

# THE TEMPO EFFECT

TORONTO TEMPO  
INAUGURAL SEASON REPORT



# A MARKET ON THE RISE

# \$570M

## MARKET PROJECTION BY 2030

*On May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026, the Toronto Tempo tipped off their inaugural season as the first Canadian franchise in the WNBA, the league's first team outside of the United States.*

*This marks a historic milestone in a rapidly growing market, one that has doubled in value since 2023 and is projected to reach \$570 million by 2030. Here's a look at the ownership, roster, community vision, opening night highlights, and brand opportunities defining the Toronto Tempo's first season.*

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Toronto Tempo's inaugural game is evidence of the explosive growth of women's sports, a phenomenon that has seen the professional women's sport market in Canada double from 2023 to 2025, surging to an estimated \$380-400 million, and projected to reach \$570 million by 2030. This isn't just rapid commercial expansion; it's smart business. Canadian Women & Sport (2025) reports brands investing in pro women's sports experiencing a 25% lift in brand familiarity, positive sentiment, and purchase consideration. Toronto Tempo arrives not just as a new entrant, but as a symbol of this increasingly valuable market.

Toronto has long asserted its claim as a basketball city and the electrifying passion witnessed during the Raptors' 2019 NBA Championship win wasn't just a celebration, it was an undeniable declaration of a market ready, eager, and demanding more. Two years ago, the anticipation began to build; in May 2024 Toronto was awarded a WNBA franchise, the first outside of the United States for the league. For anyone with a finger on the pulse of basketball in Canada, this was not the beginning of the story but rather a checkpoint in a long-held dream. Although the new WNBA team was officially on its way, there was no roster, no identity, no established leadership group, but a passionate fanbase was established instantly in anticipation.

Much has changed over these two transformative years. From a nascent concept, the Toronto Tempo has found its powerful identity, brand, and voice, championed by an impressive leadership group including Teresa Resch, Lisa Ferkful, and Whitney Bell. This core team has been augmented by the appointment of General Manager Monica Wright Rogers, Head Coach Sandy Brondello, and a compelling roster of athletes featuring beloved local talent like Kia Nurse. The team's roots and reach are solidified and now prominently represented in Bordeaux and Borealis Blue by fans throughout the city, at Toronto Raptors games, and as of May 8<sup>th</sup>, Toronto Tempo games at Coca-Cola Coliseum.

# WHAT EVERY BRAND NEEDS TO KNOW

*Understanding Toronto Tempo as a business opportunity requires looking well beyond the box score. What has been carefully and deliberately constructed over the past two years is far more than a basketball team – it is a multifaceted brand ecosystem built on visionary ownership, authentic community purpose, and a roster of players whose influence extends well beyond the court.*



# WHAT EVERY BRAND NEEDS TO KNOW

The momentum leading up to the inaugural season opener was always destined to be significant, but it was supercharged in the months leading up to it. Historic developments, like the critical CBA ratification in April and a groundbreaking broadcast partnership with Bell/TSN, have catapulted the Toronto Tempo into the spotlight. When Toronto Tempo officially tipped off the season on May 8<sup>th</sup> it was more than just a game; it was an emotive culmination of a community's belief and testament to a vision. But here's the truly inspiring part for businesses watching this unfolding phenomenon: while it marks the fulfillment of a long journey, it simultaneously signals an exciting, dynamic beginning – one brimming with opportunities and an amplified nation-wide spirit.

For businesses evaluating partnerships, sponsorships, or simply seeking to understand the cultural conversation shaping this city, three dimensions of the Toronto Tempo demand your attention. First, an ownership group whose collective influence, reach, and expertise is arguably unmatched in the history of Canadian sport. Second is a roster; assembled not just to win games but to foster compelling personal brands and storytelling that resonate deeply with contemporary consumers. Third, a community-first identity rooted in purpose – one that is already forging meaningful connections with Torontonians who share like-minded values.

Individually, each element is impressive. Together, they paint the picture of an organization with a remarkably high ceiling and the foundational infrastructure to reach it. Here is what you need to know.



# THE OWNERSHIP GROUP

## A CONSTELLATION OF INFLUENCE

*The breadth of expertise this group brings is not incidental. At a baseline, it's a strategic foundation to ensure long-term, sustainable success. The ceiling of what this group is capable of is more compelling.*



# THE OWNERSHIP GROUP

## A CONSTELLATION OF INFLUENCE

The Toronto Tempo's ownership group is a statement of intent. Initiated by Larry Tanenbaum, the group has since expanded to include some of the most recognizable and influential names across sport, entertainment, and commerce. Serena Williams, one of the most celebrated athletes in human history. Masai Ujiri, the basketball visionary who delivered Toronto its only NBA Championship. Cultural icon and trailblazer Lilly Singh. NHL executive and Montreal Canadiens owner Geoff Molson. And renowned tech entrepreneur and business leader Sukhinder Singh Cassidy.

The trend of high-profile figures taking meaningful ownership stakes in sports franchises is not new. The remarkable rise of Wrexham AFC under Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney demonstrated what celebrity ownership, when authentic and engaged, can do for a franchise's cultural reach and commercial trajectory. Toronto Tempo's ownership constellation carries that same transformative potential, amplified by the scale of the market and the historic nature of the franchise itself. How this group shapes the direction, culture, and global narrative of the Toronto Tempo is worth keeping an eye on.



# THE ROSTER

## TALENT BRANDS SHOULD BE WATCHING

Assembling the inaugural roster was a milestone in defining the identity and soul of the Toronto Tempo. The organization made an unmistakable statement with a deliberate 'win now' philosophy, constructing a veteran-loaded roster through the expansion draft and free agency that signals competitive ambition from day one.

Names like Kia Nurse, Marina Mabrey, and Brittney Sykes bring, not only elite on-court credentials, but rich personal narratives, established audiences, and authentic connections to the communities the Tempo is committed to serving. They are not merely athletes, they are influential voices whose engagement with fans is genuine, consistent, and culturally relevant.

Below, we've identified the players we believe represent the most compelling marketing and partnership opportunities for brands paying attention:



KIKI RICE, GUARD

A high-visibility, next-gen player that represents a franchise-first narrative as the team's first ever draft pick. Her visibility, featuring her on-court leadership and strong fashion and lifestyle appeal, is only expected to grow.

FOLLOWERS

**140K** IG

**28K** TIKTOK



KIA NURSE, GUARD

The first Canadian player on Toronto's first WNBA team. Her "homecoming" storyline, combined with national team credibility and offseason broadcast media position, strengthens her connection with Canadian audiences.

**108K** IG

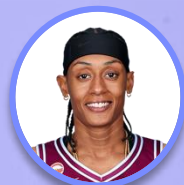


MARINA MABREY, GUARD

Marina Mabrey is one of the most visible personalities on the roster. The combination of on-court confidence and off-court authenticity makes her a high impact asset from both a performance and commercial standpoint.

**167K** IG

**130K** TIKTOK



BRITTNEY SYKES, GUARD

One of Tempo's highest profile signings. Her reputation as a top defender, combined with her veteran status and 2025 WNBA All-Star credentials, positions her as a performance-driven face of the team.

**80K** IG



NYARA SABALLY, GUARD

Brings a reputation for high IQ and team-first play to Toronto. A German-American, she represents international growth and diverse engagement. Beyond the court, the content on her platforms is consistently top-tier

**74K** IG

**51K** TIKTOK

# COMMUNITY & BRAND

## PURPOSE AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

From the very beginning, Toronto Tempo made one thing abundantly clear: this organization would be defined by far more than what happens on the court. Community and purpose were not afterthoughts or marketing additions – they were established as core pillars of the team's identity, baked into the foundation of the brand from day one.

The Tempo's guiding vision is bold and unambiguous: a future where women and girls in Canada live fuller, healthier lives. This is a vision that transcends basketball. Critically, the organization has moved with intention and authenticity to bring it to life, building real credibility with a fanbase that shares these values deeply.

That vision is actively supported through a portfolio of meaningful strategic partnerships; Canada Basketball, Women's College Hospital Foundation, Canadian Women & Sport. These relationships underpin key platforms that activate the organization's purpose, connecting brands and business with their shared values:

### TEMPO IMPACT

Social impact platform launched March 2026. Long-term commitment to the health and well-being of girls and women across Canada.

### TEMPO COLLECTIVE

Network of grassroots, non-profit, and charitable partners embedded within Tempo Impact.

### TEMPO RISING

Fully funded coaching development program for emerging women and non-binary basketball coaches in Canada. Includes mentorship from team leadership, monthly sessions, clinic access, and a \$1,000 development grant.

### TOGETHER WE WIN

Social inclusion and belonging platform. Launched in June 2025 for Pride and Indigenous Heritage Month, in partnership with Sephora Canada. Expanded nationally February 2026 for Black History Month. Fan Pledge tied to donations to You Can Play.

## 2026 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

**May 8** Opening Night  
**May 23** Asian Heritage Night  
**May 30** Youth Jam

**June 3** Commissioner's Cup Begins (ends June 16)  
**June 25** Indigenous Heritage Night  
**June 27** Play with Pride Night

**July 8** SLAM Night  
**July 10 & 12** Cross-Canada Series: Montreal  
**July 17** Homegrown Hoops Night  
**July 30** Carnival Celebration Game

**August 21 & 23** Cross-Canada Series: Vancouver

**September 18** Her Health, Her Future Night  
**September 20** Fan Celebration Night

# RECAPPING A SUCCESSFUL HISTORIC OPENING NIGHT

Beyond the action on the court, the atmosphere inside Coca-Cola Coliseum was electric. The anticipation for Toronto Tempo's first-ever game culminated in a night filled with opening ceremonies, brand activations, and an overwhelming wave of fan support.

Along with the sold-out crowd (8,210 fans), the occasion drew an exceptional array of celebrity attendees, underscoring the cultural significance of the moment. In the building were Tempo owner Masai Ujiri, Raptors alum Serge Ibaka, current Raptors Sandro Mamukelashvili, Immanuel Quickley and Chris Boucher, the Tempo's own Chief Hype Officer Lilly Singh, Olympian Andre De Grasse, Toronto Maple Leafs Chris Tanev and Steven Lorentz, Toronto Scepters stars Emma Maltais and Darryl Watts, and AFC Toronto's Nikayla Small and Kaylee Hunter.

Notably, Christine Sinclair's appearance drew the most resounding response of the evening — a testament to the community's connection, not only to a basketball team, but to a larger movement for equity and representation in Canadian professional sports, an ambition Sinclair has championed for decades. This passion was on full display throughout the arena, where fans arrived decked out in an array of WNBA and Toronto Tempo merch, handmade creations, and the opening night t-shirts gifted to every attendee.

Fan engagement carried throughout every moment of the game, from in-game segments like the CIBC Courtside Club celebrity feature and the Vogue Cam, to a halftime performance by LU KALA. These are the moments where game-day traditions are born. In a standout moment late in the game, a young fan's infectious dancing captured the crowd's attention and imagination — her moves were quickly adopted by fans and featured in subsequent dance cams. She was then invited onto the court to perform once more, this time backed by The Rhythm Section, the Tempo's official dance team



"The night was a culmination of years of fandom anticipation. The most satisfying part was to see the crowd rally behind the Tempo players throughout the game, creating new relationships across the roster now that they are here representing Toronto. That and the fashion—fans brought the Tempo colours and creativity to the stands with style and diversity that's unique to Toronto."

MAEVE JEWISS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, SPONSORSHIP MARKETING



"It was a special night. Witnessing that historic tip-off, you could feel the gravity of the moment—it was about so much more than the final score. Watching young fans in the stands start to realize that their role models are finally right here at home was incredibly powerful. The energy was so warm, and the fashion was a standout—the custom outfits and merch proved that the city and country have fully bought in. It was a career milestone that transcended the game."

STEPHANIE KINSELLA, MANAGER, SPONSORSHIP MARKETING

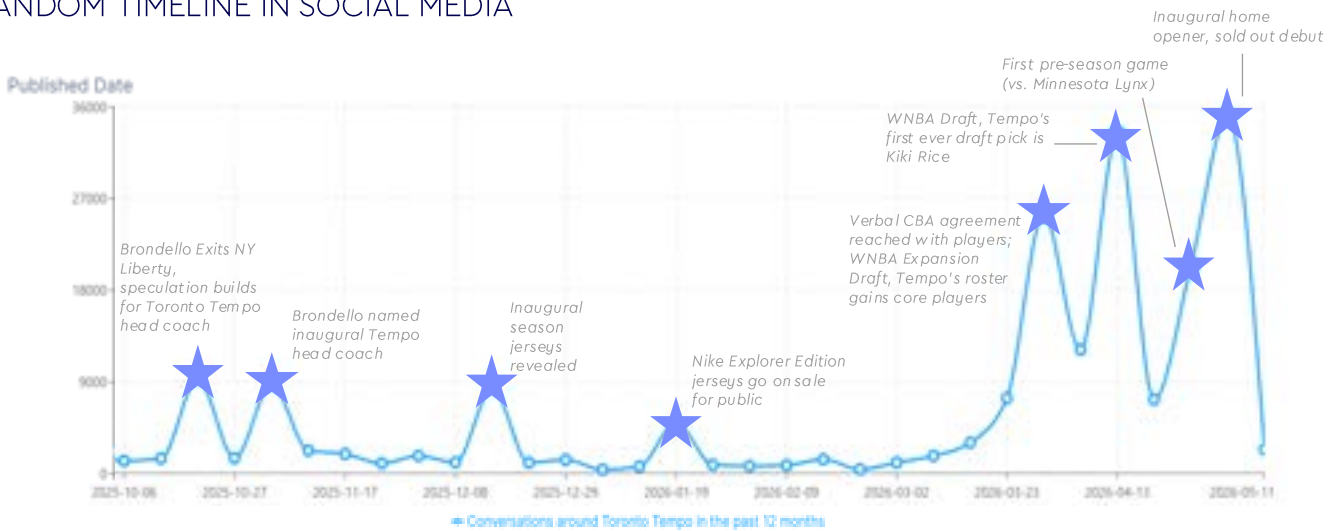
# AUDIENCE, VIEWERSHIP & MEDIA ACTIVITY

# 1.235B

## MEDIA IMPRESSIONS ACHIEVED

Between the long-awaited arrival of WNBA team in Toronto, the CBA agreement signed only a month before season tip off, and the national media rights announced only days before the inaugural game, engagement had hit the ceiling. With the regular season now underway, engagement momentum and passion are expected to grow the opportunities to activate around Tempo athletes, new rivalries, and more brand activations.

### FANDOM TIMELINE IN SOCIAL MEDIA



### BROADCAST VIEWERSHIP RESULTS

Toronto Tempo's inaugural season opener broadcast drew 1.01M reach on TSN and CTV2, an average audience of 198,000 viewers (P2+), **the most watched WNBA game on record in Canada.** This record-breaking performance extended into key demographics, with 56,300 A25-54 viewers.

Audiences peaked at 9:54pm with 427,100 viewers (P2+), when the players lined up for a jump-ball with 2.4 seconds left in the game and the Tempo trailing by three points.

### WNBA OPENING WEEKEND VIEWERSHIP ON TSN, YOY



# VIEWERSHIP & MEDIA ACTIVITY

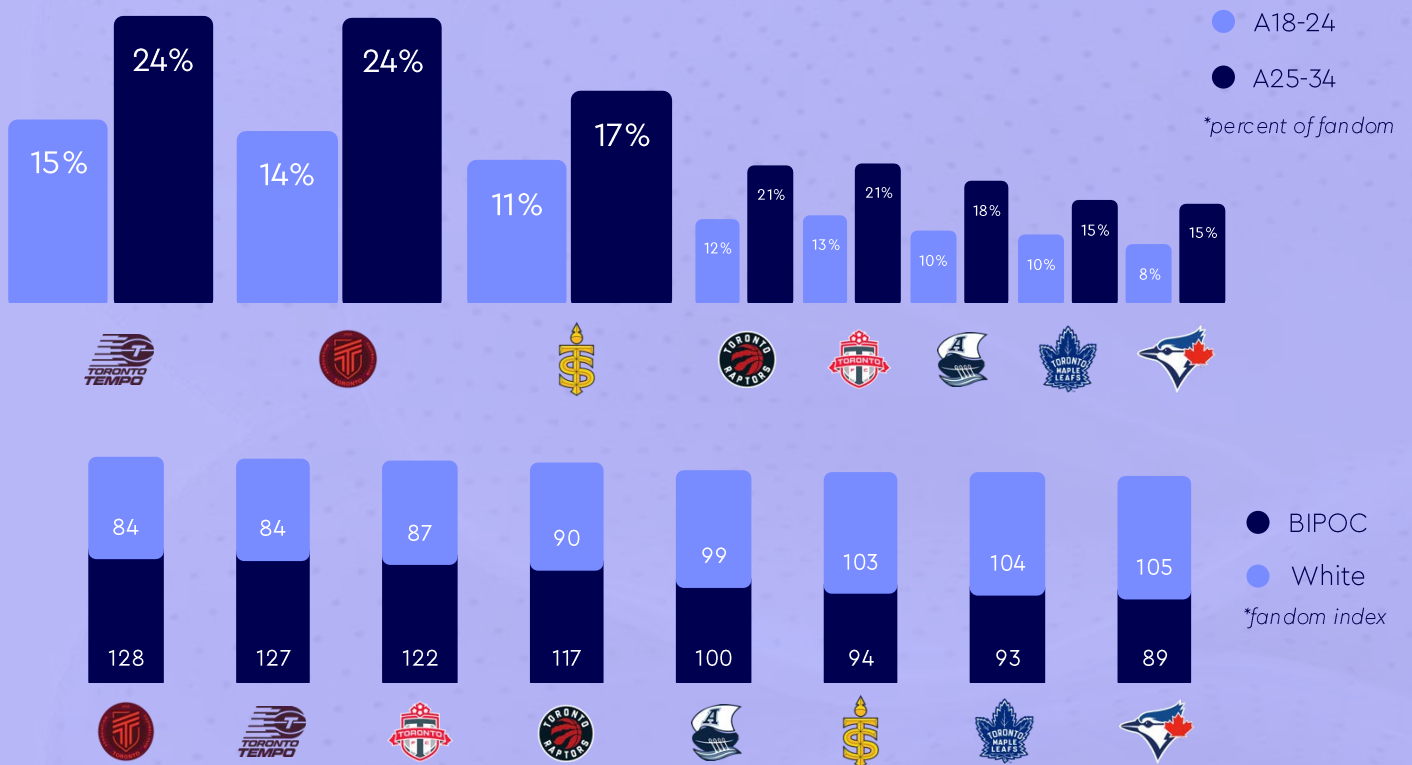
## EARNED MEDIA COVERAGE

Toronto Tempo made an undeniable splash in the media landscape. From May 3<sup>rd</sup> to May 9<sup>th</sup> alone, the team garnered an impressive 3,452 media mentions in Canada, generating 1.235 billion media impressions

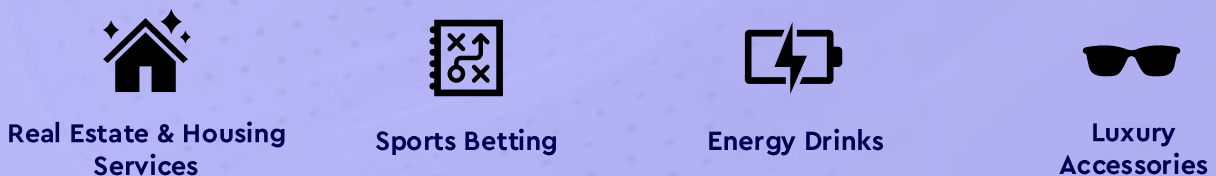
## UNDERSTANDING THE TORONTO TEMPO FAN

Toronto Tempo fans skew younger, with 34% of Canadians A18-24 engaged with the team and, among those, 33% are engaged on a weekly basis. The cohort of fans A18-24 is the largest segment (15%) among professional sports teams in Toronto. Toronto Tempo fans are also some of the most diverse fans among Toronto's professional sports team fandoms, over indexing on those fans (127i) who identify as BIPOC.

### FANDOM DIVERSITY, AGE & RACE BY TORONTO TEAM



### TOP INTERESTS FOR TORONTO TEMPO FANS



# BRAND ACTIVATIONS

## FOUNDING PARTNERS SETTING THE PACE

**Sephora Canada** made history as the Toronto Tempo's first ever partner, announced in January 2025 as the Official Beauty Partner. The partnership is grounded in shared values: individuality, diversity, and belonging captured in Sephora's own brand line, "We Belong to Something Beautiful," which aligns naturally with the Tempo's vision. That alignment became action through *Together We Win*; a social inclusion platform co-created with the Tempo, launched in June 2025 during Pride and National Indigenous History Month.

Sephora's commitment is among the most visible in the Tempo's entire partner ecosystem through their co-presenting partnership of the out-of-market games planned for Montreal and Vancouver this season, as well as one of two brands featured on the team's jersey. Beyond the arena, Sephora has integrated exclusive merch drops for Sephora Beauty Insiders, who can redeem points for co-branded swag.

**CIBC** joined the Toronto Tempo as a Founding Partner and Official Bank in April 2025 and was one of the first major commitments to the franchise. The partnership is anchored in the Tempo's community impact work both on the ground and at a national scale. Through *Champions of Ambition*, CIBC celebrates and elevates Canadians who are advancing representation and opportunity in sports across the country.

As the presenting sponsor of opening night, CIBC was well-represented in concourse activations and digital signage. Their largest and season-long branded contribution to the arena is the CIBC Courtside Club, where courtside ticket holders have access to premium food and drinks and an elevated area to take in the game or mingle between quarters. CIBC's *Day Ones* campaign came to life on-site with iron-on patches handed to fans to add to their Tempo merch and capture in a subsequent photobooth photo op.



# BRAND ACTIVATIONS

## NOTEWORTHY DEALS & STANDOUT ACTIVATIONS

**Bell Media's** multi-year agreement with Toronto Tempo and the WNBA is a landmark deal for women's professional sport in this country, bringing every game into Canadian homes across TSN, CTV, and Crave. TSN serves as the primary broadcast home, delivering live coverage of the Tempo's full inaugural season alongside marquee events, including the WNBA Draft, All-Star Game, Playoffs, and Finals. Select games will also air on CTV and stream on Crave, maximizing accessibility across linear and digital audiences. This deal is the first time the WNBA has dedicated, full-scale national broadcast infrastructure in Canada. A signal of how seriously the league and the country's leading sports media brand are treating this moment.

**Instacart** was well-represented in-arena via digital signage and assets, while their broadcast partnership with Bell/TSN held share of voice for those watching from home and will continue to do so throughout the season. A key moment for the brand was in the delivery of the official game ball by Toronto mayor Olivia Chow in the opening night's pre-game ceremonies.

**FanDuel Canada** made history as the first iGaming brand to officially sponsor a professional women's sports team in Canada - a notable signal of how seriously the sports betting industry is beginning to invest in women's sport as a commercial category, not just a brand moment.

**Tampax's** first ever WNBA sponsorship in Canada and a notable one, given the broader cultural conversation around normalizing period health in women's sport. The deal is a part of a wider multiyear P&G-WNBA partnership, and locally includes support for Lay-Up Youth Basketball, a Canadian charity providing free community basketball to young people with a focus on increasing girls' participation.

**Canadian Tire** was notably quiet in brand activations in-arena on opening night. Announced only a week prior, this partnership reflects the organization's commitment to an equal portfolio across men's and women's sports.

A Canadian retail brand celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2026, **Reitmans** sponsorship of the Tempo partnership signals a cultural reset for the brand, with its activewear line Hyba designing the custom uniform for The Rhythm Section, the team's official dance crew.

The most effective brands activate with meaning. With a passionate and discerning fanbase — and a growing roster of sponsors already in market — standard advertising assets will struggle to break through. The brands that will win are those that show up with authenticity, activating across integrated channels with a story that genuinely reflects shared values and purpose. There is a growing roster of sponsors already in market and more categories available for brands to come in and build meaningful strategies that resonate with fans of Toronto Tempo.

# THE TEMPO EFFECT

## TORONTO TEMPO INAUGURAL SEASON REPORT

*WPP Media empowers brands to win by building upon a foundation of deep audience intelligence, strategic relevance, and innovative media ecosystems.*

*The WPP Media Sports + Entertainment team are leaders in sponsorship marketing, uniquely positioned to help brands move beyond transactional partnerships and build meaningful, culturally resonant strategies — whether through the Toronto Tempo, women's sports, or the broader sports and entertainment landscape.*

*Connect with your WPP Media client lead today to discover how our data-driven strategies and media innovation can build your brand and drive intelligent growth.*



DANIEL MEKINDA

EVP, HEAD OF WPP MEDIA SPORTS + ENTERTAINMENT



BRANDON MAZERALL

VICE PRESIDENT, WPP MEDIA SPORTS + ENTERTAINMENT



JUSTINE TAINSH

DIRECTOR, SPONSORSHIP STRATEGY