

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors
Friday, April 19, 2024 Meeting

FROM: Natalie Blake, Chief Human Resources Officer

RE: **Q1 COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING, AND EVENTS REPORT SUMMARY (JANUARY 1 - MARCH 31, 2024)**

KEY ISSUE

Information report regarding Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) corporate media communication activities during the fourth quarter of 2024 (January 1 - March 31, 2024).

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Q1 Communications, Marketing and Events Report Summary for January 1 - March 31, 2024, 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, 2024, achieved by the Communications, Marketing and Events (CME) Team.

Q1 Successes

1. CME developed and executed a communications strategy to create awareness and drive attendance to the Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival that resulted in 22,092 individual admissions and gross sales of \$216,300 from February to April 2, 2024. Promotions included google ads, earned

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media coverage, social media, newsletters, billboards and radio.

2. CME designed and printed the updated Albion Hills summer trail signs. This was a complex, detailed project, working in collaboration with the Albion Parks and Conservation Lands teams. In addition to the trailhead signs, a new trail colour and arrow style was introduced, designed and printed as well.
3. CME led the development of an integrated marketing strategy for the Look After Where You Live program, with a focus on email marketing to organizations who have experienced the program in the past, as well as better integration with PPG.
4. CME consolidated many distinct email newsletters into one cohesive monthly communication, which is displayed dynamically to our audiences depending on their interests.

Key Q1 Communications Metrics

1. New consolidated monthly TRCA newsletters have been issued with an average open rate (AOR) of **45.3% (AVG: 42,945 subscribers opened)** and a click rate (CR) of **3%** 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. CME promoted Albion winter activities through google ads and social media that resulted in a total of 184,192 ad impressions and web traffic of 13,000 to the cross-country ski page.
3. Maple Syrup Social Media Campaign (stats from Feb to April 2): Organic social media resulted in 26,411 impressions and 1,298 click-throughs to the maple syrup section of the website and paid social media resulted in 997,000 impressions, resulting in 21,090 clicks.
4. Maple Syrup Google Campaign (stats from Feb to April 2): Google Grant resulted in 7,294 impressions, 2022 clicks to website, at a value of \$6,645 US dollars in free google ads. Google Display resulted in 618,043 impressions and 2,151 clicks.
5. Google Grant Recruitment Campaign resulted in 20,230 impressions, 3059 clicks, at a value of \$23,241 US dollars in free google ads.


Q1 Social Activity

In Q1 2024, our social media strategy spotlighted winter activities, such as cross-country skiing, and spring events like the Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival. We emphasized TRCA's flood safety messaging and showcased milestones like funding


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announcements and grand openings. Key campaigns, including the Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival and our seasonal hiring drive, drove engagement, while the Source to Stream conference underscored our commitment to knowledge-sharing in the environmental sector.


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

**Toronto and Region Conse...**
Thu 3/7/2024 4:03 pm EST


The bird is out of the bag... 🦅 We're thrilled to celebrate the arrival of Toronto's first-ever recorded Bald Eagle nest—a...




Total Engagements	2,783
Reactions	1,117
Comments	275
Shares	133
Post Link Clicks	—
Other Post Clicks	1,258

**Toronto and Region Conse...**
Fri 3/8/2024 8:42 am EST


Celebrating #InternationalWomensDay! At TRCA, we are so proud of the remarkable women on our team who lead the way in...




Total Engagements	2,675
Reactions	150
Comments	0
Shares	5
Post Clicks (All)	2,520

**trca_hq**
Thu 3/7/2024 1:50 pm EST


The bird is out of the bag... 🦅 We're thrilled to celebrate the arrival of Toronto's first-ever recorded Bald Eagle nest—a...



Total Engagements	835
Likes	635
Comments	18
Shares	165
Saves	17

**@TRCA_HQ**
Thu 3/7/2024 1:50 pm EST

The bird is out of the bag... 🦅 Toronto welcomes its first recorded #BaldEagle nest—a historic moment and reflection o...



Total Engagements	451
Likes	131
@Replies	4
Retweets	37
Post Link Clicks	134
Other Post Clicks	143
Other Engagements	2

1. The top performing **Facebook, Instagram** and **Twitter** post based on engagements was our eagle nest announcement. The discovery of an eagle nest in Toronto, a first-ever recorded event, likely resonated strongly due to its historic significance, capturing the audience's attention with a rare and exciting wildlife encounter. Animal-related content tends to perform well on social media, amplifying the post's engagement and reach.
2. The top performing **LinkedIn** post was our International Women's Day post, showcasing women in conservation and science roles likely resonated strongly on LinkedIn due to its celebration of diversity, empowerment, and representation in traditionally male-dominated fields. Highlighting the achievements and contributions of women in various departments aligned well with LinkedIn's professional audience, fostering engagement and positive sentiment towards TRCA's commitment to gender equality and diversity in the workplace.

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. The Events team also takes the lead in managing signature TRCA events.

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The Events team coordinated and implemented the following events in Q1.

TRCA's Annual General Meeting

On February 23, TRCA held its annual general meeting and marked the event with the recognition of Councillor Paula Fletcher who achieved six years of dedicated service on TRCA's Board of Directors.

The following outgoing members were recognized for their service on TRCA's Board:

- Councillor Jon Burnside
- Councillor Shelley Carroll
- Councillor Lily Cheng
- Councillor Mike Colle
- Councillor Josh Matlow
- Dr. Xiao Han
- Maria Kelleher
- Basudeb Mukherjee
- Don Sinclair

Additionally, Toronto and Region Conservation Foundation board member, Vitu Mhango, presented the awards for the B. Harper Bull Scholarship to the following award recipients:

- Tomisona Oludairo
- Carolyne Qiang
- Yazan Zamel

Albion Hills Conservation Park Chalet and Workshop Ribbon Cutting

On March 1, with the generous support from Peel Region and the Canada Community Revitalization Fund (CCRF), TRCA formally commemorated the completion of the new workshop building and upgrades made to the Chalet and park infrastructure at Albion Hills Conservation Park.

Albion Hills has undergone remarkable transformations. These include the addition of a cutting-edge workshop, significant upgrades to the Chalet, and the paving of roadways and parking lots to enhance accessibility to the park's year-round amenities.

The new workshop is equipped with all the necessary tools and equipment, including a spacious lunchroom with multiple washrooms, showers, and changing areas. With two floors dedicated to office and storage space, it houses offices, a training/meeting room, and a public-facing reception area, complemented by ample public parking.

The comprehensive makeover of the Chalet has significantly improved its functionality and aesthetics. Highlights of the renovations include the replacement of the roof and

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insulation, installation of durable concrete walkways, addition of a charming deck and gazebo, and upgrades to the interior flooring.

These upgrades and renovations will allow for expanded and continued four-season programming that allows residents, families, and schools to continue to enjoy Albion Hills Conservation Park through nature-based activities including cross-country skiing, camping, mountain biking, summer camps, seasonal events, and other locally developed programs and services.

Distinguished guests that attended and provided remarks included:

- Mario Russo, Regional Councillor, Town of Caledon, and Member, TRCA Board of Directors
- John MacKenzie, Chief Executive Officer, TRCA

Distinguished guests in attendance included:

- Dave Barton, Mayor of Uxbridge, and Vice-Chair, TRCA Board of Directors
- David West, Mayor of Richmond Hill, and Member, TRCA Board of Directors
- Stan Cameron, Peel District School Board Trustee for Caledon, and member of Natural Science Education Committee (NSEC)
- Natalie Blake, Chief Human Resources Officer, TRCA
- Sameer Dhalla, Director, Development and Engineering Services, TRCA
- Darryl Gray, Director, Education and Training, TRCA
- Laurie Nelson, Director, Policy Planning, TRCA
- Richard Ubbens, Director, Conservation Parks and Lands, TRCA
- Anil Wijesooriya, Director, Restoration and Infrastructure, TRCA

Wetlands Conservation Partner Program Announcement

On March 4, the Ontario government announced the investment of over \$2.5 million in a project led by the City of Brampton in partnership with TRCA to enhance four wetland areas in the Etobicoke Creek watershed through the Wetlands Conservation Partner Program. This project is one of many wetland projects across Ontario that are collectively receiving up to \$11 million from the program this year.

The City of Brampton is partnering with TRCA on the project, which will take place in four locations of the Etobicoke Creek watershed in and around Loafers Lake and Conservation Drive Park. Through this project Brampton will plant 6,500 native trees and other vegetation, manage invasive species, improve shoreline habitat, and install rocky shoals and log piles in the water to support turtles and fish habitat. This project will also build recreational viewing platforms at Loafers Lake that will let visitors enjoy the natural beauty of these wetland habitats, while minimizing the disturbance of sensitive ecological features.

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Mayor Dave Barton, Vice-Chair of TRCA's Board of Directors delivered remarks on behalf of TRCA and was accompanied by Anil Wijesooriya, TRCA's Director of Restoration and Infrastructure (R&I) along with members of the R&I and Government and Community Relations staff team.

Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival Official Launch

On March 8, TRCA formally commemorated the maple syrup festival's kickoff and highlighted the exciting partnership between TRCA and 407 ETR. 407 ETR has committed to sponsoring the festival over the next three years.

At the launch, guests including TRCA Board and subcommittee of the Board members and 407 ETR staff were treated to a guided tour of the maple syrup trail, which showcased what the site has to offer during the festival. Throughout the tour, they had the opportunity to learn about traditional and modern maple syrup production methods and even had the chance to taste some maple syrup.

As part of the sponsorship, 407 ETR has also funded a phytoremediation study - a significant environmental research initiative. The phytoremediation study is poised to deliver invaluable insights into the use of biotechnology including specific plant species used in meadow restoration work to remediate salt-contaminated soils. By investing in this critical research, 407 ETR is contributing to TRCA's work in protecting our environment and mitigating the harmful effects of road salt application.

Distinguished guests that attended and provided remarks included:

- Javier Tamargo, President, and Chief Executive Officer, 407 ETR
- John MacKenzie, Chief Executive Officer, TRCA

Distinguished guests in attendance included:

- Laura Isidean, Member, TRCA Board of Directors
- Angela Grella, York Catholic District School Board Trustee, and member of Natural Science Education Committee (NSEC)
- Natalie Blake, Chief Human Resources Officer, TRCA
- Darryl Gray, Director, Education and Training, TRCA
- Richard Ubbens, Director, Conservation Parks and Lands, TRCA
- Christian Basil, Vice President, Communications & Government Relations, 407 ETR

The Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival is a perennial favourite that attracts thousands of visitors and promotes local tourism. It also offers educational opportunities and helps build strong community ties.

The Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival ran from March 9 to April 7 at two TRCA locations: Bruce's Mill Conservation Park and Kortright Centre for Conservation attracting more than 25,000 visitors.

Weather Radar Modernization Announcement

On March 15, Parliamentary Secretary van Koeeverden on behalf of Minister Guilbeault with MP Taylor-Roy announced the investment of \$180 million to install 33 state-of-the-art weather radar modernization projects across Canada to keep Canadians safe and track severe weather. Weather services, such as weather and environmental prediction, are more important than ever in preparing for and responding to increasingly severe weather as a result of climate change.

John MacKenzie, Chief Executive Officer, TRCA and Sameer Dhalla, Director of Development and Engineering Services, along with staff from TRCA's Development and Engineering Services team were in attendance.

Event Spotlight – Source to Stream

On March 26 and 27, 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, Canada's premier stormwater and erosion and sediment control conference at Pearson Convention Centre in Brampton.

John Mackenzie, CEO, TRCA and Quentin Hanchard, Chief Administrative Officer, CVC delivered opening remarks, setting a celebratory tone to kick off the conference.

The conference shed light on projects and initiatives related to sustainable water management, protection and restoration of natural features, management of urban runoff, and green infrastructure solutions.

The event featured renowned speakers from across North America offering insights on the latest advancements in stormwater management, erosion and sediment control, and natural channel design, underscoring the increasing urgency to address issues such as climate change, aging infrastructure, housing demands, and increasing flood risk.

The 2024 event hosted:

- 767 attendees
- 71 exhibitor booths
- 8 student poster displays
- 37 presentations

Q1 Media Coverage – Summary

Requests for information or interviews occurred from various members of the media during Q1 2024 through:

- Our Media Request Form or direct media email on our website.

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- Directly to our Communications and Media Relations Specialist.
- Contacting staff at TRCA who notified CME.

TRCA received **59** requests in Q1 through our online Media Request form and other methods listed above. Of the **59** total requests, **30** were for TV/Radio, with the remaining related to print or online.

Highlighted below is a combination of the following:

- Media requests to TRCA resulting 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 media advisory / media release.

TRCA received over 88 direct mentions in media coverage in Q1 2024. Of the 88 total requests, 20 were for TV/Radio, with the remaining related to print or online.

January 2024

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
January 3, 2024	Canadian Geographic	Planting a network of mini forests across Canada	STORY LINK
Information			
An article on planting a network of mini Miyawaki forests across Canada. Includes a short profile on The Pocket Tiny Forest by TRCA's Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program (SNAP).			
January 18, 2024	The New York Times	The TikTok 'Tunnel Girl' Is Not Alone	STORY LINK
Information			
An article about tunnels dug by the members of the public. One of the tunnel featured was dug by a construction worker near York University in 2015 and mentions TRCA owning the property, managed by the City.			
January 25, 2024	The Weather Network	Looking For a New Winter Activity? We Tried Out Two... With Varying Success	STORY LINK
Information			
A report by the Weather Network's Victoria Fen Alvarado, who tries her hand (or feet) at snowshoeing and cross-country skiing while at Albion Hills Conservation Park. Interview with TRCA's Jay Clark, Supervisor, Conservation Parks.			

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February 2024

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
February 7, 2024	CityNews	Choose your own winter adventure	STORY LINK
Information			
A report on TRCA encouraging people to think of them when planning your winter activities.			
February 8, 2024	Toronto Star	She wanted to help the environment. But that's not always easy for a teenager	STORY LINK
Information			
An article on one of TRCA's Youth Council Members. Includes a short profile on the TRCA's Youth Council.			
February 22, 2024	CityNews	Warm winter not a hurdle for GTA maple syrup festival	STORY LINK
Information			
A report on the preparation for this year's Maple Syrup Festival. Interviewed Heather Stafford Supervisor, Community Outreach & Education at TRCA.			

March 2024

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
March 4, 2024	In Brampton	Province to invest millions to improve Brampton's wetlands, build new viewing platforms	STORY LINK
Information			
An article about the Ontario government investing over \$2.5 million into a Brampton-led project that will improve some of the city's wetlands, plant new trees and vegetation, and create viewing platforms for residents to use. Mentions TRCA as partner of City of Brampton.			
March 7, 2024	Just Sayin' Caledon	Albion Hills Conservation Park Upgrades	STORY LINK
Information			
An article on the ribbon cutting ceremony and a tour at the Albion Hills Conservation Area commemorated the official opening of the park's new 8,500-square-foot, two-story workshop. John MacKenzie, CEO, TRCA, is quoted.			
March 8, 2024	Toronto Star	Toronto has its first bald eagle nest in recorded history. Here's why you haven't seen them here before	STORY LINK
Information			
An article on a pair of bald eagles that are nesting in Toronto for the first time in documented history — a sign of hope for the city's environment and for Indigenous			

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communities. Interviewed TRCA's Karen McDonald, Senior Manager, Restoration & Infrastructure.

Media Releases:

TRCA was involved with 7 Media Releases and blogs this quarter:

Date	Title	Link
January 17, 2024	Stay Safe this Winter	STORY LINK
February 2, 2024	Choose Your Own Winter Adventure with TRCA	STORY LINK
February 23, 2024	Chair and Vice-Chair acclaimed at TRCA Annual General Meeting	STORY LINK
March 1, 2024	A New Chapter for Albion Hills: Unveiling a new Workshop and upgrade Chalet	STORY LINK
March 3, 2024	TRCA brings you the ultimate March Break Experience	STORY LINK
March 7, 2024	Top Tips to keep you safe while enjoying the outdoors this spring	STORY LINK
March 19, 2024	Connect to Nature with your Parx Prescription and TRCA	STORY LINK

Media Advisories:

TRCA was involved with 6 Media Advisories this quarter, which led to additional media coverage:

Date of Media List Distribution	Title
January 25, 2024	Choose your own winter adventure with TRCA Media Advisory
February 15, 2024	TRCA celebrates the annual Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival Media Advisory
February 27, 2024	Ultimate March Break Experience Media Advisory
February 29, 2024	Official unveiling of newly constructed Workshop and renovated Chalet within Albion Hills Conservation Park Media Advisory
March 6, 2024	Celebrate the Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and 407 ETR
March 18, 2024	2024 Source to Stream Conference Interview Opportunities Media Advisory

Q1 Key Learnings

1. Continue proactive media relations strategy of bundling TRCA events and programming into one monthly pitch so that journalists have a wide choice of content to cover.
2. Email communications are an important component of a marketing strategy for certain TRCA initiatives such as Look After Where You Live and will be

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implemented for marketing strategies to support Camp registrations, Field Centre overnight trips and more.

3. Local community media outlets will continue to be a focus of CME's media relations strategy, especially for coverage of funding announcements and capital projects.

2024 Q2 Look Ahead

Below is a list of upcoming communications activities set for Q2 2024:

1. Communication support will be provided during Q2 to promote the following:
 - Amplifying Earth Month (April) programming and events communications both internally through employee communications and externally, through social media, blog content and news release distribution
 - Overnight trips in TRCA Field Centres for 2024-2025 season
 - TRCA Camp registrations
 - Educating visitors on Tommy Thompson Park's history and unique context
2. Planning of communication support will begin for TRCA major events, including:
 - Earth Month programming and events April
 - TRCA Spring Bird Festival on May 11
 - Bike The Creek June 8
 - TRCA Celebrate the Humber on June 15

Relationship to TRCA's 2023-2034 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: Miguel Pacheco, Senior Manager, Communications, Marketing & Events

Email: miguel.pacheco@trca.ca

For Information contact: Natalie Blake, (437) 880-2281

Email: natalie.blake@trca.ca

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