



TCHC's 2023 Strategic Communications Plan Update

Item 7

November 16, 2023

Governance, Communications and Human Resources Committee

Report: GCHRC:2023-37

To: Governance, Communications and Human Resources Committee
("GCHRC")

From: Vice President, Strategic Planning and Communications

Date: October 23, 2023

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide the GCHRC with Toronto Community Housing's ("TCHC") Strategic Communications Report for the last six months of 2023 (April – September 2023).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the GCHRC receive this report for information.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

This report provides a summary and review of TCHC's achievements against the 2023 Strategic Communications Plan over the last six-month period (April-September 2023).

In 2023, the Strategic Communications division has established four main strategies that guides the division's work:

- 1) Delivering tenant-focused communications that impact service delivery and provide stories and themes that reflect the vibrancy of our communities.
- 2) Using a digital first approach by continuing to engage tenants and TCHC business units to develop and implement user-friendly and future ready digital channels (e.g. website, email, SMS etc.).
- 3) Engaging in active storytelling by finding stories and examples of TCHC in action and elevating them for greater publicity.
- 4) Celebrating staff by highlighting the ability and resilience of TCHC employees and recognizing their integral value as contributors to the success of the organization.

To achieve these strategies, the Strategic Communications team collaborates closely with different business units across the organization including Operations, Legal and Governance, Facilities Management, Strategic Planning and Stakeholder Relations, Information Technology and People and Culture. Several examples of close collaboration shared in the report highlight strong communications campaigns to tenant, stakeholders, and employee audiences over the last six months. The Strategic Communications unit continues to deliver best-in-class in house support for end-to-end strategic communications, issues and media management, design, and digital projects.

Delivering tenant-focused communications continues to be a priority focus for the division. The tenant communications team is a strategic partner and collaborator in the implementation of a wide range of tenant facing initiatives including changes in policy, tenant engagement and consultation, tenancy management activities, maintenance and facilities management initiatives and other campaigns. The role of the team continues to strengthen in terms of providing guidance and delivering a strong standard for how TCHC communicates with tenants, and in particular, the underlying values and tone that drive the communications approach.

Over the past half year, digital communications at TCHC have seen tremendous growth and development with the launch of the new corporate website, the creation and launch of regular email bulletins to tenants and the pilot use of other digital tools to support greater tenant engagement.

Launched in May 2023, the TCHC website has garnered a 75% increase in page visits compared to the same period last year. Email bulletins to tenants are also performing well above industry benchmarks in terms of readership metrics. Finally, social media growth is on pace to match or exceed total growth achieved in 2022 at 13-18% per channel.

In 2023, we are continuing to build positive media engagement to pitch good news stories and to further establish TCHC's image, brand, and reputation. There has been a marked improvement in establishing strong lines of communication, transparency, and responsiveness to media inquiries. This has resulted in more effective communications with reporters driven by collaboration and trust-building. Over the last six months, several high profile and wide-reaching stories were published, highlighting TCHC successes in our revitalization portfolio, community programs and other initiatives.

Employee engagement through communications continues to be a significant area of work for the division. Internal communications continue to be driven by strong pushes towards sharing different employee voices, recognizing the key contributions of TCHC's frontline staff, and moving towards a more regular sharing of organizational success via internal channels. The Internal Communications team has also delivered high quality change management materials supporting technology and other organizational changes.

Overall, the Strategic Communications team is on pace to achieve strong progress against the four 2023 strategies.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS:

The Strategic Communications division continues to be a critical business partner to other units as they carry out TCHC work. The division's work is driven by a range of priorities as the needs of the organization shift and change. The division needs to remain responsive, effective and strategic as we lead and support different priorities across the year.

SIGNATURE:

“Paula Knight”

Paula Knight
Vice President, Strategic Planning and Communications

ATTACHMENT:

1. 2023 Strategic Communications – 6 Month Update Report

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Toronto
Community
Housing



2023 Strategy: 6 month Report

Strategic Communications

Report to GCHRC: October 2023



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2023 Strategic Communications Strategy

The department will focus on the four main strategy areas below.

Tenant focus



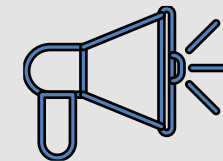
Deliver tenant communications that are service focused, impactful and inspirational.

Digital first



Continue to engage tenants and business units to develop and implement user-friendly and future ready digital channels.

Active storytelling



Tell our story to the public, finding examples of TCHC in action and elevating them. This includes People and Culture campaigns to attract new talent.

Celebrating staff



Highlight the goodness and ability of TCHC staff, because when people feel good, they produce good results.



Tenant Focused Communications

In 2023, we are focused on the following strategies:

Deliver timely, relevant and informative tenant communications that improve service delivery.

Segment and customize communications for specific tenant audiences to improve effectiveness and reach business goals.

Continue to improve and extend tenant communication channels (digital, print and in-building).

Raise awareness about the ways that TCHC partners with tenants and organizations to deliver wraparound services.

Develop a series of targeted multi-channel campaigns to deliver impactful messages supporting overall tenant education or engagement.

Tenant Focused Campaigns

In 2023, Strategic Communications continues to deliver best-in-class tenant communications strategy and campaign deliverables as a valued business partner to multiple divisions.



Annual unit inspections are starting across our buildings

torontohousing.ca/inspections



Annual Unit Inspections

Strategic Communications provides full campaign to support Operations with the roll-out of annual unit inspections each year. It is important to educate tenants on what to expect and when the process will start. The multi-channel campaign includes print and digital resources that reach all 43,000 households.



Did you miss or were unable to attend the in-person consultations? All TCHC tenants are invited to attend an online session.

We want to improve the way we receive, investigate and resolve tenant Human Rights concerns at TCHC. This project is to develop a centralized, proactive, equity-focused response to tenant Human Rights issues.

At the consultation we will discuss:
• What works in the current Human Rights policy and processes?

Online consultation details:
Date: Thursday, August 3
Time: 6 to 8 p.m.

Human Rights Policy and Procedure

In collaboration with the Legal and Governance and Tenant Engagement teams, Strategic Communications created and executed a full multi-channel plan to support the consultations, reports and materials for the implementation of an interim procedure.



Help manage waste by keeping enclosures clean. Let's keep our communities clean and healthy.

Conservation at TCHC

We collaborated with the Conservation team to create content that engages tenants to help lead TCHC to a more sustainable future. Content created includes monthly educational posters, social media campaigns, web stories and learning videos to raise awareness about conservation initiatives.



2023 Tenant Survey

Together with the Strategic Planning and Stakeholder Relations division, we developed a portfolio-wide campaign to communicate to tenants the importance of completing the biennial tenant survey. The communications campaign combines print and digital channels as well as a prize incentive to increase participation.

Engagement and Information Focus

Tenant Communications continues to focus on engagement and delivering value-added information in a timely manner.



New deadline: apply for the TCHC Tenant Advisory Committee

Do you want to contribute to the development and well-being of your community?
Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) and the City of Toronto are seeking tenants (age 18+) to join TCHC's Tenant Advisory Committee focusing on tenant engagement and participation.
New deadline to apply online: Friday, June 16, 2023.

Apply on the website
torontohousing.ca/tes



Tenant Community Action Tables

In collaboration with Tenant Engagement and regional operations teams, we delivered event communications support for nine events. Event communications include promotion, event materials and post-event reporting.



Accessibility at TCHC

We partner with R-PATH to develop content to increase tenant knowledge around accessibility issues. This includes a National AccessAbility Week campaign, unit modifications, Accessibility is for You info packages (4000 delivered across three regions), video content and 94 social media posts.



Tenant Guide

The 2023 Tenant Guide was first launched digitally as part of the new TCHC website in May 2023. The publication will be translated into 10 languages. The updated publication will be printed and distributed in Q4 of 2023 and is given to every household at lease signing.

Tenant Publications (Print and Digital)

Tenant publications are published and distributed in regular intervals throughout the year to provide important updates and notices and to share tenant and community stories.

Publication	Frequency	Audience	Open Rate	Click-through Rate
Tenant LOOP (Print)	Quarterly	43,000 (all households)	N/A	N/A
Tenant Bulletin (Digital)	Monthly	5500 (opt-in)	69%*	6%**
Tenant Engagement Leadership Newsletter (Digital)	Bi-monthly	Approx. 648 tenant leaders	62%*	5.25%**

*Industry benchmark for open rates is 25%-28%. TCHC has an above average audience engagement for this publication.

**Industry benchmark for click-through rates is 3-5%. TCHC has an above average click-through rate and strong readership of articles in the newsletter.



Tenant Content Strategy

Strategic Communications delivered timely, informative, engaging and inspirational stories to our tenants and stakeholders using a range of different channels. Below is content published and produced over the last 6 months.

16

Digital tenant stories

1,790

Social Media Posts

12

Videos Produced

10

Publications for tenants

Tenant Awareness and Education

In collaboration with subject matter experts on TCHC's conservation team, we created two illustrated videos to raise awareness and education about conserving electricity and waste management in TCHC buildings. A third video on water conservation is in the works.



Learn about waste management



How to help conserve electricity in your building

Tenant-Focused Videos

The TCHC content team continues to create video and digital content with the goal of engaging tenants in programs, events and other wraparound services available in our communities.



[Youthworx: Celebrating 10 years](#)



[What makes Lawrence Heights, Lawrence Heights?](#)



[Talking to TCHC's 2023 summer interns](#)



[Be.Build.Brand 2023 pitch contest recap](#)



[TCHC's basketball and soccer programs for youth](#)



[Introducing the Building Up program](#)

Community Stories

The TCHC content team identifies inspirational and exemplary stories to share online and in print with our tenant, staff and stakeholder audiences.



Building Up a Future in the Trades

As a non-profit social enterprise, Building Up provides individuals with barriers to employment with holistic training and support in the trades, and has had a long-standing partnership with TCHC since 2016. To date, approximately 175 TCHC tenants have completed the Building Up apprenticeship program.



Promoting Financial Literacy within TCHC Communities

Alisha Griffith is the founder of *Unified We Grow*, a non-profit organization established to improve the overall livelihood of TCHC tenants. For the past year, Alisha has been generously donating her time to run a free tax clinic through the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)'s Community Volunteer Income Tax Program.



A new Alexandra Park mural reflects its proud community

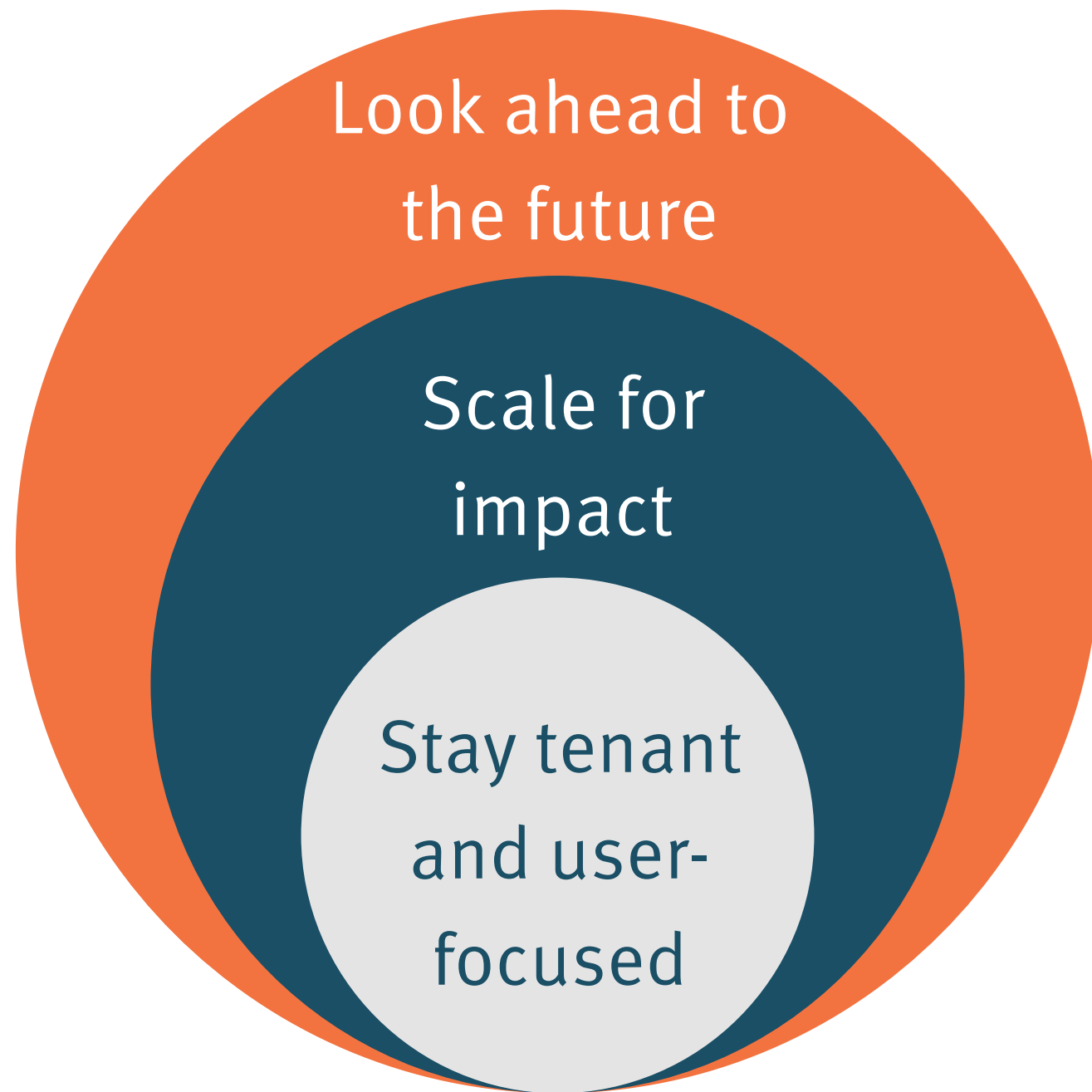
A vibrantly painted mural titled *Further Together* was installed at 20 Vanauley Road in the Alexandra Park community. Painted by Montreal-based artist, Annie Harmel, the colourful art piece honours the Indigenous peoples and the many global cultures that have settled and made Alexandra Park their home.



Reaching out and Giving Back

A basketball player from the Jane and Finch community, Kwasi Adu-Poku, used lessons learned on the court to help others. From his experiences as a former varsity basketball player and as a mental health advocate, Kwasi founded the Reach Series, a platform for holistic wellness and personal development.

Digital First



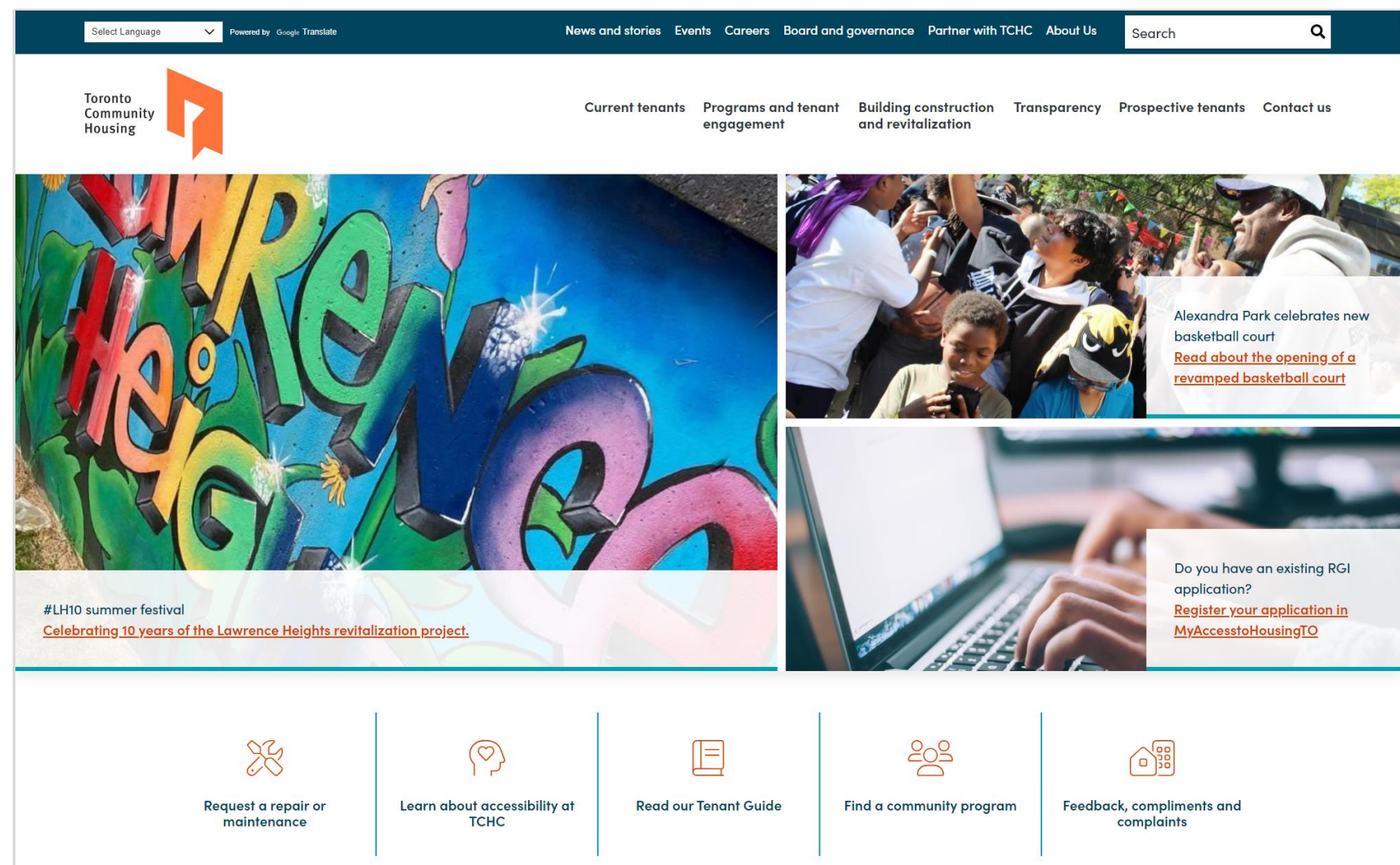
Determine what tenants and users want from us: Identify areas where technology will make a service difference and engage users in design and feedback.

Scale existing channels to be more impactful: Now that we have established new digital channels, how do we ensure their continued success and scale to new use cases.

Look ahead to the future: Plan for the future by upskilling the current team, phasing new platform development based on foreseeable need and selecting solutions that allow for flexibility.

New TCHC Website

TCHC's new website officially launched in July 2023, providing a new user friendly and simplified digital experience.



Current reach

69,600 unique visitors per month (+75% compared to 2022)

Top pages and sections of new site

Careers, Search results, Prospective Tenants sections, Contact Us, Tenant Service Hubs

Recent popular searches on site

Jobs, Cleaner, Parking, Heating, income change form

Strategic growth in 2023-2024

Governance tool installed on site to ensure ongoing accessibility compliance, development of new webforms, and new content areas to support Human Rights project and integrated communication campaigns.

Social Media Growth

TCHC’s four primary social media channels – Facebook, LinkedIn, X (formerly known as Twitter) and Instagram – have grown by 6.2% (total net audience growth) from April 1 – September 30, 2023.

Year	Audience	Impressions	Engagements	Post Link Clicks	Engagement Rate
Apr 1 - Sept 30, 2022	36,876	1,237,984	52,602	22,728	4.2%
Apr 1 – Sept 30, 2023	41,456 (+12%)	859,815 (-30%)	54,129 (+2.9%)	27,952 (+23%)	6.3% (+50%)

Highlights:

- Audience growth continues to be steady across all channels, with all four primary platforms seeing between 13-18% growth compared year-over-year
- Engagement and post-link clicks are on track to match or exceed last year. Highest engagement is currently on LinkedIn
- The decrease in impressions is due to a more strategic number of posts in 2023 and changing social media algorithms displaying material at different intervals

Strategic growth in 2023-2024

- Youth focused campaigns on Instagram
- Continued customized content on different channels to increase engagement and drive business needs and objectives
- Full integrated campaigns utilizing TCHC’s new website as a landing point with an emphasis on stylized images and custom video
- Collaboration through media partnerships has supported increased reach and shared content.

Active storytelling in 2023

Media strategy to drive positive, constructive coverage for TCHC

Pitching Great Stories

Turn interesting story leads into effective media pitches, supporting subject matter experts with media preparation to confidently tell TCHC's story and show the positive community impact.

Leveraging Strategic Partnerships

Coordinate with corporate and community partners to create positive news stories that show TCHC in action, collaborating with other agencies and organizations.

Strengthening Media Relationships

Media relationships based on trust and transparency lead to better outcomes for TCHC, both in responding to incoming requests and pitching story ideas.



Media Deep Dive

Pitching Great Stories

During the summer (June-September), several key revitalization milestones were reached in Regent Park, including approval of the [rezoning application](#) by the City and selection of the [architects](#) for Phases 4-5.

Media coverage resulting from TCHC's media releases included:

- 45 online, print and radio mentions
- Sentiment:
 - Positive – 84%
 - Negative – 0%
 - Neutral – 16%



Media Deep Dive

Pitching Great Stories

On September 8, the North York Mirror and Toronto.com published a [feature story](#) highlighting TCHC's completion of two revitalization projects – [Allenbury Gardens](#) and [Leslies Nymark](#).

The article included interviews with TCHC's William Mendes and Michael Lam, as well as several photos from each community's celebration with tenants.

Audience reach: 235,000



Media Deep Dive

Leveraging Strategic Partnerships

On September 19, Raptors captain Pascal Siakam and Leafs captain John Tavares were in Alexandra Park to [unveil a new basketball court](#).

The event featured Tom Hunter and Deputy Mayor Ausma Malik, and was covered by several media outlets.

[CBC Toronto's two-minute piece](#) included interviews with youth from the community.

A [feature story](#) focusing on tenant voice was also created by TCHC for web and social media channels.



Media Deep Dive

Leveraging Strategic Partnerships

In August, TCHC partnered with Meridian Credit Union and the John Tavares Foundation to provide school supplies to youth across the portfolio.

TCHC created a [joint media release](#) for Meridian and collaborated with the John Tavares Foundation on several social media posts.

A [feature story](#) highlighting the partnerships was also published for use on TCHC's website and social media channels.



Media Deep Dive

Strengthening Media Relationships

On September 4, Alex Bozikovic – a prominent architecture critic for the *Globe and Mail* – [published a story](#) highlighting TCHC's choice of architects for Phases 4-5 of the Regent Park revitalization project.

External Communications has spent time building a good working relationship with Bozikovic because he is an influential voice in the space and has published thoughtful and constructive coverage of TCHC and other public housing projects in the past.

The approximate readership of this story was 5,970,000.



Media Deep Dive

Strengthening Media Relationships

On August 8, [CBC's Here and Now](#) program interviewed TCHC's Peter Zimmerman, unpacking the rezoning approval for Regent Park well, as well as TCHC's vision for the revitalization project.

The opportunity started with a media release from External Communications that generated the request, but required more extensive background work with CBC producers and pre-interview support to prepare TCHC's spokesperson.

Total audience reach (i.e., listeners) was 1,560,000.



Preparing for Crisis

Meeting reputational risk and issues with transparency and adaptability

During the first half of 2023, Strategic Communications has seen significant gains in the team's ability to respond well under pressure.

- Development of an ongoing On-Call schedule for issues management during evening and weekend hours.
- Integration with CSU to develop a shared process for Critical Incident Notifications and subsequent notifications to key stakeholders.
- Tabletop discussions for Strategic Communications staff that created an opportunity to test TCHC's crisis communications plan with hypothetical incidents.

Strengthening Employee-ELT Connections

Strategic Communications started 2023 with the intention of creating closer connections between employees and executive leaders by opening lines of communication and communicating more frequently.

- *Momentum 2023*, the new motivational employee engagement campaign, continues to share positive stories with staff, including recent messages from the CEO and COO.
- The arrival of Tom Hunter was supported by a new video series, *Talking with Tom*, that brought Tom's personality and leadership style to life.
- *Talking with Tom* was so successful that a call for staff questions received multiple responses, with staff interest suggesting that this will be a valuable ongoing series.



Momentum Campaign Updates

- In Spring 2023, Strategic Communications launched a new concept for employee communications: **Momentum 2023**. Momentum uses anecdotes from across the employee community to show TCHC's goodness and potential, including most recently:
 - Praise in the *Globe and Mail's* coverage of new architects for Regent Park Phases 4-5, and how it highlights TCHC's innovative approach.
 - The important role of TCHC in Mayor Chow's affordable housing targets, and why our involvement shows that TCHC is trusted and well-regarded.
 - An end-of-summer snapshot that highlighted tenant BBQs across the portfolio that staff supported, helping to bring joy and leisure into TCHC communities.



Celebrating Staff

Service Appreciation Awards

In Spring 2023, TCHC recognized hundreds of staff who reached 15 to 40 years of service between 2019 and 2022.

2023 recipients will be celebrated on November 7, 2023.

Strategic Communications is supporting People & Culture, who has taken the lead in planning future Service Appreciation events.



Thank you to all the individuals, employees and partners that generously shared their stories with us this past year. You bring life and inspiration to the TCHC community.

Strategic Communications 2023

