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**Fall 2007 Communications Strategy  
Department of Health and Community Services**

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| <b><u>Consulted with:</u></b><br>R. Thompson, HCS<br>M. Hennessey, HCS<br>J. Jeans, HCS<br>W. Legge, HCS<br>J. Strong, HCS<br>E. Hunt, HCS<br>F. Stratton, HCS | <b><u>Date:</u></b><br>September 28, 2007 | <b><u>Announcements:</u></b><br>Various, see enclosed. |
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**COMMUNICATIONS ANALYSIS**

**Public Environment**

- ER/PR testing
  - The most prominent issue that has created significant media and public attention are problems identified with Estrogen/Progesterone breast cancer testing (ER/PR). These most certainly have created a loss of confidence in the health care system, and in particular in Eastern Health, with some members of the general public.
  - Opposition leader Gerry Reid and NDP leader Lorraine Michael have linked the errors in testing with the reorganization of the health boards and the creation of what they have called four 'superboards'.
  - Around the time the problems related to ER/PR testing became public, NAPE issued a news release calling on the Provincial Government to undertake an independent review of the health care authorities, stating that they are too large and have become "impossible to manage."
  - In the spring sitting of the house, the Opposition called for the resignation of the current health minister and questioned the role of past health ministers in relation to ER/PR.
  - A judicial inquiry, which was established by the Premier, began its work in July 2007 and is being led by Justice Margaret Cameron. Hearings began in September to determine those who will have standing before the commission. Media coverage was low to moderate. A report by Justice Cameron is anticipated in July 2008.
  - In addition, many patients impacted by incorrect results of ER/PR testing have secured legal counsel and become part of pending class action lawsuits. Media coverage of this aspect of the issue included interviews in local papers with lawyer Blair Rogers, brother of Gerri Rogers, who is one of the patients involved in the class action and is high profile in the community and province as a breast cancer survivor.
  - The resignation of Eastern Health CEO George Tilley, in the wake of the ER/PR issues coming to light, raised even more speculation and criticism of government and Eastern Health. Some, including media and Opposition, speculated that Tilley was 'the sacrificial lamb' for government.
  - As a result of documents released in response to an ATIPPA request in August, details of Tilley's severance package became public and this created further negative reaction, with multiple callers to radio shows condemning the \$250,000 severance amount.
  - The fact that this issue was following on the heels of the ER/PR issue served to heighten the public's reaction and media attention.

**Strategic Considerations**

- The public's confidence in the health care systems has undoubtedly been shaken with the string of negative events related to health care (ER/PR testing, suspension of radiologists, inaccurate information released related to the completion of the Burin radiology review, resignation of Eastern Health CEO, shortage of urologists and delays in radiology reports due to delays in transcription services).

pending class actions related to ER/PR testing will undoubtedly  
public domain for the year to come.

**Communications Objectives:**

- To balance and mitigate criticism and negative feedback that will undoubtedly be created with the high profile nature of the Cameron inquiry.

**COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY****Key Messages**

- Our government is building on a record of strategic health care investments that are working to enhance the health and well-being of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.
- Over the past four years, we increased the annual health care budget by \$600 million and improved access to health care services by enhancing coverage of prescription drugs, investing in new technologies and reducing wait times.
- We have increased the overall budget for health care in each of the last three budgets, with a current budget of \$2.2 billion.
- Our vision is that of a health care system that is responsive and accountable to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, while providing quality care and services now and for future generations.
- Through recent Budget investments, our government has furthered its commitments to reduce the waiting times for diagnostic and treatment procedures and place diagnostic and treatment equipment in regions of the province where it is most needed. Budget 2007 dedicates \$22.3 million investment this year for new diagnostic and capital equipment.
- Health promotion and prevention are critical to better health outcomes and keeping people healthy. To improve the health and well being of our people we have invested significantly in wellness promotion, cancer prevention and treatment, dental programs, as well as in strengthening mental health and addictions services.
- We are building on a record of strength, fulfilled commitments, and unprecedented investments in health care that enhance the well-being and health of our residents. Our commitments announced in Blueprint 2007 are consistent with our vision and our direction over the last four years and we are continuing to work to ensure quality health care for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

**Prepared by: Glenda Power**  
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