

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors
Friday, April 14, 2023 Meeting

FROM: Michael Tolensky, Chief Financial and Operating Officer

RE: **Q1 COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING, AND EVENTS REPORT SUMMARY (JANUARY 1 - MARCH 31, 2023)**

KEY ISSUE

Information report regarding Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) corporate media communication activities during the first quarter of 2023 (January 1 - March 31, 2023).

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Q1 Communications, Marketing and Events Report Summary for January 1 - March 31, 2023, 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 and monitors 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 January 1 - March 31, 2023, achieved by the Communications, Marketing and Events (CME) Team.

Q1 Successes

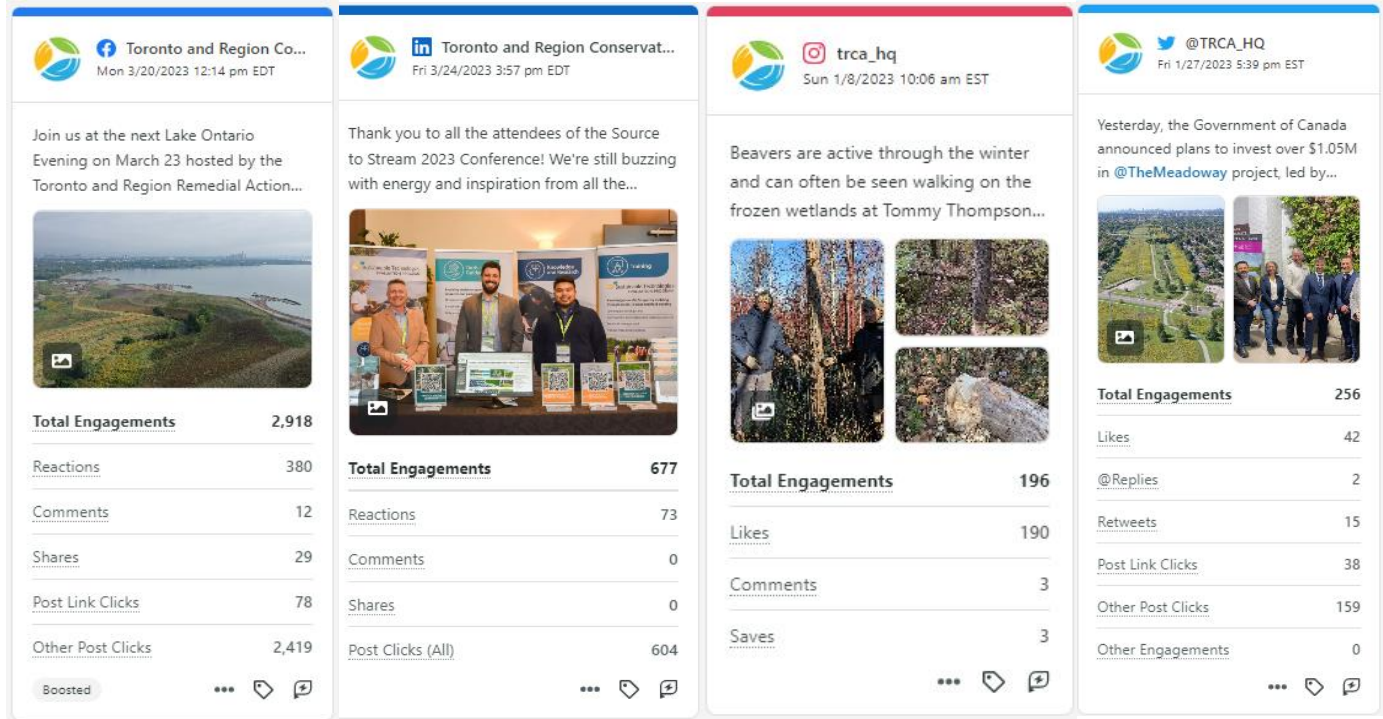
1. CME assisted with multiple announcements involving the federal government, municipal partners associated with grants from Infrastructure Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada for projects including The Meadoway, restoration work, and trails and infrastructure within Conservation Parks.
2. CME assisted with TRCA's annual Maple Syrup Festival (March 4 – April 1) by providing guidance with the overall communications plan, technical support related to registration and digital assets and the creation of marketing materials to help drive awareness and registration.
3. CME assisted with TRCA's annual Source to Stream Conference (March 22-23) by providing guidance with the overall communications plan, creation of marketing materials to help drive awareness, technical support related to registration and digital assets and registration and onsite support.
4. CME launched a series of stories/blogs to help promote specific service areas related to TRCA's efforts throughout the GTA. This included messaging for the public about TRCA's Flood Forecasting and Warning Program and a focus on TRCA's Sustainable Technologies Evaluation Program (STEP) and the program's efforts to build safer, healthier, and more resilient communities.

Key Q1 Communications Metrics

1. A total of **39** newsletter campaigns were issued with an average open rate (AOR) of **48.04%** and a click rate (CR) of **10.09%** 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 **2.9%** from Q4 2022 to Q1 2023. Social media audience engagement increased **2.8%** from Q4 2022 to Q1 2023 with a total of **69,690** interactions during Q1 2023. The increase was largely due to Facebook engagement increasing **14%**. The interaction increase during Q1 can be traced to continuing to provide 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 Q1 2023 totalled **473K** visits, an increase of **21%** from Q4 2022 (390K). This most likely is due in large part to the Paid Google Ads purchased at the start of 2023 to promote seasonal hiring as well as the TRCA Summer Camp registration opening.

Q1 Social Activity

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



1. The top **Facebook** post related to Toronto Island. The post received the most total engagements because of the nature of the content relating to the many large-scale projects currently underway on Toronto Island and the popularity of the Island itself as a key recreation destination for many across the GTA.
2. The top **LinkedIn** post did well in terms of overall engagement due in part to the nature of the content. The top post related to the reemergence of TRCA's Source to Stream Conference as a live event and the number of professionals on LinkedIn showing their appreciation and involvement with the conference .
3. The top **Instagram** post did well in terms of engagement as it included images of animals, such as beavers and other species. These images when posted on Instagram do well with increased engagement, such as "likes".
4. The top **Twitter** post received the most total engagements because of the nature of the content relating to The Meadoway. Project and how well the project is received across the GTA.

Q1 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 Q1.

TRCA's Annual General Meeting

On January 13th, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) held its annual general meeting and marked the event with the recognition of thirteen members reaching service milestones of 3, 10 and 15 years of dedicated service on TRCA's Board of Directors.

The Nature Centre at Bruce's Mill launch and TRCA's Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival

On March 4, visitors dug their way out of the massive snowstorm to attend the opening day of TRCA's annual Maple Syrup Festival at Bruce's Mill Conservation Park in Stouffville and Kortright Centre for Conservation in Vaughan.

A ceremony was held in the afternoon to commemorate and formally recognize the naming and opening of The Nature Centre at Bruce's Mill.

The Nature Centre at Bruce's Mill will be a community hub with a four-season presence delivering a suite of educational programs for public visitors, summer camps, school, and corporate groups. Visitors will be able to experience events such as the Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival, York Children's Water Festival, Conservation Youth Corps programs, nature-based summer camp programming, season-based programming (including Halloween and winter wreath making events), and much more.

Distinguished guests that attended the ceremony and provided remarks included:

- Paul Ainslie, Chair of TRCA's Board of Directors and City of Toronto Councillor
- Paul Chiang, Member of Parliament for Markham-Unionville and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion
- Leah Taylor Roy, Member of Parliament for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill
- The Honourable Paul Calandra, Member of Provincial Parliament for Markham—Stouffville and Minister of Long-Term Care
- Iain Lovatt, Mayor of Stouffville

Other distinguished guests in attendance included:

- Dave Barton, Vice-Chair of TRCA's Board of Directors and Mayor of Uxbridge

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- Hugo Kroon, Member of TRCA's Board of Directors and Councillor of Stouffville

TRCA's Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival ran from Saturday March 4 until Saturday April 1st attracting over 33,000 visitors.

Canada Community Revitalization Fund (CCRF) Announcement – Richmond Hill

On March 16th, Leah Taylor Roy, Member of Parliament for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill announced that \$236,000 in funding from the Canada Community Revitalization Fund (CCRF) was invested to support the completion of TRCA's Oak Ridges Lake to Lake Trail Project.

The Oak Ridges Lake to Lake Trail Project is a newly completed 630-metre-long, multi-use trail connection within the conservation reserve. Helping complete 10% of the remaining Lake to Lake Trail left to build in Richmond Hill, the trail is a valuable addition.

Completed at the end of 2022, the extensive trail system now provides an additional entry point into the conservation reserve. It facilitates off-road connectivity to transit and is improving community access to outdoor recreation and facilities such as the Oak Ridges Community Centre and Pool, Lake St. George Field Centre, and Swan Lake Outdoor Education Centre. This project will improve visitor experiences at Bruce's Mill Conservation Park by rejuvenating and increasing the provision of various park infrastructure, allowing more people to re-engage with their communities and nature.

CEO John MacKenzie provided remarks on behalf of TRCA and Richmond Hill's Deputy Mayor and Regional Councillor Godwin Chan was in attendance.

Canada Community Revitalization Fund (CCRF) Announcement – Heart Lake

On March 26th, Ruby Sahota, Member of Parliament for Brampton North announced an investment of \$666,825 in funding from the Canada Community Revitalization Fund (CCRF) to improve the infrastructure of the park.

The funding will be put towards adding fifty new picnic tables, upgrading washrooms to improve accessibility components where possible, and reconstruction and improvements will be completed on the swimming pool deck.

Planned trail improvements also include three wayfinding kiosks with accessibility information, two culverts to promote better water flow, and a new set of pedestrian access gates. Additionally, park access roads and parking lots will be paved and repaired.

These upgrades will greatly improve accessibility and the overall experience of the approximately 250,000 annual visitors, of every age and ability, from across the Greater Toronto Area.

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CEO John MacKenzie provided remarks on behalf of TRCA and Marketing Director, Mike Stiell provided remarks on behalf of Treetop Trekking.

Event Spotlight – Source to Stream

On March 21st, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) in association with Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) and Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority (LSRCA), through the Sustainable Technologies Evaluation Program (STEP), hosted Source to Stream (formerly called TRIECA), Canada's premier stormwater and erosion and sediment control conference in-person after a 3-year hiatus due to COVID-19.

The event showcased the work of leading industry experts, influencers and researchers who are shaping the future of stormwater management, low impact development, erosion and sediment control, and stream restoration.

The 2023 event hosted:

- 775 attendees
- 62 exhibitor booths
- 14 student posters (displays)
- 40 presentations

CEO John MacKenzie, along with Darryl Gray, Director of Education and Training provided opening remarks to kick off the conference.

Q1 Media Coverage – Summary

Requests for information or interviews came in from various members of the media during Q1 2023 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 23 requests in Q1 through our online Media Request Form. Of the 37 total requests, 7 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.
- Organic coverage where TRCA was mentioned by name or TRCA's key findings/reports were referenced.
- Coverage that resulted from TRCA posting news releases.

January 2023

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
Jan. 4, 2023	The Pointer	National Wildlife Centre to build first full field hospital in Caledon East this year	STORY LINK
<i>Relates to a wildlife hospital being built by the National Wildlife Centre in Caledon. Information from a TRCA report supported the need for the hospital. No specific staff mentioned.</i>			
Jan. 5, 2023	Durham Region (Metroland)	What's going on here? Ajax wetland restoration project complete	STORY LINK
<i>Highlights the recent completion and importance of a large watershed restoration project in Ajax. Identified TRCA in partnership with Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Region of Durham as players in the project. No specific TRCA staff mentioned.</i>			
Jan. 9, 2023	CityNews	How lack of snow in the GTA could impact snow-dependent attractions and our environment	STORY LINK
<i>Discusses the impact of a lack of snowfall in Toronto on local ecosystems. TRCA was contacted for the article. TRCA's Laura Del Giudice, Associate Director of Watershed Planning and Ecosystem Science, is featured as a subject expert.</i>			
Jan. 11, 2023	Rogers	Toronto and Region Conservation Authority hangs up on traditional business phones	STORY LINK
<i>About the importance of IT and green solutions to achieving TRCA's mission to preserve our environment and protect communities. TRCA was contacted for the article. TRCA's James Dong, Manager of infrastructure, Security and Architecture, is featured.</i>			
Jan. 16, 2023	Forest Ontario (newswire)	Rocket scientist Natalie Panek, climate scientists and forestry experts headline Forests Ontario's 2023 Annual Conference	STORY LINK
<i>Promotion for Forests Ontario's 2023 Annual Conference. TRCA's Jonathan Ruppert, Senior Research Scientist, is highlighted as a speaker.</i>			

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Jan. 17, 2023	Environmental Defense	Flooding soon in a basement near you: the impacts of weakening wetland protection in Ontario	STORY LINK
<i>Relates to Bill 23, the resulting weaking of the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System and its implications. TRCA is named and CEO John MacKenzie's submission on Bill 23 and staff response to a Toronto Star inquiry in December 2022 is quoted to describe the negative impact.</i>			
Jan. 23, 2023	Toronto.com	Scarborough Councillor chosen to lead Toronto and Region Conservation Authority at a challenging time	STORY LINK
<i>Relates to the election of Councillor Paul Ainslie as Chair of TRCA's Board of Directors. Highlights TRCA's major projects in Scarborough and the challenges TRCA faces.</i>			
Jan. 31, 2023	CityNews	Weather ups and downs for maple syrup	STORY LINK
<i>About the impact of temperature/weather on maple syrup production. The TV segment was filmed at Kortright Centre and TRCA's Aldo Missio, Educator, was interviewed as a subject expert.</i>			

February 2023

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
Feb. 7, 2023	CBC Toronto	Researchers are finding 'fatbergs' floating on Toronto's waterfront	STORY LINK
<i>About aquatic pollution in Lake Ontario. TRCA is named as collaborating with PortsToronto in carrying out a Seabin project to collect and remove debris. No specific TRCA staff mentioned.</i>			
Feb. 9, 2023	CTV News at Noon	(live TV segment – jump to 28:47)	STORY LINK
<i>About the heavy rainfall, mild temperature and risks to be aware of. Safety tips also provided. TRCA's Sameer Dhalla, Director of Development and Engineering Services, interviewed as a subject expert.</i>			

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Feb. 11, 2023	The Pointer	Despite Doug Ford's attack on conservation authorities, they continue to protect our water	STORY LINK
<i>About the importance of conservation authorities. TRCA is named as one of the conservation authorities and TRCA's 2023 projects were described. Reporter connected with TRCA, and quotes from email response, CEO John MacKenzie's Peel Council presentation, and information from a conversation Pointer had with Darryl Gray, Director of Education and Training, last year were included.</i>			
Feb. 13, 2023	Beach Metro Community News	Local residents urged to learn more about city's waterfront plans	STORY LINK
<i>About TRCA's upcoming Feb. 23 virtual presentation where Toronto waterfront projects will be discussed. Provides information about the event and what will be covered, encouraging Beach residents to register for the event and engage in the process. TRCA's Jet Taylor, Manager of Capital and Special Projects, named as a panelist.</i>			
Feb. 13, 2023	Just Saying Caledon	Seedy Saturday: Come Get Your Seed On!	STORY LINK
<i>Promotion for a seed exchange and environmental responsibility event on February 25. TRCA's Christopher Bialek, Community Learning Coordinator, named as a speaker at the event, hosting a talk about gardening for pollinators.</i>			
Feb. 17, 2023	Great lakes Echo	Greenspace starts with grassroots	STORY LINK
<i>About the importance of adequate greenspace for communities and considering it in the urban planning of cities to address, the current lack of it. TRCA is named as an advocate for more greenspace. TRCA's Noah Gaetz, Senior Manager of Ecosystem and Climate Science, is quoted.</i>			
Jan. 17, 2023	Caledon Enterprise (Metroland)	Caledon Public Library hosting 'Winter Wonders' event for kids to learn about wildlife	STORY LINK
<i>Promotional article for TRCA's 'Winter Wonders' event on February 23. The event will teach children ages 6-12 about how wildlife survive cold weather and how to recognize their tracks.</i>			
Feb. 21, 2023	The Pointer	PDSB to implement more climate change education	STORY LINK
<i>About the importance of educating people, especially young people, about climate change and protecting the environment. Includes TRCA as an organization that is working to improve education through its Peel EcoSchools, a collaboration with the Peel District School Board. TRCA's Darryl Gray, Director of Education and Training is quoted.</i>			

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Feb. 25, 2023	Toronto Star	Highway 413 environmental impact studies have cost more than \$35 million - but gaps mean Ford government will likely have to spend millions more	<u>STORY LINK</u>
<i>About the negative environmental impact of the Ontario government's highway 413 or GTA West construction project. TRCA was contacted for the story. Highlights environmental concerns raised by TRCA's Sharon Lingertat, Senior Manager of Infrastructure Planning, at a meeting and incorporates our email response about being re-engaged in the project as it moves forward.</i>			

March 2023

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
Mar. 4, 2023	Toronto Star	Toronto prohibits parking on major snow routes as city workers dig out	<u>STORY LINK</u>
<i>About the snowstorm that hit the GTA on March 2. TRCA was contacted for the story. With the warm temperatures that followed the storm, TRCA is mentioned related to flood warnings and safety. TRCA's Craig Mitchell, Associate Director of Engineering Services, is quoted.</i>			
Mar. 8, 2023	Durham Region (Metroland)	What's a wetland and why is it important? Experts discuss Ajax and Pickering projects	<u>STORY LINK</u>
<i>About the wetland restoration work Ducks Unlimited Canada and TRCA is doing in Durham region and its importance. TRCA was contacted for the story. TRCA's Clifton Coppolino, Senior Project Manager of Restoration Projects, is quoted.</i>			
Mar. 12, 2023	The Pointer	Heart Lake Turtle Troopers secure \$75K to protect species at risk	<u>STORY LINK</u>
<i>About the announced government funding (nearly \$75K) granted to protect the turtle population around the Loafers Lake area in Brampton. The story features Heart Lake Turtle Troopers and identifies TRCA as working closely with the organization to provide best practice recommendations for turtle protection. No specific staff mentioned.</i>			
Mar. 14, 2023	CTV News at Noon	(live TV segment – jump to 8:27, 23:00, and 44:10)	<u>STORY LINK</u>

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Features Maple Days at Black Creek Pioneer Village throughout the live show. TRCA was contacted for the story. Interviews several staff and promotes the Village and the event as a great March Break activity for the family.

Mar. 28, 2023	Newsire	Electricity Distributors Association Celebrates the Best of Local Hydro	<u>STORY LINK</u>
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About the Electricity Distributor's Association Awards and the list of award winners. TRCA is named as a partner of Hydro One, who received the Environmental Excellence Award for a project where we worked together to create a wetland habitat, adjacent to Hydro One's Kleinburg Transformer Station, with the potential for evaluating carbon offset as a natural climate solution. No specific staff mentioned.

Mar. 30, 2023	CBC News – What on Earth	Saving the salamanders: road closures help these critters migrate	<u>STORY LINK</u>
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About salamanders, their migration, and their ecological importance. TRCA was contacted for the story. Features TRCA's David Lawrie, Research Scientist, who explains salamander migration patterns and how we can protect them.

Media Releases:

TRCA was involved with 5 Media Releases this quarter, which led to additional media coverage:

Date of Media List Distribution	Joint Release/Title	Link
Jan. 27, 2023	Government of Canada Supports the Meadoway (Joint Release)	https://trca.ca/news/government-canada-supports-meadoway/
Feb. 17 and 21, 2023	Canada's most iconic tradition is back this year with the 2023 Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival (plus launch of Nature Centre at Bruce's Mill)	https://trca.ca/news/bruces-mill-nature-centre/
Mar. 1, 2023	Seven TRCA Projects to Receive Federal Support (Joint Release)	https://trca.ca/news/government-canada-investment-to-restore-nature-mitigate-climate-change/
Mar. 16, 2023	TRCA Trail Project in Richmond Hill Completed with Support from Government of Canada (Joint Release)	https://trca.ca/news/trail-orccr-richmond-hill-funding-government-canada/

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Mar. 27, 2023	Government of Canada Invests in Upgrades to Heart Lake Conservation Park (Joint Release)	https://trca.ca/news/heart-lake-upgrades-government-canada/
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Q1 Key Learnings

1. Continue to advocate for programs to invest in digital (social and google advertising) as part of their tactics to promote their efforts within TRCA across the GTA. A balance of organic and paid advertising is necessary to continue to drive traffic to trca.ca.
2. Advance collaboration with communications teams from government offices and offices of elected officials facilitated the preparation of joint messaging, content and cross promotion, and increased attendance of diverse media outlets, supporting greater visibility for TRCA.
3. There is an opportunity to increase targeted media pitching of news stories for greater pick-up.
4. New branded assets elevated events onsite.

2023 Q2 Look Ahead

Below is a list of upcoming communications activities set for Q2 2023:

1. Communication support will be provided during Q2 to promote the following:
 - Continued support for Summer Camp registration
 - Continued support for any seasonal hiring opportunities still available
 - Promotion of TRCA Parks openings
 - TRCA's Spring Social Contest
 - Potential announcements related to government funding related to the federal CCRF program and TRCA infrastructure and the provincial Wetlands Conservation Partner Program in support of TRCA restoration projects
 - TRCA ongoing projects relating to Erosion Management and Restoration such as the Toronto Island Flood Mitigation Environmental Assessment Project, The Scarborough Waterfront Project, and others.
 - Quarterly videos to highlight TRCA accomplishments from previous quarter
2. Planning of communication support will begin for TRCA major events, including:
 - Spring Events, such as TRCA's Spring Bird Festival at Tommy Thompson Park (May 13)
 - TRCA's Bike the Creek (June 10)

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:

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Pillar 4 Service Excellence:

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

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