

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Executive Committee
Friday, November 8, 2024 Meeting

FROM: Linda Charlebois, Director, Corporate Services

**RE: Q3 COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING, AND EVENTS
REPORT SUMMARY (JULY 1 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2024)**

KEY ISSUE

Information report regarding Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) corporate media communication activities during the third quarter of 2024 (July 1 - September 30, 2024).

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Q3 Communications, Marketing and Events Report Summary for July 1 - September 30 , 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 July 1 - September 30, 2024, achieved by the Communications, Marketing and Events (CME) Team.

Q3 Successes

1. Proactive media relations outreach has resulted in consistent media coverage of TRCA events and programming throughout Q3. CME Communications Specialists have built relationships with key media including Metroland, Weather Network, Toronto Star and others.
2. CME fielded a high volume of interview requests following the flood events that occurred throughout the summer in our region. Working in collaboration with TRCA's Engineering Services, all media requests received a response within hours of receipt, ensuring that TRCA's important messaging promoting safety and clarifying our role in flood management were disseminated. Flood related pages on trca.ca website generated over 28,000 clicks during Q3.
3. CME managed the rebranding strategy for The Village at Black Creek (VBC). Working with Trajectory, a design and brand agency, CME, in conjunction with VBC staff, developed entirely new branding for VBC, inclusive of new positioning and visual elements such as logos and imagery. New assets were produced to align with the launch of the rebrand in late September, including a revamped website, external and internal signage, and interior branded signs. In addition, a new staff guide to help VBC and TRCA staff tell the story of The Village, with accompanying brand guidelines were also produced.

Key Q3 Communications Metrics

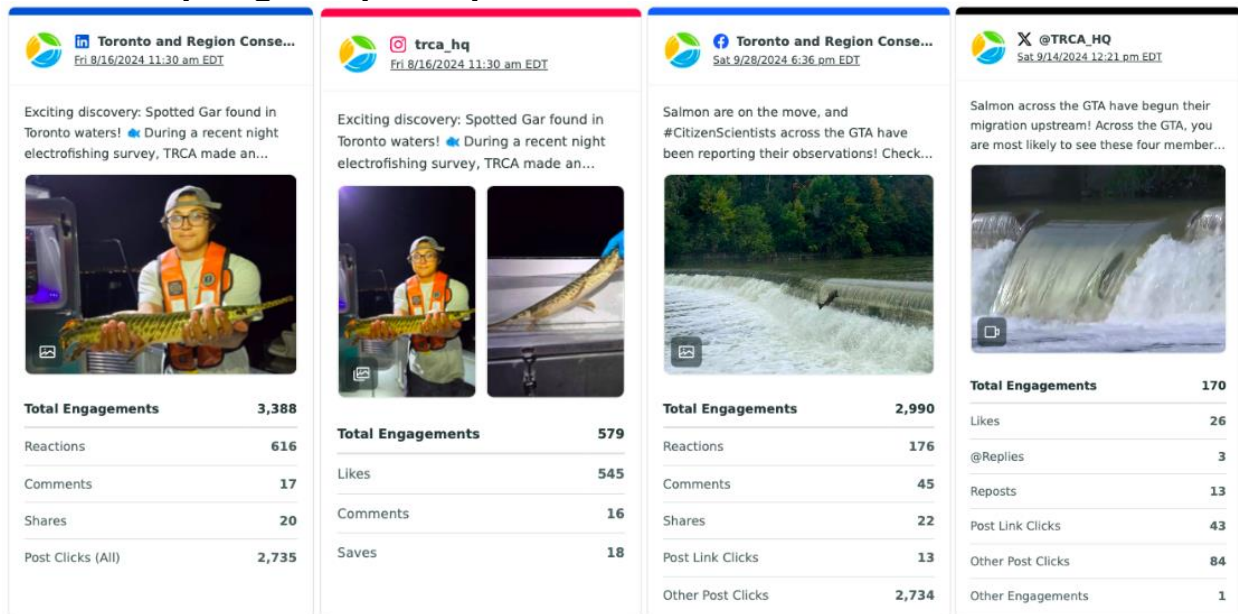
1. Google Grant Campaign resulted in approximately 25,667 clicks to trca.ca, at a value of \$117,772 US dollars in free google ads. These ads have been promoting a variety of TRCA elements including TRCA locations and activities, TRCA Calendar of Events, Flood Mapping and Day Camps.
2. TRCA consolidated monthly newsletters have been issued with an average open rate (AOR) of 56% (AVG: 32,646 subscribers opened) and a click rate (CR) slight increase from the second quarter to 3.5% 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).

Q3 Social Activity

In Q3 2024, our social media content showcased TRCA’s commitment to environmental education, conservation, and community engagement through signature events and conservation news. Highlights included the annual Butterfly Festival, the Adventures of Salmon event, and key conservation stories like the discovery of a rare and endangered spotted gar in Toronto waters.

We also kept our communities informed with updates on local wildlife, such as eagle and cormorant nesting, and natural phenomena, such as the fall bird and salmon migrations. These stories helped drive engagement, positioning TRCA as a leader in both wildlife preservation and driving public involvement in conservation efforts.

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



1. The top-performing post on **LinkedIn** was the announcement of the spotted gar discovery in Toronto waters. This rare species find captivated our audience and highlighted the success of TRCA’s conservation efforts. The post resonated with professionals and environmental enthusiasts alike, sparking excitement around the species’ recovery and the impact of TRCA’s work in local ecosystems.

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2. On **Instagram**, the spotted gar discovery also topped the charts as the most-liked and commented-on post. Followers shared their excitement over the discovery and celebrated the positive outcomes of conservation work. The post garnered numerous saves, indicating that this content resonated strongly with audiences who were eager to revisit and share the news.
3. On **Facebook**, the post showcasing the salmon migration, featuring images and reports from our #CitizenScientists, saw the highest engagement. This post generated 45 comments, with many users inquiring about salmon sighting locations and migration timing. The interactive nature of this post, paired with our responses directing users to our reporting website, helped foster community involvement and encouraged further citizen science participation.
4. **Twitter**'s top-performing post focused on the salmon migration, driving significant engagement with 43 link clicks to our reporting tool. This post demonstrated our ability to use social media to direct the public toward resources that support our conservation efforts, while also educating and involving our audience in real-time conservation action.

Q3 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, implemented, and supported the following events in Q3:

Ajax Wetlands Conservation Partner Program Announcement

On July 15, Minister Andrea Khanjin, alongside MPP Patrice Barnes, made a regional announcement to highlight the \$650,000 investment in a wetland restoration project at Carruthers Creek in Ajax. This announcement echoed the March 4, 2024, announcement of the \$11 million provincial investment in Wetlands Conservation Partner Program (WCPP) projects.

TRCA Board Vice-Chair, Mayor Dave Barton provided remarks on behalf of the organization and was joined by staff from the Restoration and Infrastructure team.

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Re-Opening of the Waterfront Trail at Bruce Handscomb Park

On July 25, TRCA, in partnership with the City of Pickering, hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially reopen the Waterfront Trail at Bruce Handscomb Park.

The event was emceed by Mayor Kevin Ashe, who delivered the opening remarks. Regional Councillor Joanne Dies spoke on behalf of TRCA, and Heidi Tillmanns, Director of Trail & Infrastructure for Trans Canada Trail, also provided remarks.

CEO John MacKenzie, Director of Restoration and Infrastructure Anil Wijesooriya, and TRCA staff were in attendance.

TRCA's Butterfly Festival

On August 17, TRCA hosted its annual Butterfly Festival at Tommy Thompson Park, attracting over 500 visitors. Attendees participated in guided walks and a variety of activities throughout the day.

TRCA's Newcomer Youth Green Economy Project collaborated with festival organizers to offer six guided walks in different global languages, enhancing accessibility and inclusivity.

This year, the Butterfly Festival welcomed Nature Canada's NatureHood program as a new supporter. Their funding helped provide a shuttle service, increasing visitor access to the park. NatureHood also supported the festival's opening ceremony and smudge, led by Indigenous Knowledge Keeper, healer, and philosopher Cat Criger.

TRCA Board Chair, Councillor Paul Ainslie provided remarks and highlighted that the day also coincided with National Flight of the Monarch Day—a celebration that unites communities across Canada to honor the remarkable, yet vulnerable, Monarch butterfly.

City of Brampton Housing Enabling Water Systems Fund Funding Announcement

On September 3, Premier Doug Ford, joined by Mayor Patrick Brown, Ministers Graham McGregor, Prabmeet Sarkaria, and Kinga Surma, along

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with CEO John MacKenzie, announced the launch of the Downtown Brampton Flood Protection Project, known as Riverwalk.

The funding will support key infrastructure upgrades as part of a major urban renewal project. This includes:

- Widening the bypass channel to improve water flow;
- Re-aligning Ken Whillans Drive and re-grading Church Street and the valley; and
- Replacing bridges on Church, Scott, and Queen Streets, with enhancements to the CN rail bridge.

These upgrades will remove 31 hectares from the downtown floodplain, reducing the risk of flooding during extreme storms.

TRCA Staff Service Recognition Awards

On September 17, TRCA held its sixth annual Service Recognition Awards ceremony at The Village at Black Creek, celebrating the contributions of 122 staff members marking 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30 years of service with the organization.

CEO John MacKenzie delivered the opening remarks, joined by TRCA's Senior Leadership Team to congratulate the award recipients.

TRCA Adventures of Salmon

On September 22, TRCA hosted the annual Adventures of Salmon event at Morningside Park in Scarborough, celebrating the salmon migration. The event attracted over 1,500 visitors of all ages, who engaged in interactive displays and explored the natural beauty of Highland Creek while learning about salmon through self-guided tours.

The event opened with a spiritual blessing and smudging ceremony led by Indigenous Knowledge Keeper, healer, and philosopher Cat Criger. TRCA Board Chair, Councillor Paul Ainslie, provided remarks alongside Deputy Mayor Jennifer McKelvie. Regional Councillor Joanne Dies, CEO John MacKenzie, and senior leadership team member Darryl Gray were also in attendance.

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Visitors enjoyed a range of activities and displays highlighting the vital role salmon play in our ecosystems and the efforts to preserve them. Activities included guided salmon walks, sorting soil samples for microplastics, learning to cast a fishing rod, and salmon-themed games for kids and families.

Event Spotlight – National Day of Truth and Reconciliation

TRCA hosted two public events in observance of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, dedicated to reflection, learning, and remembrance.

On Sunday, September 29, The Village at Black Creek, in partnership with True North Aid held a Reconciliation Walk & Indigenous Art Trail event.

Participants learned about the profound impact of the Residential School system on over 150,000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children. They followed a self-guided Reconciliation Walk, explored art by local and Indigenous artists, and engaged in reflection and activities. Quiet spaces were provided for participants to contemplate how they can contribute to supporting the 94 Calls to Action.

On Monday, September 30, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation event was held at the Medicine Wheel Garden in Heart Lake Conservation Park, in partnership with the Four Colours Drum Circle. The Four Colours Drum Circle commemorated the children of residential schools and offered prayers of healing for all affected families.

The event included activities for children and the opportunity to participate in a round dance—a slow, circular dance accompanied by rhythmic drumming, which holds special significance in First Nations culture. The round dance is an open ceremony meant to bring people together for healing and remembrance.

Q3 Media Coverage – Summary

Requests for information or interviews occurred from various members of the media during Q3 2024 through:

- Our Media Request Form or direct media email on our website;
- Directly to our Communications and Media Relations Specialist; and
- Contacting staff at TRCA who notified CME.

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TRCA received **64** requests in Q3 through our online Media Request form and other methods listed above. Of the **64** total requests, **37** were for TV/Radio, with the remaining related to print or online.

Highlighted below is a combination of:

- 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; and
- Articles that resulted directly from TRCA issuing a media advisory / media release.

TRCA received over **121** direct mentions in media coverage in Q3 2024. Of the **121** total direct mentions, **27** were for TV/Radio/Other Broadcast, with the remaining related to print or online.

July, 2024

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
July 8, 2024	The Social	Jess Tries Beekeeping.	STORY LINK
Information			
A feature segment on Jess Allen exploring the world of beekeeping at the Kortright Centre. The segment includes an interview with Jennifer Ouimette, Program Manager for Kortright Programs at TRCA, discussing the importance of beekeeping and its role in conservation.			
July 8, 2024	Toronto Star	Plans to move the cormorants away from Toronto islands were working. Then two eagles showed up.	STORY LINK
Information			
The article highlights efforts to relocate cormorants from the Toronto Islands, which were showing promising progress until the unexpected appearance of two bald eagles, potentially disrupting management plans. It features an interview with Karen McDonald, Senior Manager of Restoration and Infrastructure at TRCA.			

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July 10, 2024	CityNews	Areas in Toronto that are vulnerable to flooding.	STORY LINK
Information			
A news report spotlighting flood-prone areas in Toronto and the increasing risks they face due to recent extreme weather events. The report features an interview with David Kellershohn, Associate Director of Engineering Services at TRCA.			
July 15, 2024	CityNews	Rainfall warning ends for Toronto as flooding affecting some roads, TTC routes.	STORY LINK
Information			
A news report about heavy rain and strong winds impacting parts of the Greater Toronto Area today, resulting in flooding on major roadways and significant disruptions for commuters. The report features an interview with David Kellershohn, Associate Director of Engineering Services at TRCA.			
July 15, 2024	InDurham	Province investing \$650,000 in Carruthers Creek watershed restoration plan in Ajax	STORY LINK
Information			
An article detailing the Ontario government's \$650,000 investment in a wetland restoration project aimed at revitalizing approximately seven acres within the Carruthers Creek watershed. TRCA is recognized as a key partner in this initiative.			
July 16, 2024	CBC	Can Toronto infrastructure handle another major downpour? Canada Tonight	STORY LINK
Information			
A news report covering heavy rainfall and flooding in GTA. The report features an interview with David Kellershohn, Associate Director, Engineering Services at TRCA, who discusses infrastructure and emergency management changes since 2013.			
July 17, 2024	Toronto Star	Why the massive Don River redesign won't stop flooding on the DVP — but what might	STORY LINK

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Information			
An article discusses the flooding of the Don River and the adjacent Don Valley Parkway, highlighting that these events are a result of intentional design work. David Kellershohn, Associate Director, Engineering Services at TRCA, is quoted.			
July 22, 2024	Toronto Star	Another '100-year storm'? Why Toronto's latest flooding floats tough questions on how the city responds to the rain	STORY LINK

Information			
An article that highlights expert opinions urging Toronto to prepare for increased storm activity. It explores the types of damage the city may need to accept and identifies what should be considered unacceptable. David Kellershohn, Associate Director, Engineering Services at TRCA, is quoted.			

August, 2024

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
August 17, 2024	Global	Global News at 6 Toronto: Aug. 17, 2024: A segment on the 2024 Butterfly Festival	STORY LINK (Starts at 9:40.)

Information			
A segment on the 2024 Butterfly Festival, showcasing activities and educational displays focused on butterfly conservation. The segment features an interview with Colin Love, Supervisor of Community Outreach and Education at TRCA.			

August 20, 2024	InBrampton	Brampton makes big contribution to Canada conservation goal	STORY LINK
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Information			
An article detailing the City of Brampton's contribution to Canada's "30x30" conservation goal, highlighting TRCA's role as a key partner in this initiative.			

August 25, 2024	CTV News	CTV News Toronto at Six: "Digging up the Past" - A	STORY LINK (Starts at 23:10)
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		segment on TRCA's Archaeological Field School.	
Information			
A news segment featuring archaeology students from TRCA's Archaeological Field School as they conduct excavations in Pickering. The segment includes an interview with Alistair Jolly, Supervisor of Archaeology at TRCA.			
August 31, 2024	The Globe and Mail	After the deluge: July's Don River floods in Toronto were the result of fateful planning choices that a Port Lands project is trying to undo. But there are more far-reaching ways to create 'sponge cities' for the future	STORY LINK
Information			
An article discusses the Port Lands project and the aim of preventing downstream disasters. David Kellershohn, Associate Director, Engineering Services at TRCA is quoted.			

September, 2024

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
September 3, 2024	CP24	CP24 Live at Five for Sept. 3, 2024 – Housing-Enabling Water Systems Funding Announcement for Brampton's Riverwalk Project	STORY LINK (Starts at 17:53)
Information			
A report on Ontario's investment of \$27.9 million in critical infrastructure aimed at supporting the construction of 12,900 new homes in Brampton. The report features an interview with CEO John MacKenzie.			
September 19, 2024	Unsalted Great Lakes	They Found an Endangered Gar	STORY LINK
Information			
A podcast discussing the recent sighting of the spotted gar in Toronto waters. The episode features an interview with Rick Portiss, Senior Manager of Aquatic Monitoring and Management at TRCA.			
September 25, 2024	York Durham Headwaters	Welcoming A New Era for The Village at Black Creek	STORY LINK

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Information

An article covering the rebranding of The Village at Black Creek. The piece includes an interview with Wendy Rowney, Senior Manager of Community Outreach and Education at The Village at Black Creek.

Media Releases:

TRCA was involved with **12** Media Releases and blogs this quarter:

Date	Title	Link
July 3, 2024	Bathurst Glen: Great Golfing in the GTA	STORY LINK
July 8, 2024	Make this Summer Special with TRCA!	STORY LINK
July 10, 2024	Epic Summer Adventures at TRCA Camps!	STORY LINK
July 24, 2024	Unlock the Secrets of TRCA's Trails	STORY LINK
July 25, 2024	Pickering Celebrates Reopening of Revitalized Waterfront Trail	STORY LINK
July 31, 2024	How to protect Butterflies and other Pollinators!	STORY LINK
August 14, 2024	Close Out Your Summer with TRCA Workshops, Festivals, and More	STORY LINK
August 15, 2024	Get Hooked on Fishing with TRCA	STORY LINK
August 19, 2024	City of Brampton and TRCA Contribute to Canada's 30x30 Conservation Target	STORY LINK
August 26, 2024	A Day for Monarch Magic: Highlights from the 2024 Butterfly Festival	STORY LINK
September 3, 2024	Through the Lens: Daniel Huszar	STORY LINK
September 13, 2024	Back-to-Fun Events and Activities with TRCA	STORY LINK

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Media Advisories:

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

Date of Media List Distribution	Title
July 3, 2024	Make this summer special with TRCA!
August 9, 2024	TRCA End of Summer Events: workshops, volunteer opportunities and festivals!
August 12, 2024	Embrace the End of Summer with a Free Family Fun Day at TRCA's Butterfly Festival!
September 11, 2024	Back-to-fun events and activities with TRCA!
September 16, 2024	TRCA Adventures of Salmon 2024 Event – FREE!

Q3 Key Learnings

1. Proactive marketing and communications of TRCA's important role in flood management is required and should be implemented for remainder of 2024 and 2025.
2. Continue to leverage LinkedIn as an important social channel to highlight TRCA's thought leadership, collaborative role and conservation practices.
3. Continue to support all TRCA divisions in stakeholder outreach for important events such as National Day of Truth and Reconciliation

2024 Q4 Look Ahead

Below is a list of upcoming communications activities set for Q4 2024:

1. Communication support will be provided during Q4 to promote the following:
 - SNAP's 15 Year Anniversary;
 - TRCA Holiday Events including: Both Village at Black Creek and Kortright Centre for Conservation Halloween and Christmas Events;
 - TRCA program level events and activities such as workshops, courses, etc.;

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- TRCA Internal Staff and external stakeholder Holiday messaging;
- 70th anniversary of Hurricane Hazel communications campaign; and
- Production of TRCA's 2024 annual report.

2. Planning of communication support will begin for TRCA major events, including:

- Official "ribbon cutting" for new TRCA administrative building in January;
- TRCA Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival;
- Source to Stream Conference; and
- Initial planning for both TRCA Summer Staff Recruitment and TRCA Summer camps.

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

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