

The Edmonton Journal and La Presse Newspapers (1959-2006): A Comparison in Delivering the Message of Winter in Canada

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ABSTRACT

While both newspapers are printed in Canada, *La Presse* is published in French in Eastern Canada (Montreal, Quebec) while The Edmonton Journal is published in English in Western Canada (Edmonton, Alberta). A total of 10 winters (from November 1 to April 30 focusing on page 1 and 3 of the newspapers) ranging from 1959 to 2006 were selected: 1959-60, 1965-66, 1970-71, 1975-76, 1980-81, 1985-86, 1990-91, 1995-96, 2000-01 and 2005-06. Each article talking about winter was recorded and analyzed. Overall, 2027 articles were classified into several categories (Snowstorm/Accident/Death, Sport/Tourism, Debates/Ideas, Crime, International News, etc.). Hence *La Presse* newspaper tends to deliver a very negative image about winter while The Edmonton Journal writes on a broader spectrum about winter and tends to be less negative about the cold season.

Keywords: winter, snow, cold, The Edmonton Journal, La Presse, Canada

INTRODUCTION

Canada is a Nordic country. For most of Southern Canada snow may start falling as early as mid-October and stays on the ground generally from mid-to-late November until about early April. Montreal (± 4 million people) gets on the average about 225 cm of snowfall with frequent snowstorms, while Edmonton (± 1 million people) is drier (124 cm, see Table 1).

Table 1 Average monthly snowfall (1971-2000 in cm)

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Edmonton average=123.5cm	24.5	15.8	16.8	13.4	3.5				1.5	7.8	17.9	22.3
Montreal average=226.2cm	45.9	46.6	36.8	11.8	0.4					2.2	24.9	57.8

Source: www.climate.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/climate_normals Edmonton municipal airport station (downtown Edmonton, Alberta) and Montreal McGill station (downtown Montreal, Quebec)

Montreal is slightly warmer (average is -8.9° in January, the coldest month) than Edmonton (-11.7° C, see Table 2) in the wintertime.

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Table 2 Average monthly temperature (1971-2000 in Celsius)

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Edmonton average=3.9°C	- 11.7	- 8.4	- 2.6	5.5	11.7	15.5	17.5	16.6	11.3	5.6	- 4.1	- 9.6
Montreal average=7.4°C	-8.9	- 7.2	- 1.2	7.0	14.5	19.3	22.3	20.8	15.7	9.2	2.5	- 5.6

Source: See Table 1.

METHODOLOGY

For this ten-year winter period, every single page from both newspapers was checked from November 1 to April 30. Emphasis was made on headlines and the first 10 lines (Toupin et al. 2009) focusing on words such as: “winter, cold, snow” mainly published on page 1 (front page) and 3 (most visible after page 1).

A total of 2027 articles (1133 for The Edmonton Journal; 56%, and 894 for La Presse; 44%) was tracked down. The content of each article was labelled as negative (with words such as “bad, extremely cold, death”, etc.), positive (with words such as “good, beautiful, enjoyable”, etc.) or neutral (with neither negative nor positive terms). A seven-category classification (Toupin et al, 2009) was developed from this set of data for La Presse: 1-) Snowstorm/Accident/Death; usually the most common theme and the more negative one, 2-) Sport/Tourism (excluding professional sports), 3-) Editorial/Opinion, 4-) Crime, 5-) International News, 6-) Festivals and 7-) Environment. The same classification was used for The Edmonton Journal but three other topics were added: 8-) Social Interest/Well-being, 9-) Delay/Damage/Closing and 10-) Economic Impacts. The location on the page (top left, top right, middle, bottom left, bottom right), length of every article and pictures were also noted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

While the amount of articles decreases as years go by in La Presse (363 in 1959-60, 59 in 2005-06), the number of articles remain just about the same for The Edmonton Journal (Table 3). No correlation was found (Toupin, 2000) between the type of winter and the number of articles (a very snowy winter did not produce more articles than a dry one). It has been found (de Bonville, 1995; Barbier and Bertho-Lavenir, 1996) that La Presse has specialized from the mid -1950’s to the 21st century which explains the reduction in numbers for articles focusing on winter

Table 3 Number of articles per theme for The Edmonton Journal 1959-2006

Winter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	total	%total
1959-1960	41	38	1	1	3	2	10	2	6	0	104	9.2
1965-1966	39	15	1	0	7	17	4	7	7	4	101	8.9
1970-1971	30	26	1	1	6	2	3	2	6	3	80	7.1
1975-1976	52	14	2	2	13	3	9	6	6	15	122	10.8
1980-1981	67	17	1	1	7	0	3	12	5	8	121	10.7
1985-1986	49	21	2	0	11	10	3	11	3	7	117	10.3
1990-1991	46	17	2	1	5	7	3	11	6	3	101	8.9
1995-	80	4	1	1	3	5	5	4	8	15	126	11.1

Winter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	total	%total
1996												
2000-2001	73	25	4	3	5	7	4	6	3	9	139	12.2
2005-2006	60	15	5	0	6	5	7	7	9	8	122	10.8
Total	537	192	20	10	66	58	51	68	59	72	1133	100.0
%Total	47.4	17.0	1.8	0.9	5.8	5.1	4.4	6.0	5.2	6.4	100.0	

1.Snowstorm/Accident/Death, 2.Sport-Tourism, 3.Debates/Ideas, 4.Crime, 5.International News, 6.Festivals, 7. Environment, 8. Social Interest/Well-being, 9.Delay/Damage/Closing, 10. Economic Impacts. Publicity and professional sports were omitted as well as a small number of articles that would not fall into any specific category.

Table 4 Number of articles per theme for *La Presse* (1959-2006)

Winter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total	% Total
1959-1960	102	104	20	4	48	14	63	355	40.0
1965-1966	50	24	13	2	22	7	14	132	15.0
1970-1971	18	15	5	1	6	0	9	54	6.0
1975-1976	13	27	3	1	1	1	14	60	6.5
1980-1981	7	8	8	0	8	0	15	46	5.0
1985-1986	17	3	5	0	10	1	11	47	5.2
1990-1991	9	3	4	0	6	1	7	30	3.3
1995-1996	9	11	3	0	11	2	17	53	6.0
2000-2001	28	12	1	1	9	12	2	65	7.3
2005-2006	23	16	1	0	5	6	1	52	5.7
Total	276	223	63	9	126	44	153	894	100.0
% Total	31.0	25.0	7.0	1.0	14.0	5	17.0	100.0	

1. Snowstorm/Accident/Death, 2.Sport-Tourism, 3.Debates/Ideas, 4.Crime, 5.International News, 6.Festivals, 7. Environment. . Publicity and professional sports were omitted as well as a small number of articles that would not fall into any specific category.

Theme 1 (Snowstorm/Accident/Death) and 2 (Sport/Tourism) were the most frequent articles published for this period (1959-2006) by both newspapers (The Edmonton Journal; theme 1: 47.4% and theme 2: 17%, La Presse; theme 1: 31%, theme 2: 25%, see Table 3 and 4). Theme 7 (Environment) scores third for La Presse (17%) and theme 5 (International News) comes in fourth position at 14%. On the other hand, theme 3 all the way to theme 10 for The Edmonton Journal remains marginal (percentage varies from 0.9% for Crime to 6.4% for Economic Impacts, although close to 18% of all the articles published by The Edmonton Journal fall into categories that didn't exist in La Presse: Social Interest/Well-being; 6%, Delay/Damage/Closing; 5.2%, Economic Impacts; 6.4%).

Most articles (about 60%) were published in the months of January and February for both newspapers. While the vast majority of all articles (894, or about two-thirds) published by *La Presse* were definitely negative about winter close to half (47.8%) was recorded as neutral from *The Edmonton Journal* (1133) and even one-quarter (24.1%) was positive towards winter. Negative articles published by *The Edmonton Journal* accounts for only 15.8% which contrasts greatly from *La Presse*. As years go by, more and more pictures are added to articles (rare in the 1960's from the 1980's onwards notably on the front page) for both newspapers. The size of the average article (doubles from the 1960's to the 21st century, occupying about 10% in the mid-1960's to about 20% today).

PAGE 1 AND 3

As readers tend to pay more attention to page 1 and 3, we have focused more on this segment of the newspapers. While both newspapers tend to publish negative articles on winter (mostly on theme 1: Snowstorm/Accident/Death), once again, *La Presse* is by far more negative in delivering the message of winter (see Table 5).

Table 5 Total of articles published on page 1 and 3

Year	<i>La Presse</i>				<i>The Edmonton Journal</i>			
	Total	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Total	Negative	Positive	Neutral
59-60	68	63	5	0	25	15	5	5
65-66	35	32	3	0	17	15	0	2
70-71	22	19	3	0	18	16	1	1
75-76	20	12	8	0	28	15	6	7
80-81	10	10	0	0	23	12	3	8
85-86	26	24	2	0	22	15	1	6
90-91	16	14	2	0	9	6	0	3
95-96	16	12	4	0	14	10	0	4
00-01	20	7	7	6	11	8	0	3
05-06	7	1	1	5	7	3	4	0
Total	240	194	35	11	174	115	20	39

Overall, 414 articles were published on either page 1 or 3 for this ten-year period: (240 were from *La Presse*, which represents 26.8% of all the articles published (894) from this newspaper, and 174 were from *The Edmonton Journal*, representing 15.4% of all articles (1133) on winter).

La Presse records 81% of negative articles (194/240) while *The Edmonton Journal* has 61%. Both newspapers have roughly the same percentage for positive articles, but *The Edmonton Journal* scores 22 % of all the articles as neutral (39/174) with only 4.5% for *La Presse* (11/240).

CONCLUSION

In Canada, the cold season is an important topic, making frequent headlines in Canadian newspapers from November until April. Snowstorm/Accident/Death is the most common theme published by *La Presse* and *The Edmonton Journal* and generally is the most negative theme published either on the front page, page 3 or elsewhere in the newspaper.

While *La Presse* is very negative about winter (overall, 2 articles out of 3 focus on negative aspects of winter, and that negativity increases to 81% if one reads articles published on page 1 and 3), *The Edmonton Journal* is more optimistic about the cold season (about 24% of all the material published on winter is positive) and is more neutral (close to half of all articles published) than *La Presse*. This positivity is also noticed for page 1 and 3, usually the most common pages read by the public.

The Edmonton Journal also offers a wider (15%) variety of topics on winter, writing notably on economic and social (usually in a positive way) aspects of winter on a more regular basis than *La Presse*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Funding for this project was provided by the University of Alberta, Canada. Special thanks to research assistants Alice Prophete and Shannon Robinson.

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