

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

Editorials and opinion pieces are different from regular news stories. They are created to share a perspective and influence beliefs.

Opinion pieces are easily found in most newspapers. The writers—often called columnists—will share their opinions on events of the day. For example, the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* and Regina *Leader-Post* feature regular columns by writers such as Doug Cuthand and Murray Mandryk, who offer valuable perspectives on current events.

Editorials are found in many newspapers. Editorials are unsigned articles written by the newspaper's editorial board. Editorial boards oversee a newspaper or magazine's general direction. Their editorials present the newspaper's "official" opinion on a particular topic. Editorial beliefs are not supposed to directly influence the work of journalists.

The fair and open exchange of ideas in opinion columns and editorials is essential to democratic society.

NEWS OR OPINION?

At one time, editorials and opinion pieces were aired as special segments on TV and radio broadcasts, and placed on a dedicated page in newspapers. The segments were clearly marked as opinion pieces. Often this is no longer the case.

Many legacy media outlets and their online news portals have shifted their focus from providing news to providing opinions. One reason for this shift is that most news organisations are businesses. Businesses try to maximise their profits. It costs less to broadcast opinions than to produce in-depth investigative journalism.

Meanwhile, opinion articles and programs tend to be more popular than investigative journalism. As a result, many news organisations have shifted their focus from journalism to opinions. The prominence of opinions in the news means that citizens should choose their news and information wisely, being aware of the differences between opinions and journalism.

Discuss

1. Why do you think opinion-based programming is more popular than investigative journalism?
2. Find an opinion/editorial that appeared in Saskatchewan's legacy media.
 - a) Is it made clear to the audience that it is an opinion/editorial?
 - b) What is the topic?
 - c) What facts does the opinion/editorial use to support its stance?
 - d) Is the opinion piece a balanced perspective on the issue? Why or why not?
3. Look more closely at your chosen opinion/editorial.
 - a) Who stands to benefit from its stance?
 - b) Who stands to be disadvantaged by its stance?
 - c) Regardless of your personal opinion about the topic, do you think the editorial/opinion adds a valuable perspective to public discussion?

