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Newsmakers of 1998

Hey, how about that weather? El Nino dominated the 1998 headlines

BY ROY GREEN
STAFF WRITER

The Newsmaker of 1998 isn't Mike Harris or Jean Chretien or even Bill Clinton or Mega-Mayor Mel Lastman or any other noise-making politicians and/or policymakers (though we thank them all for trying).

No, the person who had the most impact on us in 1998 isn't even a real person, but a fictional creation called 'The Little Child' — also known as El Nino.

Let's face it, the most fascinating, captivating, gripping and enduring thing, the single spectacular fact about the year, the incredible stories we'll be telling our grandchildren about the Year of Our Lord 1998 will all centre on the weather.

El Nino made his (her? its?) presence felt very early. A Jan. 8 newspaper headline stated 'Rainy days irritate those who love snow.'

In March, we told you 'We've had a pretty easy year so far.'

In May, 'Summer-like weather makes for cool cash.'

In July, 'Hot spring means farm cornucopia arrives early.'

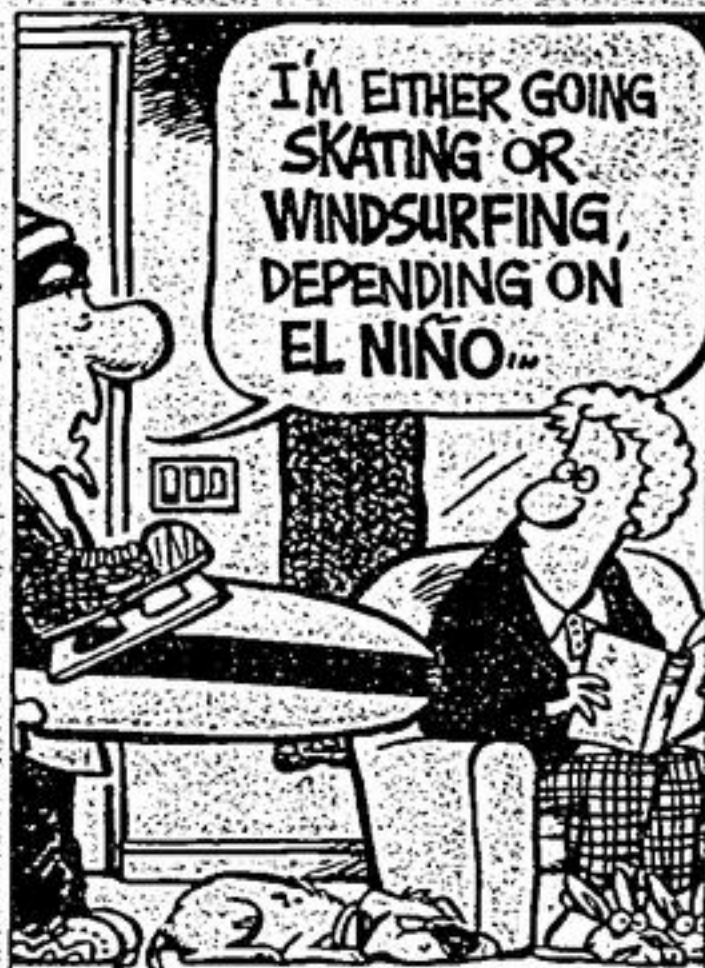
And just a few weeks ago, 'Grass is too green for holiday spirit.'

The awe-inspiring and terrible ice storm in eastern Ontario and Quebec. Dreadful floods in some areas and killing droughts in others.

And in York Region, the incredible absence of winter, followed by an early spring, wonderful summer, spectacular fall and, until recently, barely a sign of winter.

And temperatures that broke records dating back a

See FANTINO, page A-5.



EL NIÑO

What a strange year for weather — that's what makes El Nino one of our newsmakers of 1998.



JULIAN FANTINO

London police chief is hired to lead York Region's beleaguered police force into the future.



BRYAN COUSINEAU

York Region's police chief retired. His tenure was marked by a damning provincial audit.



BILL FISCH

Chairperson strives to build consensus on important regional issues, such as transportation.



TERRI-JEAN BEDFORD

Thornhill dominatrix was found guilty of prostitution-related charges.



DAVE JOHNSON

Education Minister took on striking Catholic teachers and ordered them back to work.

QUOTABLE QUOTES/ Words worth remembering from 1998

'It's common sense there is sex when a naked male who has a rope tied around his penis is being attended to by a female, especially when she is wearing lingerie.'

— JUDGE ROY BOGUSKY

Ruling on the case of Thornhill dominatrix Terri-Jean Bedford, convicted of prostitution-related charges in October.

'Does it take a death in the emergency room for the government to realize there's a crisis in health care? Does it take the death of small business for the province to understand we have a tax issue?'

— DON COUSENS

Markham mayor called on his Greater Toronto Area counterparts to join him in a protest over business tax increases caused by provincial assessments.

'This reminds me of when I was watching TV in Sudbury and they had the results of the Olympics (host site selections). I saw the faces of people when it was announced Vancouver had won. This is our Olympics and we've won it.'

— DAN CARRIERE

York County Hospital president reacts with delight to the news that his facility will be home to a regional cardiac health centre.

'I'm not doing this one day in, one day out. I'm not going to sit around watching the news to see what day I'm supposed to go to school.'

— NICK L'ECUYER

Newmarket High School student grew fed up with threatened labour action by his public secondary teachers.

'What you are teaching the kids is that when the going gets tough, you just walk away.'

— LOULA BIGIONI

The Stouffville parent commented on the impact a Catholic teachers' strike had on students.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW / A year of challenge, a year of opportunity in health care

Region gets a heart centre

BY JENNIFER BROWN
STAFF WRITER

Hospitals may have been desperate for funds in 1998, but Christmas came early to York Region residents requiring cardiac care, with the announcement York County would be the home to a new heart centre.

The first cardiac catheterizations are expected to be performed in February, if the money flows from the Ministry of Health — that will mean significantly less travel time for heart patients.

Serving all of York Region and Simcoe County, the centre, once it's complete in 2000, will provide cardiac surgery, cardiac catheterizations, pacemakers and implantable defibrillator service.

Cardiac catheterization is a

See HOSPITALS, page A-8.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW / Regional chairperson Bill Fisch hopes his council and administration can turn their attention to building the future ... instead of putting out provincial fires.

Are we ready for the new millennium?

BY LISA QUEEN
STAFF WRITER

York Region chairperson Bill Fisch wants to stop putting out fires created by the provincial government.

Not that he expected 1998 to be easy. With massive growth on the horizon and the downloading of provincial services to regional governments, Fisch knew York had a full agenda.

It's just that the rookie chairperson didn't expect Queen's Park to keep changing policies surrounding Ontario's new property tax system.

As far as Fisch is concerned, the Tories created chaos for property taxpayers and for the municipal politicians left scrambling to keep up.

'We have been putting out fires and reacting to things that occurred almost on a daily basis,' he said.

'I don't mind change, but not when it changes every day.'

As a result, the region is far from achieving the goals council established at a retreat last winter.

By early next year, council was hoping to have a regional fire department in the five urban municipalities and a regionally integrated transit system.

Fisch estimated the move would save taxpayers at least \$100 million over the

See TAXES, page A-7.



STAFF PHOTOGRAPH BY ALARY

Regional chairperson Bill Fisch said council reacted to provincial directives almost every day. As a result, the region is far from reaching some of the goals it established.

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