachary" — about what happened.

"It started from that moment in December in '08, and we moved it along, got it drafted, went through a number of drafts, found something that was acceptable, and lo and behold, got it to the House (of Commons). And with help of Senator Tommy Banks, we got it through the Senate," he said, adding that the Bagbys are excited by the new law.

"It gives them some sense that someone has heard their cries so this will not happen again, to change the law to make sure something this tragic will never happen again," he said, adding that it will still be several weeks before the effects will be seen.

"These processes now normally take three or four months for the (federal) Justice Department to send word to the provincial departments of Justice and down through the system, saying that the Criminal Code has changed," he said. "At some point in the future we'll see this law enacted and a judge at that time will deny bail because of this provision, and then we'll know that we've accomplished something."

Andrews is also proud of the fact this marks the first time a private member's bill put forth by a Newfoundland MP received royal assent.

"It's pretty amazing to be the first Newfoundland MP to get a private member's bill through Parliament, and in particular through a minority Parliament, too," he said. "That's a point that is not lost when you have to find support from all parties and work with colleagues on both sides of the House and get your bill approved."

Seven years after Zachary Turner was killed by his mother, Shirley, a bill to reform Canada's bail laws sparked by his death has received royal assent. The private member's bill, presented by Liberal Avalon MP Scott Andrews (below) gained royal assent in Ottawa Wednesday. — File photos

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