

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Executive Committee
Friday, February 3, 2023 Meeting

FROM: Michael Tolensky, Chief Financial and Operating Officer

**RE: Q4 COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING, AND EVENTS REPORT
SUMMARY (OCTOBER 1, 2022 TO DECEMBER 31, 2022)**

KEY ISSUE

Information report regarding Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) corporate media communication activities and events during the fourth quarter of 2022 (October 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022).

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Q4 Communications, Marketing and Events Report Summary for October 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022, be received.

BACKGROUND

The Communications, Marketing and Events (CME) business unit with involvement of program areas across TRCA's Divisions carry out corporate communications programs to provide TRCA with a unified voice that aligns consistently with strategic priorities. The work of CME includes monitoring results to identify opportunities for improvements. Working with staff from all divisions and external program and service providers, the business units deliver communications campaigns through traditional media outlets and online social media channels. Content is typically disseminated through materials such as news releases and media advisories, direct outreach to targeted journalists, producers and editors, and responses to incoming media inquiries. Digital campaigns involve posting visual and written content on websites and distribution via social media platforms. All media activity is supported by ongoing assessment and deployment of technology tools and processes to maximize effectiveness.

OVERVIEW:

This report covers communications and marketing activities for TRCA between October 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022, achieved by the Communications, Marketing and Events (CME) Team.

Q4 Successes

1. CME assisted with TRCA's annual TRCA Adventures of Salmon (Oct. 2) by providing guidance with the overall communications plan and support at the event itself to help drive awareness and registration.
2. CME launched an integrated communications plan to promote TRCA Youth opportunities within TRCA. This included targeted messaging, creation of graphics, strategic website updates and scheduling of messages on various digital platforms (TRCA.CA, social media and Newsletters).

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3. CME also assisted with the execution of TRCA's Adventures of Salmon Festival by assisting with the creation and execution of the communications plan that helped to drive awareness of the 2022 Adventures of Salmon Festival. With the event moving back to an in-person event, the event was considered sold out based on registration.

Key Q4 Communications Metrics

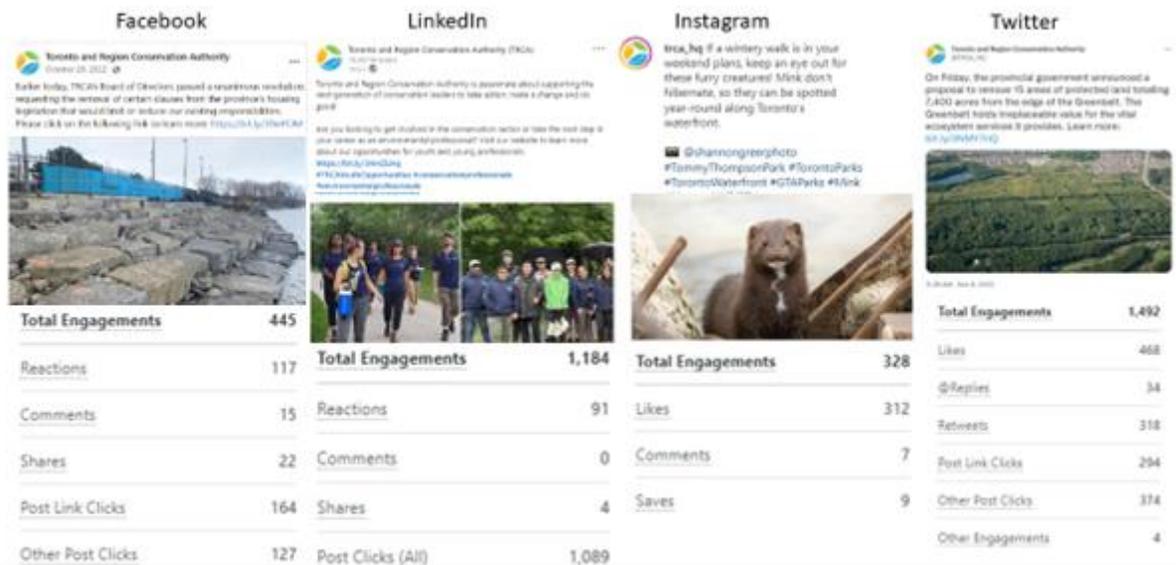
1. A total of **55** newsletter campaigns were issued with an average open rate (AOR) of **43.40%** and a click rate (CR) of **6.83%** which is above the benchmarks for the non-profit sector (25.17% AOR / 2.79% CR). These rates remained well above the total average for all industry standards (21.33% AOR / 2.62% CR).
2. Social media audience growth rate was **2.6%** from Q3 2022 to Q4 2022. Social media audience engagement increased **57.3%** from Q3 2022 to Q4 2022 with a total of **73,254** interactions during Q4 2022. The increase was largely due to Facebook and LinkedIn engagement increasing **56%** and **150%** respectively. Interaction increase during Q4 can be traced to actively providing more ways for viewers to be interactive, such as; viewing more photos, asking for feedback and incorporating more videos into our weekly posts. TRCA's Facebook account continues to account for the most direct links to TRCA's website.
3. Total traffic on www.trca.ca during the year (Jan-Dec) totalled 2.20 Million visits, down 14% from the previous year in 2021 (2.51 Million). This most likely is due in large part to the decrease in Paid Google Ads purchased in 2022 compared to the previous year due to utilizing an outside vendor and limiting the ads to specific campaigns.

Q4 Social Activity

During Q4 2022, social media content focused on the promotion of "Things to Do" and "Places to Visit" relating to TRCA Parks, events that TRCA offered, but also included news related to provincial government announcements. Major campaigns of note included TRCA's efforts around promoting Conservation Park passes and activities available at TRCA Parks, while also focusing on a Youth campaign to highlight the number of opportunities TRCA offers for youth to get involved with our efforts and programs.

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TRCA's top organic posts per social media account were as follows;



1. The top **Facebook** post highlighted above received the most total engagements because of the nature of the content relating to changes in government policy that could affect the natural environment and public safety related to flooding. The post saw a number of comments and “Link” click throughs to the full story on trca.ca.
2. The top **LinkedIn** post did well in terms of overall engagement due in part to the nature of the content as it related to “Youth” opportunities resonating with both young and older demographics on LinkedIn.
3. The top **Instagram** post did well in terms of engagement as images of animals, birds and other species when posted on Instagram generally do well with increased engagement, such as “likes”.
4. The top **Twitter** post highlighted above received the most total engagements because of the nature of the content relating to changes in government policy affecting lands that were considered protected garnishing strong reactions from citizens in the GTA. The post’s engagement included a high click through rate to the full story on trca.ca.

Q4 Events Summary

TRCA’s Events team provides strategic direction and assistance to all TRCA business units as required, to stage or participate in successful events, and takes the lead in managing signature TRCA events.

The Events team coordinated and implemented the following events in Q4.

Jim Tovey Lakeview Conservation Area Site Tour

On November 4th, TRCA and Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) hosted an on-site visit to the Jim Tovey Lakeview Conservation Area project site. Staff from TRCA and CVC provided an overview of the project, a progress report and led discussions around what the community can look forward to upon completion of the project.

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Participants were shuttled around the property and visited various sites including:

- Cell 1, to learn about the design features and creation of the Serson Creek wetland;
- The Promontory, to learn about the public realm component and terrestrial restoration; and
- The Central Cobble Beach and Amphitheatre, to learn about shoreline protection and offshore islands and their construction process.

This project would not be possible without significant support from the Region of Peel and the City of Mississauga and close cooperation on securing all necessary approvals from senior levels of government.

There were many dignitaries in attendance including: MPP Rudy Cuzzetto, CVC Chair Tom Adams, Councillor John Brennan, Councillor Stephen Dasko, TRCA Chair Jennifer Innis, TRCA Board member Maria Kelleher, Mayor Bonnie Crombie, Mayor Sandy Brown, and Mayor Allan Thompson.

Seasonal Staff Learning Day

On December 7th, TRCA hosted a learning day for seasonal staff. 40 seasonal staff from across the organization participated in this engaging and in-depth tour of Tommy Thompson Park and Black Creek Pioneer Village. The day began with a warm welcome and introduction from members of TRCA's SLT team and then staff embarked on a school bus to learn about the many programs at Tommy Thompson Park and the work that is being done at Ashbridges Bay.

Staff returned to Black Creek to continue learning about the Black Creek land use and trail planning, the Super Trail connection through Boyd Conservation Park and the role of planning throughout these processes. The day ended with an interactive walking tour of the Village where staff learned about the history and future vision of Black Creek.

TRCA Staff Pancake Breakfast

On December 14th, TRCA hosted its annual staff pancake breakfast at the Kortright Centre for Conservation. After a two-year hiatus, staff came together to enjoy a wonderful breakfast with their colleagues. 335 staff were in attendance in addition to previous TRCA Vice Chair Jack Heath.

Event Spotlight - TRCA Adventures of Salmon

On October 2nd, TRCA Adventures of Salmon (formerly called The Salmon Festival) returned in-person after a 2-year hiatus due to Covid-19.

This free community event attracted more than 1,900 participants who engaged in a self-guided tour along the trails to view the annual Salmon migration from Lake Ontario and up Highland Creek as it passes through Morningside Park.

Participants explored the marked trail and engaged in educational activities about Salmon and their migration, along with enjoyment of these natural spaces. Staff further encouraged the community to be stewards for the creeks and rivers of the bioregion to ensure water quality and habitats are safe for Salmon to maintain their life cycle.

As part of this event, TRCA staff also hosted two smaller guided walk events to view and learn about salmon. 18 participants took part in the October 15th walk at Étienne

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Brûlé Park and 34 participants took part in the October 16th walk at Bob Hunter Memorial Park.

Q4 Media Coverage – Summary

Requests for information or interviews occurred from various members of the media during Q4 2022 either through:

- our Media Request Form on our website
- our media email alias
- directly to our Communications and Media Relations Specialist
- our information email alias regarding media/research requests
- reaching out to other staff at TRCA who notified the CME team

TRCA received **15** requests in Q4 through our online Media Request form. Of the 15 total requests, **5** were for TV/Radio, with the remaining related to print or online.

Highlighted below is a combination of the following:

- Media requests to TRCA that resulted in media coverage.
- Additional organic coverage where TRCA was mentioned by name or TRCA's key findings/reports were referenced.
- Articles that resulted directly from TRCA issuing a press release.

October 2022

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
October 27, 2022	Metroland	YOU ASKED: Solve the mystery — what are those boxes beside the Humber River trail in Bolton?	STORY LINK
<i>Relates to Environmental Education. Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and Credit Valley Conservation install bat boxes to provide animal habitats.</i>			
October 31, 2022	Toronto Star	Does Doug Ford's new housing bill cut natural disaster protections for developments? GTA mayors ask for 'pause' to sort out plan.	STORY LINK
<i>Relates to the risks to homeowners and the environment with the province's new housing bill and changes to the Conservation Authorities Act, and the desire of GTA mayors to pause the bill to discuss the concerns further.</i>			

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November 2022

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
November 1, 2022	Royal Ontario Museum	Great Lakes, Great Invaders	STORY LINK
<i>Relates to the prevention of a Grass Carp invasion in the Great Lakes to protect native fish and water conditions. TRCA named as a partner of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada to surveil the Great Lakes and for photo credit.</i>			
November 4, 2022	CBC Kids News	A 'unicorn' catch: Toronto fish is good sign for the ecosystem	STORY LINK
<i>Relates to returning muskie population in Toronto Harbour and improving ecosystem.</i>			
November 23, 2022	Toronto Star	'Conservation authority prepares for battle over unauthorized wetlands clearing	STORY LINK
<i>Kelly LaRocca, elected Chief of the Mississauga's of Scugog Island First Nation, released a statement on Monday condemning the destruction and it was noted that TRCA had not granted permission to alter the wetlands.</i>			

December 2022

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
December 14, 2022	Toronto.com	Jim Tovey Lakeview Conservation Area project received 'Reach Out' Brownie Award	STORY LINK
<i>Relates to the Jim Tovey Lakeview Conservation Area project receiving "Reach Out" Brownie Award for excellence in communications, marketing and public engagement.</i>			
December 15, 2022	The Weather Network	The most epic Santa visits in the Greater Toronto Area	STORY LINK
<i>Relates to Christmas town at Black Creek Pioneer Village. Mention in the article removed upon event completion, but still appears in main video.</i>			
December 24, 2022	Toronto Star	Toronto winter storm updates: More than a third of flights cancelled at Pearson airport; up to 100 vehicles involved in collisions on 401	STORY LINK
<i>Relates to hazardous conditions due to rain, snow melt and rising water levels. References a water safety message TRCA issued on December 22.</i>			
December 26, 2022	The Narwal	Our top images from 2022 speak to the resilience of nature and	STORY LINK

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		the power of the human spirit	
<i>Features Tommy Thompson Park and its unique offerings.</i>			
December 30, 2022	CityNews	Significant rainfall expected in Toronto, southern Ontario through weekend	<u>STORY LINK</u>
<i>Relates to significant rainfall. Referenced TRCA's 'Watershed Conditions Statement.'</i>			

Media Releases:

TRCA was involved with 3 Media Releases this quarter, which led to additional media coverage:

Date of Media List Distribution	Joint Release	Link
October 28, 2022	TRCA RESPONDS TO THE MORE HOMES BUILT FASTER ACT AND ASSOCIATED POSTINGS AND PROPOSED CHANGES TO HOUSING AND LAND USE POLICIES	https://trca.ca/news/trca-response-more-homes-built-faster-act-proposed-changes-housing-land-use-policies/
November 8, 2022	TRCA RESPONDS TO PLANNED DEVELOPMENT OF 50,000 NEW HOMES ON PROTECTED GREENBELT LAND	https://trca.ca/news/response-development-homes-protected-greenbelt-land/
November 25, 2022	TRCA RECIPIENT OF 2022 REACH OUT BROWNIE AWARD FOR WORK ON JIM TOVEY LAKEVIEW CONSERVATION AREA PROJECT	https://trca.ca/news/2022-brownie-award-jim-tovey-lakeview/

The above releases also resulted in significant follow up including television and radio interviews including interviews of TRCA's CEO on CBC's Metro Morning and CBC Toronto evening news.

Q4 Key Learnings

1. Utilizing Facebook and Instagram stories and reels as a way to further promote TRCA initiatives has increased overall engagement. The additional efforts have also provided a platform to showcase the personalities of the Board of Directors and staff at TRCA. An emphasis will be made to continue these efforts across all our programs and to actively involve new members of the Board of Directors as a key part of our External Communications Strategy.
2. Proactively sending out Event information to media contacts before TRCA signature events has helped gain organic coverage on 3rd party event calendars.

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A focus to continue this effort will be part of all TRCA event communication plans.

3. A continued focus on the overall organization content calendar will be a priority into 2023 as the calendar provides a clear view (month by month and week by week) of the messages that need to be scheduled in advance.

2023 Q1 Look Ahead

Below is a list of upcoming communications activities set for Q1 2023:

1. Communication support will be provided during Q1 to promote the following:
 - Summer Camp Registration
 - Summer Job Recruitment
 - Spring Break Activities (PA Day Camps, BCPV and Kortright activities, other TRCA Parks)
 - TRCA Maple Syrup Event
 - Source to Stream Conference
 - TRCA's Winter Contest
2. Planning of communication support will begin for TRCA major events, including:
 - TRCA Bike the Creek
 - TRCA TTP Spring Bird Festival at TTP

Relationship to TRCA's 2022-2034 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following Pillar and Outcome set forth in TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan:

Pillar 4 Service Excellence:

- 4.3 Responsive relationships and a trusted brand with a reputation for excellence

Report prepared by: Michael Bortolussi, Leigh Mitchell, Crystal Lee, Sabrina Minnella

Emails: michael.bortolussi@trca.ca; leigh.mitchell@trca.ca; crystal.lee@trca.ca; sabrina.minnella@trca.ca

For Information contact: Michael Tolensky, (437) 880-2278

Email: michael.tolensky@trca.ca

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