

REPORT NO. 150 of the
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,
HEALTH & CULTURE STANDING COMMITTEE
of its meeting held April 10, 2013

Present: Councillor Ed Sleiman, Chair
Councillor Jo-Anne Gignac
Councillor Percy Hatfield
Councillor Alan Halberstadt
Councillor Fulvio Valentinis

That the following recommendation of the Social Development, Health and Culture Standing Committee **BE APPROVED** as follows:

Moved by Councillor Halberstadt, seconded by Councillor Valentinis,

THAT the Report from the Employment & Social Services Department providing an overview of the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario Report – Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario **BE RECEIVED** by City Council for information; and

THAT City Council **ALLOW** the City of Windsor's Executive Director of Employment & Social Services and/or the Community Development & Health Commissioner, to **TRAVEL, ATTEND and PARTICIPATE** in meetings involving the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and other participating municipalities working together to provide input to the Province of Ontario within the context of social assistance transformation.

Carried.

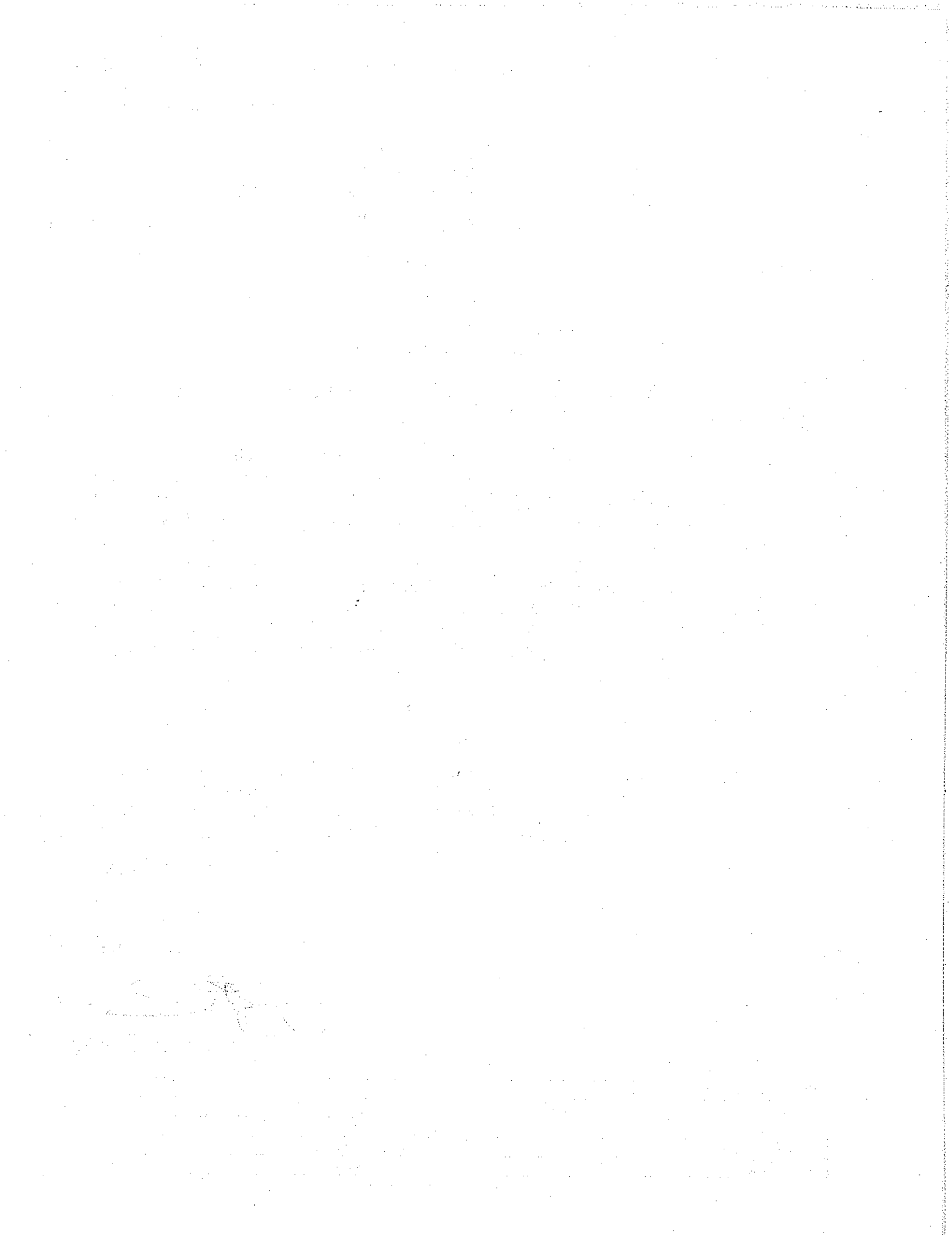
Clerk's Note: The administrative report authored by the Executive Director of Employment & Social Services dated February 15, 2013 entitled "*Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario Report – Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario*" is attached as background information.

LIVELINK 16419, SS2013


CHAIRPERSON


COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

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THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF WINDSOR
Social Development, Health and Culture Standing Committee-
Administrative Report

**MISSION STATEMENT:**

"The City of Windsor, with the involvement of its citizens, will deliver effective and responsive municipal services, and will mobilize innovative community partnerships"

LiveLink REPORT #: 16419 SS2013	Report Date: February 15, 2013
Author's Name: Bruno Ierullo	Date to Standing Committee: April 10, 2013
Author's Phone: 519 255-5200 ext. 5257	Classification #:
Author's E-mail: bierullo@city.windsor.on.ca	

To: Social Development, Health and Culture Standing Committee

Subject: Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario Report – *Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario*

1. RECOMMENDATION: City Wide: Ward(s): _____

THAT the Report from the Employment & Social Services Department providing an overview of the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario Report – *Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario* **BE RECEIVED** by City Council for information; and

THAT City Council **ALLOW** the City of Windsor's Executive Director of Employment & Social Services and/or the Community Development & Health Commissioner, to **TRAVEL, ATTEND and PARTICIPATE** in meetings involving the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and other participating municipalities working together to provide input to the Province of Ontario within the context of social assistance transformation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

N/A

2. BACKGROUND:

This report is being brought to Council, consistent with Council Resolution 75/2011 which reads as follows:

THAT City Council **RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION** the Delegation of Authority Status Report for the second half of 2010 (July 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010); and

THAT City Council APPROVE the amended criteria for City of Windsor staff participation on Professional Committees, Executives and Boards of Directors of outside organizations.

Report Number 15066 AS/7748 C3

As part of the provincial government's 2008 Poverty Reduction Strategy, the provincial government embarked on a review of social assistance in Ontario. In proceeding with the review, the government of Ontario established the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario ("the Commission") in November 2010. The Commissioners appointed to lead the review were Frances Lankin and Munir A. Sheikh.

Extensive consultation took place across Ontario, inclusive of Windsor, through local engagement events convened by local organizations, such as Pathway to Potential (Windsor-Essex County).

The final report, entitled *Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario* ("the Report"), was submitted to the Minister of Community and Social Services in October 2012. It has received much attention by provincial organizations, municipalities, provincial political parties, and various advocacy groups, including but not limited to: the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), the Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) – just to name a few.

The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Provide a very high level overview of the Commission's Report, taking into consideration the views expressed in the Drummond Report, the Government of Ontario's statements, and the PC Caucus White Paper – *Paths to Prosperity: Welfare to Work*. Additionally, a summary of a joint response to the Provincial Government from AMO/OMSSA (with the involvement of municipal representatives) regarding the Report will be provided.
- b) Provide the context within which the request is being made for staff to actively engage in ongoing meetings involving the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and other participating municipalities working together to provide input to the Province of Ontario within the context of social assistance transformation.

3. DISCUSSION:

The Commission's Report contains **108 recommendations** with the overarching goal to find ways to remove barriers and help people obtain employment. The prominent recommendations can be categorized into the following areas.

1. Enabling Employment

- a. Persons with disabilities should have access to employment services as do persons without disabilities.
- b. Promote the hiring of persons with disabilities.
- c. Replace Participation Agreements with a "*Pathway to Employment Plan*", identifying employment goals and activities, as well as the services and supports to be provided.
- d. Include alternative forms of employment, such as self-employment, social enterprise, etc.

2. Service Integration

- a. Replace Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) with one integrated program to be managed at the local level.
- b. Integrate employment services with other human services, with the local level being responsible for employment services for social assistance recipients.
- c. Municipalities being given the option to be a designated Employment Ontario delivery agent.

3. A New Benefit Structure & Simplified Rules

- a. Set the standard rate at \$100 per month over the rate at the time of implementation for a single adult renter receiving OW.
- b. Allow social assistance recipients to earn an additional \$200 per month in employment earnings.
- c. Harmonize various rules for all social assistance benefits (e.g., liquid asset rules, etc.). The Commission indicates that harmonizing and simplifying the rules could eliminate more than 25 directives under OW and ODSP.
- d. Provide prescription drugs, dental, and other health benefits to all low-income persons beyond social assistance, increasing incentives to work.
- e. Eliminate the Special Diet Allowance as a separate benefit, and reinvest it into the standard rate to improve income adequacy.
- f. No longer use the Rent-Geared-to-Income rent scales for social assistance recipients, instead use 30% of household income; thereby, generating \$200 million in increased rent revenues to Ontario municipalities.
- g. Establish "block funding" to be used at the discretion of local administrators.

4. Strengthen Accountability

- a. Appoint a Provincial Commissioner for Social Assistance.
 1. Leads the process of establishing and overseeing performance measures.
 2. Authority to intervene if municipalities exhibit problems or poor performance.
- b. Compliance or client eligibility reviews should be based on the actual risk profile of recipients rather than a percentage of cases.

5. Reinvestment

- a. Reinvest program savings in employment services and supports, and fund benefit structure implementation priorities.

Support for many of the foregoing recommendations can be found in the Drummond Report and the PC White Paper, specifically in regards to employment, service integration, a new benefit structure and/or simplified rules.

Drummond also supports the reinvestment of savings into social assistance, but qualifies it with expenditures being contained below the 0.5% annual growth rate.

The Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) recommends against moving the Special Diet Allowance into a new benefit rate as it could, in their view, seriously affect peoples' medical conditions.

AMO/OMSSA Municipal Response to the Social Assistance Review Commission Report

Being that the Commission's Report has the potential for significant changes in the area of social assistance, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario's (AMO) President Russ Powers communicated with the Minister of Community and Social Services, and spoke to the shared provincial-municipal interest in transforming social assistance in Ontario and the common goal of improving outcomes for low-income Ontarians and persons with disabilities in our communities. AMO's President emphasized two important points going forward:

1. Social assistance transformation must adhere to the principles and commitments of the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review (PMFSDR) agreement of 2008 and not result in any new costs to municipalities; and,
2. Dialogue on transforming social assistance in Ontario must also include efforts to further integrate the delivery of income support and employment services with other human and social service delivery.

AMO and OMSSA established a working group, which includes various municipal representatives, to assess the possible impacts and develop a joint response to the Province outlining preliminary initial thoughts concerning the Commission's recommendations. The joint response is framed within the context of specific questions asked by the Ministry of Community & Social Services. The City of Windsor's Executive Director of Employment & Social Services was invited to participate with the working group.

AMO and OMSSA's joint response will be guided by the following:

1. AMO and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), alongside the City of Toronto, need to work closely together with the province through a working group process to examine the recommendations and anticipate potential impacts to the current municipal service system manager structure and to municipalities.
2. Social assistance transformation will require a strong, collaborative provincial-municipal partnership to achieve transformation that provides real change and positive outcomes that reflect the government's objectives for transforming the system and benefiting those in receipt of assistance.
3. There is much at stake given the vital role that income and employment support programs play to promote community health, reduce poverty and to enhance economic competitiveness by facilitating local labour market attachment. The common provincial-municipal interest is to: design, plan and see the delivery of an efficient and effective service; simplify and consolidate arrangements where appropriate; and focus strongly on results. At the same time, the operating context of fiscal and capacity pressures needs to be recognized.

In the coming months AMO and OMSSA will bring municipal representatives and perspectives to the table with the province, as well as solicit broader municipal input from across the province. This is important as municipalities play a pivotal role in planning, designing, managing and delivering services to meet the needs of local communities. Municipal service managers will be expected to provide their expertise including ideas for pilots, evaluations, and technology improvements in order to accelerate social assistance transformation.

How is the City of Windsor Positioned as a Service Manager to Undertake Proposed Changes?

With a focus on economic development and an "Employment First/Poverty Reduction Strategy", the City of Windsor Employment & Social Services Department is well-positioned to proceed with the recommendations made by the Commission relative to Employment. Moreover, as one of six municipalities in the Province to be designated as an Employment Ontario (EO) delivery agent in addition to delivering OW, the Department is in an advantageous position to assume service integration, inclusive of delivering financial assistance and employment services to persons with disabilities.

In principle, we are of the view that social assistance transformation should encompass:

1. A focus on outcomes.
2. Adequacy of benefits.
3. Removal of barriers to employment.
4. A simplified system that reduces the 800 rules and regulations, allowing for greater efficiency and effectiveness by placing greater emphasis on good customer service, employment, and risk-based reviews versus "red-tape", "jumping through hoops", and "policing".
5. Initiatives that create a Return-On-Investment in terms of increased employment outcomes, reduced caseloads, and decreased expenditures.

These principles have guided the approach taken by the Department in recent years, leading to positive results.

4. RISK ANALYSIS:

The Commission's Report contains only recommendations, and some of these measures could take years to implement. The Provincial Government will need time to assess each of the 108 recommendations, within the context of current economic challenges in Ontario and a significant provincial deficit. Until intended changes and the details are announced, the risks to the Corporation are unknown at this point in time. The actual risks can only be adequately assessed and measured following definitive decisions by the Government of Ontario in the implementation of any one of the recommendations.

5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:

Any changes to the social assistance system should not come with any costs to the municipalities in either a reversal of uploaded expenditures or additional downloading. Any transfer of service should be fully resourced and supported by the Province, recognizing the financial and workload pressures of municipalities.

The request to have the Executive Director of Employment & Social Services and/or the Community Development & Health Commissioner attend out of town meetings involving the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and other participating municipalities will result in costs related to transportation, possible overnight accommodations and meals. To date, meetings have been conducted via teleconference, and this will continue to be the practice whenever possible. A schedule of meetings has not been provided and, as such, the frequency of meetings is unknown at this time. However, there is a potential that meetings could occur as frequently as once per

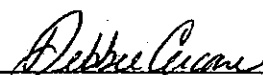
month. It should be noted that travel costs incurred in carrying out the delivery or administration of social assistance is eligible for Ontario Works provincial cost sharing of 50%. The remaining 50% municipal contribution is further cost-shared with the County, using the arbitrated weighted assessment formula.

6. CONSULTATIONS:


Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA)

7. CONCLUSION:

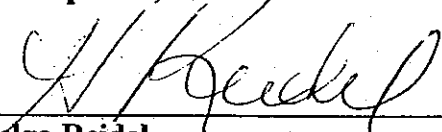
The new Premier of Ontario, Kathleen Wynne, reportedly indicated her intention to proceed with the implementation of recommendations contained in the Commission's Report. Any move to transform social assistance must involve municipalities at the table along with its provincial associations – Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA). As stated by both AMO and OMSSA, a provincial and municipal partnership in designing the transformation should be based on the principles established through the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review (PMFSDR) agreement of 2008. It is also advantageous to have the City's Executive Director of Employment & Social Services involved in the discussion and process, so that the City has input and can be at the forefront of change.

for 

Bruno Ierullo
Executive Director of Employment &
Social Services



Jelena Payne
Community Development & Health
Commissioner and Corporate Leader Social
Development, Health, Recreation & Culture



Helga Reidel
Chief Administrative Officer

/bi

APPENDICES:

Any of the documents mentioned in this Council Report can be provided by the author of this Report upon request.

DEPARTMENTS/OTHERS CONSULTED:

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NOTIFICATION :

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