



LAUREN STIEGLITZ

ALL IN A ROW Newspaper boxes are popping up all over town giving city dwellers more options for free reading material.

New dailies press into Edmonton

CHLOÉ FEDIO
Managing Editor

The streets of Edmonton got a little more crowded last week with the launch of two free daily newspapers, CanWest's *RushHour* and Sun Media's *24 Hours*, with a third, *Metro*, queued at the printers for its 2 April release. Despite a general trend toward declining circulation numbers in Canadian print media, these quick and easy-to-read dailies are targeting those who aren't regular readers of traditional newspapers.

"People still enjoy tactile experience, and reading is one of those things when you do it with a book or a magazine or a newspaper," said Bill McDonald, *Metro's* group publisher for English Canada. "The problem has been that the way that printed material has been delivered does not appeal to a younger generation as much as it does to an older generation."

In May 2006, CanWest's *Dose*, a daily magazine aimed at the 18-34 demographic and distributed in five Canadian cities including Edmonton, ended its print run a little over a year of its launch, choosing to focus entirely on its online component. *Dose* initially began distributing 40 000 copies in both Edmonton and Calgary and later reduced its number to 35 000 before folding. But Pat Hutchison, Vice-President (Marketing) at the *Edmonton Journal*, said that *RushHour* and *Dose* are "not in the same camp at all."

"I don't think there is a comparison there at all. They are different products, and certainly their target audiences were different," Hutchison said.

"*Dose* was not a daily newspaper in the traditional sense. Their content was not truly news; it was more of a magazine-style approach to daily journalism," McDonald echoed, adding that the audience for a publication like *Dose* was limited. "It wasn't that there was no interest in *Dose*, it's just that it was a very expensive

venture to reach a very narrow target. It's not the same target that were going after."

Still, all three new dailies, which were each recently launched in Calgary too, are targeting those who don't consistently read a purchased daily newspaper. John Wildgust, communications adviser for Sun Media pointed to the strength of the Alberta market and suggested that since "it's sustaining a lot of growth in other areas," the new dailies are expected to follow suit.

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BILL MCDONALD,
METRO GROUP PUBLISHER

"Certainly, the number of competitors will make it more difficult for each one," Hutchison added.

While *RushHour* is printing a modest 5000 per day, *24 Hours* has a significantly higher print run at 50 000 daily, and *Metro* is planning on distributing 60 000 per day. The free dailies come in addition to the two for-purchase dailies, CanWest's *Edmonton Journal* and Sun Media's *Edmonton Sun*, and Edmonton's two free weeklies, *See Magazine* and *Vue Weekly*.

Carolyn Nikodym, Managing Editor at *Vue*, doesn't think that the new dailies, which are targeting a broader audience, will have an impact on Edmonton's weekly magazines. Still, she was still skeptical of whether Edmonton was ready for three new additions to the media market.

"I think that one of them could

probably survive," Nikodym said.

She explained that *Vue* distributes 26 000 copies a week—in Edmonton and surrounding cities like Red Deer, Fort McMurray and Jasper—and suggested that *24 Hours* and *Metro's* distribution targets were a little ambitious.

"From what I understand, they're shooting for numbers of circulation that's pretty high. I don't think that we're a commuter market in the same way that Vancouver and Toronto are; we don't have a lot of people riding public transit as much as those cities, so I don't think [the dailies] will get picked up as much," she said.

However, Hutchison said that there was a demand for free newspapers in Edmonton, which offer on-the-go reading during the daily commute.

"An underdeveloped transit system is correct when you compare it to places like Vancouver and Toronto, but you also have to understand that Alberta is a very interesting market for national advertisers and as our economy remains hot, that's where a lot of the interest is in expanding distribution," Hutchison said.

A 2006 Statistics Canada report outlined an ongoing trend of declining profit margins for Canadian newspapers—particularly with purchased dailies—which profited 13.3 per cent in 2005 compared to 15.1 per cent in 2003. The losses were attributed to higher printing and distribution costs, and pointed to the Internet and its online media as changing the way people access their news.

But despite that, Wildgust argued that online media isn't always accessible, and that there is still a role for print media in today's society.

"The bottom line of this is that communities are well-served when people are better informed, and certainly by reading some sort of newspaper people are better informed than the alternative, which would be to not have a newspaper in their life whatsoever," Wildgust said.

NEWS BRIEF

RIBBON ROUGE RAISING AWARENESS AND FUNDS FOR HIV/AIDS

Dinwoodie Lounge will become a lot more colourful on Friday night when it hosts the second-annual Ribbon Rouge Arts Night fundraiser for HIV/AIDS. Hosted by the University of Alberta's African Caribbean society, the event will feature an African-influenced fashion show, live music, dancers and an art silent auction.

"It originally started as a means of raising money for HIV/AIDS. I feel really passionately about it because I go home to Nigeria regularly and see how it affects people there in reality," said Nikky Olaosebikan, the program's

founder. "I felt like I should make a donation, but I'm just a student."

Instead, the U of A pharmacy student created Ribbon Rouge as a way for students to give to a worthy cause.

"I knew that there are other students like me who would be willing to donate their talent and time, so we came up with the idea of a fashion and art show," she said.

Last year, Ribbon Rouge raised over \$2800 for the Stephen Lewis Foundation, which supports the victims of HIV/AIDS in Africa. This year organizers hope to be able to donate nearly \$4000. This year's show will feature a variety of Edmonton artists and performers whose works will cover a number of music and dance genres.

"It's a range, from hip-hop to R&B to

African dance ensembles," Olaosebikan explained. "And there's going to be a show of African-influenced fashions."

All the clothes in the fashion show are of Olaosebikan's own design, inspired by her trips to Nigeria and her life in Canada. She developed and sewed the clothes from fabric bought in Nigeria.

"It's a blend of Western and African influences," she said. "It's things that you actually see people wearing in African countries, and that I think people here would wear. I don't think they're too costume-y."

The event will begin tomorrow night at 6:30pm. Tickets are \$10 for students and \$15 for adults, and are available at the door or at Students' Union ticket centres.

Robin Collum, News Staff

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