

### Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

**TO:** Chair and Members of the Executive Committee  
Friday, May 9, 2025 Meeting

**FROM:** Linda Charlebois, Director, Corporate Services

**RE: Q1 COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING, AND EVENTS  
REPORT SUMMARY (JANUARY 1 - MARCH 31, 2025)**

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#### **KEY ISSUE**

Information report regarding Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) corporate media communication activities during the first quarter of 2025 (January 1 - March 31, 2025).

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT the Q1 Communications, Marketing and Events Report Summary for January 1 - March 31, 2025, 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, 2025, achieved by the CME Team.

### **Q1 Successes**

1. The CME team successfully led the communications strategy supporting staff relocation to TRCA's new administrative office building. This included the development and rollout of key communications assets such as a series of informative emails, a professionally designed tenant handbook, detailed floor plans, and other supporting materials. CME also coordinated and delivered a successful Welcome Week event, held from February 18 to 21, which warmly welcomed staff to the new building with refreshments and snacks.
2. CME has transitioned paid advertising support to a specialized external media buying agency, leveraging more efficient media buys and expertise in support of paid promotional strategies for The Village at Black Creek and Conservation, Parks and Lands.
3. CME's media relations efforts resulted in coverage of TRCA's seasonal hiring strategy in several community publications, helping to bolster recruitment.
4. Proactive media relations outreach in support of Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival also resulted in significant media coverage of the event, including broadcast remote segments.

### **Key Q1 Communications Metrics**

1. TRCA delivered three consolidated monthly newsletters during Q1, achieving a 50.1% average open rate (AOR) and a 4.26% click rate (CR). Both metrics significantly exceed non-profit industry benchmarks (25.17% AOR, 2.79% CR), highlighting strong audience engagement.
2. Google Grant Campaigns resulted in 90,437 impressions, 11,457 clicks, at a value of \$67,950 US dollars in free Google ads.
3. CME developed and executed a comprehensive communications strategy to build awareness and drive attendance to the Source to Stream conference, resulting in 859 attendees. The campaign generated 25,320 impressions and 1,062 website clicks through a combination of organic and paid social media. Engagement for organic social media was high at 15%.
4. CME promoted Conservation, Parks and Lands winter activities through 33 organic social media posts that resulted in a total of 22,574 impressions and 625 engagements. Cross-country skiing at









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Albion Hills Conservation Park was also promoted through paid Google ads that resulted in 359,595 impressions and 3,107 clicks to the cross-country ski page.

### Q1 Social Activity

In Q1 2025, TRCA's social media strategy focused on highlighting seasonal activities, recruitment efforts, and key organizational milestones. Winter activities at TRCA parks, including cross-country skiing, were promoted to encourage visitors to embrace the outdoors during the colder months. Looking ahead to summer, the seasonal hiring campaign was launched, emphasizing roles such as lifeguards, camp counsellors, and park attendants. Early promotions for TRCA's summer camps also encouraged families to plan ahead. As the new year began, TRCA reflected on its achievements through the release of its annual report and marked a fresh start with the announcement of its new administrative office building, setting the stage for another year of meaningful conservation work.

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

 Toronto and Region ... Fri 2/28/2025 3:00 pm EST	 trca_hq Mon 2/10/2025 11:49 am EST	 Toronto and Region ... Mon 2/10/2025 9:15 am EST	 @TRCA_HQ Fri 2/14/2025 9:06 am EST
Lots of smiling faces during Welcome Week as we moved into our beautiful new administrative...	The arrival of Invasive carps (formerly known as Asian carp) is a looming threat to Canadian water...	The arrival of Invasive carps (formerly known as Asian carp) is a looming threat to Canadian water...	Are We Oversalting Our Streets? "Winter road salt runs off into our ecosystems, harming freshwater habitats." – Lyndsay Cartwright in BlogTO's article People Every Toronto Is Addicted to Over-Salting Its Streets
			
<b>Total Engagements</b> 12,828	<b>Total Engagements</b> 621	<b>Total Engagements</b> 6,399	<b>Total Engagements</b> 112
Reactions 523	Likes 497	Reactions 348	Likes 18
Comments 25	Comments 8	Comments 56	@Replies 3
Shares 28	Shares 85	Shares 57	Reposts 7
Post Clicks (All) 12,252	Saves 31	Post Link Clicks 233	Post Link Clicks 33
		Other Post Clicks 5,705	Other Post Clicks 51
		Boosted	Other Engagements 0

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1. On **LinkedIn**, the top-performing post celebrated the opening of TRCA's brand-new administrative office building at 5 Shoreham Drive, marking the first week of staff settling into the building. This milestone announcement resonated with our professional audience as it highlighted TRCA's commitment to sustainability, with the new office serving as a benchmark for environmentally friendly building practices. The post also emphasized the historical significance of returning to a former office location, creating a sense of familiarity and pride among staff and stakeholders. The combination of major organizational news, sustainability achievements, and an engaging celebratory tone contributed to this post's strong performance.
2. On **Instagram**, the top-performing post featured an educational and professionally produced video about the looming threat of invasive carps and the ongoing efforts to prevent their establishment in Canadian waters. The video's visually striking and informative content captured users' attention while effectively conveying a complex conservation issue. Additionally, the post benefited from being a collaborative post with partners, extending its reach and credibility. The combination of strong visuals, engaging educational messaging, and cross-promotion with partners contributed to this post's outstanding performance.
3. On **Facebook**, the top-performing post, like Instagram, featured an educational and professionally produced video about the looming threat of invasive carps and the efforts to prevent their establishment in Canadian waters. The video's visually striking and informative content captured users' attention while effectively conveying a complex conservation issue. Its combination of strong visuals, engaging educational messaging, and a compelling call to action contributed to its outstanding performance.
4. On **X (Twitter)**, the top-performing post focused on the environmental impact of road salt, highlighting a BlogTO article that featured a quote from TRCA staff. External media coverage often grabs attention, particularly when it comes from a well-known local publication, and the inclusion of expert insight from a TRCA staff member added credibility and authority to the discussion. Additionally, the post resonated with followers as it addressed a common winter concern while providing actionable solutions, reinforcing TRCA's role as a trusted source for environmental education.

### **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 leads the management of signature TRCA events.

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

#### **TRCA's Annual General Meeting**

On January 24, TRCA held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) and recognized the following members for their six years of dedicated service on TRCA's Board of Directors:

- Regional Councillor Joanne Dies;
- Deputy Mayor, Local and Regional Councillor Linda Jackson;
- Mayor Steve Pellegrini; and
- Regional Councillor Rowena Santos.

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

- Deputy Mayor and Councillor Amber Morley;
- Councillor Jamaal Myers; and
- Councillor Gord Perks.

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

- Biancka Pragash;
- Wyatt Weatherson; and
- Yazan Zamel.

#### **Welcome Week at 5 Shoreham**

From February 18 to 20, TRCA hosted its Welcome Week for more than 300 staff at our newly opened Administrative Office Building at 5 Shoreham Drive. The event offered employees an opportunity to become familiar with their new workspace and foster a sense of connection to the site.

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Orientation tours were held throughout the week, guiding staff through the office layout and highlighting key features and amenities designed to support collaboration, sustainability, and well-being.

### Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival Official Launch

On March 8, TRCA officially launched the Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival and celebrated its partnership with 407 ETR, now in the second year of a three-year sponsorship commitment. Guests enjoyed a guided tour of the maple syrup trail, explored site offerings, and learning how syrup production has evolved over time.

Distinguished guests who attended and delivered remarks included:

- Darryl Gray, Director, Education and Training, TRCA;
- Christina Basil, Vice President, Communications and Government Relations, 407 ETR; and
- Anna Roberts, Member of Parliament for King–Vaughan.

Other notable guests in attendance included:

- Anna-Louise Richardson, Chair, Regional Watershed Alliance.

The Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival remains a perennial favourite, drawing thousands of visitors and promoting local tourism. It also provides valuable educational opportunities and fosters strong community ties.

The festival ran from March 8 to April 6 at two TRCA locations: Bruce's Mill Conservation Park and the Kortright Centre for Conservation, attracting more than 24,000 visitors.

### **Event Spotlight – Source to Stream**

On March 26 and 27, TRCA, in collaboration with Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) and Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA), hosted *Source to Stream*, Canada's premier stormwater and erosion and sediment control conference at Pearson Convention Centre in Brampton. The event was presented through the Sustainable Technologies Evaluation Program (STEP).

John MacKenzie, CEO of TRCA, and Quentin Hanchard, CAO of CVC, delivered opening remarks, setting a celebratory tone to launch the conference.

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The event highlighted innovative projects and initiatives addressing sustainable water management, with a specific focus on urban runoff, green infrastructure, erosion and sediment control, and the restoration of natural systems. Over the course of the two-day event, attendees exchanged ideas that are shaping the future of community design and environmental protection.

From new stormwater innovations and erosion control strategies to nature-based solutions, the conference showcased practical approaches that make a measurable difference. This year's program introduced cutting-edge concepts and technologies, including Montreal's sponge parks, artificial intelligence applications, and next-generation drones, to transform how water resources are managed and protected.

The 2025 conference hosted:

- 859 attendees;
- 64 exhibitor booths;
- 8 student poster displays; and
- 37 presentations.

### **Q1 Media Coverage – Summary**

Requests for information or interviews occurred from various members of the media during Q1 2025 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.

TRCA received **56** requests in Q1 through our online Media Request form and other methods listed above. Of the **56** total requests, **22** 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;
- TRCA's key findings/reports were referenced; and

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

TRCA received more than **117** media mentions in Q1 2025, including **17** on TV or radio. The remaining mentions were in print or online articles.

### January 2025

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
January 8, 2025	Beach Metro News	Winter birding events slated for Tommy Thompson Park this month	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
<b>Information</b>			
The article highlighted the range of opportunities available in January to learn about local nature and wildlife at a series of public events at Tommy Thompson Park hosted by TRCA.			
January 17, 2025	CP24	Two snowy owls found dead in Toronto park infected with bird flu: TRCA	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
<b>Information</b>			
The article confirmed that two snowy owls found dead at Tommy Thompson Park in late December had tested positive for bird flu. Karen McDonald, Senior Manager of Restoration & Infrastructure at TRCA, was quoted in the article.			
January 27, 2025	Government of Canada	Government of Canada Announces Intent to significantly expand Rouge National Urban Park	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
<b>Information</b>			
The article discussed the Government of Canada's announcement of its intention to transfer the administration of ecologically significant lands from Transport Canada's Pickering Lands to Rouge National Urban Park. It also mentioned TRCA's previous transfer of 119 hectares to Parks Canada to support the potential expansion of Rouge National Urban Park.			

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**February 2025**

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
February 7, 2025	CityNews	Using grass to decontaminate salty soil	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
<b>Information</b>			
The report highlighted a study at Pearson International Airport that is making progress in identifying a species of grass that could help decontaminate soil affected by excessive road salt. It featured an interview with Lyndsay Cartwright, Research Scientist in Watershed Planning and Ecosystem Science at TRCA.			
February 7, 2025	Caledon Enterprise	'Perfect spot': Head to Albion Hills Conservation Park in Caledon for winter fun	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
<b>Information</b>			
The article highlighted Albion Hills Conservation Park as a winter getaway in the Greater Toronto Area, located in Caledon. The park offered a range of activities, including skiing, snowshoeing, tobogganing, and snow biking (also known as fat biking), making it an ideal destination for family and friends.			
February 10, 2025	CBC	Local angler catches 2nd recorded muskie in Toronto Harbour in the last 30 years	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
<b>Information</b>			
The report covered a resident's catch of the second muskie recorded in Toronto Harbour in the past 30 years, which occurred in December. The story featured an interview with Rick Portiss, Senior Manager of Aquatic Monitoring & Management at TRCA.			
February 10, 2025	Yorkregion.com	Toronto and Region Conservation Authority hiring for 2025 season, with 500 jobs available across GTA	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
<b>Information</b>			
An article about Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) hiring for approximately 500 seasonal positions across the Greater Toronto Area			

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for 2025, with roles in customer service, lifeguarding, community programs, and more.

February 25, 2025	CHCH	March break family fun with Destination Ontario	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
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The report highlighted March break family activities with Destination Ontario, including tree-top trekking and a lesson on how sap is harvested from trees and brought to the kitchen table at Bruce's Mill. The story featured an interview with Mary Gawen, Supervisor of Community Outreach & Education at TRCA.

## March 2025

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
March 4, 2025	CityNews	Toronto residents concerned leftover snow and rain will lead to flooding	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>

### Information

The report covered a snowstorm in Toronto and growing concerns about flooding in areas like the Beaches, with warmer temperatures and rain in the forecast. It featured an interview with David Kellershohn, Associate Director of Engineering Services at TRCA.

March 10, 2025.	CityNews	Maple Syrup festivals - a sweet start to spring	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
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### Information

A report highlighting some of the sugar bush activities taking place this March, including a visit to Bruce's Mill Conservation Park during the Maple Syrup Festival. The segment features an interview with Mary Gawen, Supervisor of Community Outreach & Education at TRCA.

March 10, 2025.	CBC Podcast: This is Toronto.	Nature is healing, and it looks like a giant ball of slime in the Don River	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
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<b>Information</b>			
The podcast explored why the discovery of a 'jelly blob' in the Don River had excited scientists. The episode featured an interview with Rick Portiss from TRCA.			
March 12, 2025	The Weather Network	Are Ice Jams a Concern in Ontario as Temperatures Warm?	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
<b>Information</b>			
The report covered TRCA's efforts to monitor ice jams and flooding this spring. The story featured an interview with David Kellershohn, Associate Director of Engineering Services at TRCA.			
March 20, 2025	Water Canada	Reclaiming Nature	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
<b>Information</b>			
The article discussed the transformation of fallow urban land into wetlands in the Town of Ajax, creating vital habitats, mitigating flooding, and enhancing climate resilience. The story featured an interview with John Stille, Senior Manager of Restoration & Infrastructure at TRCA.			
March 25, 2025	Toronto Star	10 fun, exciting, cultural, outdoorsy, science-y, scary things to do on March Break that your kids (and you!) will love	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
<b>Information</b>			
An article highlighting fun, family-friendly activities for children during March Break, featuring the Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival at Kortright Centre for Conservation.			
April 3, 2025	Breakfast Television	Discover Canada's rich maple syrup history with this fun + immersive experience	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
<b>Information</b>			
A report about interactive ways to learn about the rich history and traditions of maple syrup in Canada, featuring an interview with Jennifer Ouimette, Program Manager of Kortright Programs at TRCA.			

### Media Releases:

TRCA was involved with **8** Media Releases and blogs this quarter:

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Date of Media List Distribution	Joint Release	Link
January 14, 2025	Kick Off the New Year with TRCA's Family-Friendly Events and Workshops	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
January 27, 2025.	2025-2026 Executive Committee Elected at TRCA Annual General Meeting	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
February 12, 2025	February and March Fun with TRCA	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
March 3, 2025	Spring Safety Reminder: Stay Safe Around Water	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
March 12, 2025	Exploring our Natural Wonders: TRCA's The Nature School	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
March 13, 2025	Tap into a Canadian Tradition at the Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>
March 14, 2025	TRCA Gears Up for March Maple Madness and More!	<a href="#">STORY LINK</a>

### Media Advisories:

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

Date of Media List Distribution	Title
January 7, 2025	Kick off the new year with TRCA's family-friendly events and workshops!
January 30, 2025	Hit the Trails This Winter in the GTA!
February 6, 2025	TRCA's Maple Syrup Festival is coming! And much more!
February 25, 2025	Celebrate the arrival of spring with the annual Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival – a beloved Ontario tradition!
March 10, 2025	Join TRCA for March (Maple) Madness and so much more!
March 28, 2025	Celebrate Earth Week with TRCA: Community, Conservation, and Citizen Science in Action!

### **Q1 Key Learnings**

1. TRCA's multi-channel approach—including traditional media, digital campaigns, newsletters, and social media—continues to yield significant results. Newsletter performance far exceeded non-profit industry benchmarks with a 50.1% average open rate and a 4.26% click-through rate. Google Grant campaigns and paid media buys also proved effective, delivering more than 90,000 impressions and expanding awareness for key initiatives such as the Source to Stream conference and Conservation Parks winter activities.
2. TRCA events played a key role in delivering high-impact experiences for both internal and external audiences. Welcome Week successfully introduced more than 300 employees to TRCA's new Administrative Office Building, while high-profile events like the Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival and the Source to Stream conference attracted significant participation, with more than 24,000 and 850 attendees, respectively. These events reinforce TRCA's ability to engage stakeholders, celebrate milestones, and amplify educational programming.
3. TRCA received more than 117 media mentions in Q1, including 17 on television or radio, reflecting the value of consistent and proactive media engagement. Strategic outreach supported seasonal hiring, festival promotion, and TRCA's response to conservation issues—from invasive species to flood preparedness. Top-performing social media posts showcased TRCA's leadership on sustainability, education, and innovation, helping to establish the organization as a trusted voice in environmental stewardship.

### **2025 Q2 Look Ahead**

Below is a list of upcoming communications activities set for Q2 2025:

1. Communication support will be provided during Q2 to promote the following:
  - TRCA officially opened its new administrative office building at 5 Shoreham Drive on April 25, 2025. The event showcases the organization's commitment to sustainability, innovation, and community leadership. CME supported the event through strategic media outreach, dignitary coordination, onsite logistics, and internal communications.

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- As the spring and summer seasons unfold, TRCA will promote the reopening of parks and natural spaces throughout its jurisdiction. Campaigns will encourage residents to explore local trails, conservation areas, and seasonal programming and experiences such as golfing and fishing, helping to deepen community connections with nature.
  - CME will undertake a targeted market research initiative to guide the development and promotion of TRCA's educational offerings. This research will gather quantitative insights into Ontario parents' and teachers' perceptions of outdoor learning opportunities, including Nature School, field trips, and summer camps. Findings will help shape messaging, address barriers, and inform strategic direction for 2025–2026 programming.
2. Planning of communication support will begin for TRCA major events, including:
- TRCA Bird Festival at Tommy Thompson Park – May 10, 2025  
CME will support the promotion of the Bird Festival, a public event celebrating bird conservation efforts, taking place at Tommy Thompson Park. The event will invite the public to learn about TRCA's conservation initiatives alongside the work of valued partners. CME will provide digital marketing, branding, and media relations to raise awareness and drive attendance.
  - TurtleFest – May 18, 2025  
CME will support the promotion and delivery of TurtleFest, a public event celebrating turtle conservation efforts, taking place at Heart Lake Conservation Park. The event will invite the public to learn about TRCA's conservation initiatives alongside the work of valued partners. CME will provide digital marketing, branding, and media relations to raise awareness and drive attendance.
  - Bike the Creek – June 7, 2025  
CME will support the promotion of Bike the Creek, a public event that raises awareness on the benefits of cycling and how active transportation is essential to building a healthy and sustainable community. The event will invite the public to ride and learn about TRCA's trail initiatives alongside the work of

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valued partners. CME will provide digital marketing, branding, and media relations to raise awareness and drive attendance.

- Celebrate the Humber – June 14, 2025

CME will provide communications support for Celebrate the Humber, an annual event that invites the public to explore the rich natural and cultural heritage of the Humber River, a designated Canadian Heritage River. This year's event will take place along the Humber River Recreation Trail in Toronto, with featured stops at key locations including the historic bridge at Étienne Brulé Park.

### **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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