ONTARIO SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS

2024 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

Empowering Ontario's Future Through Innovation and Engineering Excellence

February 2024

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Executive Summary

In our pre-budget submission, the **Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE)** proposes strategic investments across:

1. Affordable Housing Solutions:

- Funding for engineering-driven affordable housing solutions.
- Research and development in affordable housing technology.
- Support for cost-effective construction and energy-efficient practices.
- Incentives for green building certification.

2. Infrastructure:

- Sustainable engineering solutions for energy systems.
- Resilient urban planning and climate change adaptation.
- Modernization of water infrastructure and circular economy practices.
- Accessible infrastructure development.

3. Green Energy Transition:

- Investments in exploring the optimal net-zero supply mix.
- Incentives for renewable energy adoption and surplus energy storage.
- Grid modernization, energy efficiency programs, and support for nuclear energy and thermal networks.
- Widespread deployment of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and consumer education on the appropriate use of EV chargers.

4. Emerging Technologies:

- Funding for cybersecurity, education on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and effective data governance.
- Emerging cleantech solutions like decentralized wastewater treatment and carbon capture technologies.

5. Health and Safety:

• Initiatives for indoor air quality standards aligned with ASHRAE recommendations.

6. Education and Employment:

- Implementation of the Blue-Ribbon Panel recommendations.
- Increased funding for STEM education.
- Support for professional development and diversity initiatives.
- Programs for International Engineering Graduates (IEGs) and Indigenous individuals in mining.

7. Regulatory Efficiency and Streamlining:

• A comprehensive review of Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO) to enhance efficiency, and innovation, and recognize emerging technologies and disciplines.

8. Collaboration with Professional Organizations:

• Funding and programs facilitating collaboration with professional organizations, such as OSPE, to enhance the role of technical knowledge in decision making processes.



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The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy Minister of Finance c/o Budget Secretariat Frost Building North - 95 Grosvenor Street 3rd Floor Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Z1

RE: Ontario 2023 Pre-Budget Submission

Dear Minister Bethlenfalvy,

As Ontario approaches a pivotal moment in fiscal planning, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE) is eager to present our insights and recommendations in our pre-budget submission. OSPE plays an indispensable role in shaping the province's future, representing a vast network of engineers whose expertise permeates every facet of Ontario's economic development strategy. You will find our members in every industry that drives Ontario's economy, from advanced manufacturing, electric and autonomous vehicle production, infrastructure, energy sector, biotechnology, Al, agriculture, mining, and many other sectors.

With over 85,000 professional engineers in Ontario, OSPE serves as the collective voice of a cohort embedded in every sector and industry. Engineers, as innate problem solvers and strategic thinkers, leave an indelible mark on the intricate systems propelling our province's progress. Our members contribute to innovation, infrastructure, and technological advancements, making OSPE a vital repository of insights into effective strategies.

Beyond their professional roles, Ontario's engineers are integral community members, offering unique perspectives on social, economic, and environmental challenges. OSPE represents a wealth of collective knowledge, experience, and innovation, positioning us to provide crucial insights into the province's strategic direction.

In shaping Ontario's future, it is crucial that the government seeks advice from those on the front lines of progress—our engineers. They possess unparalleled insights into the challenges and opportunities ahead. As we embark on the budgetary planning process, OSPE encourages the government to proactively engage with our community, tapping into the wealth of knowledge that can inform and elevate the decision-making process.

Our pre-budget submission aims to harness this collective expertise, offering recommendations that not only strengthen the engineering profession but also contribute significantly to the prosperity and well-being of all Ontarians. We eagerly anticipate the opportunity to collaborate with the government, sharing our insights and working together to build a resilient and forward-thinking Ontario. Thank you for your attention, and we look forward to a constructive dialogue that will shape the future of our province.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Holko, P.Eng. Chair

Sandro terruzzo

Sandro Perruzza CEO

Affordable Housing Solutions

OSPE proposes funding to support engineering-driven solutions for affordable housing, tackling the housing crisis and promoting sustainable, energy-efficient building practices.

Research and Development in Affordable Housing Technology:

Additional funding is recommended for research initiatives focused on creating innovative engineering solutions for affordable housing, with the aim of fostering new ways of building housing communities that contribute to the development of cost-effective, sustainable housing options.

By prioritizing these investments, OSPE seeks to harness the ingenuity of Ontario's engineers, actively participating in the creation of a more inclusive and accessible housing landscape for the people of Ontario that have a low impact on the environment and low cost for homeowners to maintain these homes.

Support for Cost-Effective Construction:

OSPE emphasizes the importance of supporting new technologies and construction methods that reduce costs while improving quality. By investing in research and implementation of cutting-edge technologies, OSPE aims to drive economic growth, enhance competitiveness, and establish higher quality yet cost-effective construction solutions throughout the province.

Energy-Efficient Building Practices:

OSPE recommends investment in programs promoting the adoption of sustainable and energyefficient building practices. This strategic allocation aims to position Ontario as a pioneer in sustainable construction, simultaneously driving economic growth and environmental responsibility within the province.

Additionally, OSPE advocates for funding for training and education on the implementation of green building technologies, ensuring a skilled workforce aligned with environmentally conscious practices.

Incentives for Green Building Certification:

OSPE proposes financial incentives for builders and developers to achieve and maintain green building certifications. These incentives act as catalysts, motivating the industry to embrace sustainable building standards, contributing to the province's commitment to environmentally responsible infrastructure.

Moreover, introducing rebates or tax credits for projects meeting specific sustainability and energy efficiency criteria is highlighted as a key proposal to significantly boost the adoption of environmentally conscious engineering practices.

Affordable Housing Infrastructure:

OSPE recommends funding for the development of necessary infrastructure to support affordable housing, including utilities, transportation, and community facilities. This investment aims to create a robust foundation for affordable housing initiatives, fostering sustainable and inclusive community growth.

Accessibility and Inclusivity Improvements:

OSPE advocates for investment in engineering solutions enhancing accessibility and inclusivity in affordable housing designs. This includes addressing physical, cultural, linguistic, and social factors to create housing that meets the diverse needs of Ontario's population, promoting social equity and enhancing overall quality of life for residents.

Furthermore, OSPE calls for funding for projects that incorporate universal design principles, ensuring structures and spaces are easily accessible to individuals with a broad spectrum of abilities. This targeted funding aligns with OSPE's commitment to community betterment, emphasizing the significance of universally designed projects in advancing social equity.



Infrastructure

OSPE advocates for increased funding for infrastructure projects with a specific focus on sustainable and resilient engineering solutions.

Energy Systems:

The proposed strategic allocation includes the development of renewable energy projects such as wind, solar, and hydropower. This initiative aims to transition Ontario towards a more sustainable energy landscape, reducing reliance on traditional sources and advancing cleaner alternatives.

Additionally, the integration of smart grid technologies is recommended for efficient energy distribution. By incorporating these technologies, Ontario can enhance energy management, reduce waste, and bolster the reliability of its energy infrastructure, aligning with sustainable engineering practices.

Upgrading and enhancing the resilience of existing energy infrastructure is emphasized, contributing not only to the reliability of energy services but also aligning with goals of environmental conservation and heightened infrastructure resilience.

Resilient Urban Planning:

Investment in resilient urban design to mitigate the impact of natural disasters is proposed. Dedicated resource allocation aims to strengthen the resilience of urban environments, reducing vulnerabilities and improving adaptability to unexpected disasters.

Furthermore, OSPE recommends the implementation of green infrastructure solutions for sustainable cities, incorporating environmentally conscious elements into urban development. This initiative aligns with OSPE's commitment to advancing sustainable engineering practices and promoting cities that prioritize environmental stewardship.

Climate Change Adaptation:

The development of climate-resilient infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events is crucial. By investing in climate resilience, the province ensures the longevity and functionality of vital systems, mitigating the impact of climate change on communities.

Additionally, strategies to reduce the carbon footprint of existing infrastructure are proposed, acknowledging the importance of addressing climate change and promoting responsible engineering practices.

Water Infrastructure:

The modernization of water treatment and distribution systems is prioritized to fortify Ontario's resilience against emerging challenges and elevate water quality standards.

Investment in stormwater management to address climate-related challenges aligns with OSPE's commitment to sustainable engineering practices, recognizing the increasing impacts of climate change.

The implementation of water conservation and efficiency measures seeks to improve the efficiency of water usage, minimize wastage, and tackle challenges associated with population growth and climate change.

Circular Economy:

Inclusion of investments in sustainable practices like excess soil and aggregates reuse is recommended. This approach minimizes environmental impact, promotes resource efficiency, and contributes to a resilient and eco-friendly infrastructure development.

Accessible Infrastructure:

OSPE recommends government investment in ensuring the accessibility of public infrastructure, particularly the transport system. Addressing the lack of accessibility in rail infrastructure is crucial, contributing to breaking down barriers for individuals with disabilities and ensuring equal opportunities for participation and contribution to society. This initiative aligns with legal requirements, ethical considerations, and reflects a broader societal understanding that inclusive infrastructure benefits everyone.

For more information check OSPE's research report.



Green Energy Transition

In seeking budgetary support for the transition to green energy, with a focus on renewable energy projects, energy storage solutions, a sustainable energy grid, including carbon capture technologies for carbon emitting supply, OSPE recommends investments in the following areas:

Optimal Net-Zero Supply Mix:

OSPE proposes funding to explore an optimal net-zero supply mix that balances cost-effectiveness, reliability, and environmental sustainability. The goal is to ensure that supply mixes do not impose an unfair burden on consumer electricity bills. This initiative aligns with the commitment to achieving environmental goals while safeguarding consumer interests, facilitating a transition to clean energy sources without undue financial strain.

Incentives for Renewable Energy Adoption:

The recommendation includes the inclusion of tax credits, rebates, or feed-in tariffs in the 2024 budget to incentivize the widespread integration of solar panels, wind turbines, and other clean energy systems. This strategic initiative aims to accelerate the adoption of renewable energy technologies, fostering a transition to a more sustainable and resilient energy landscape.

Surplus Energy Usage and Storage:

OSPE emphasizes the need to allocate investments to capture and utilize surplus quantities of energy, such as pumped hydroelectric storage (PHS) and battery energy storage systems (BESS). This proposal underscores the importance of strategically investing in technologies that can efficiently store and manage excess energy, providing a means to address the intermittent nature of renewable sources and ensure a reliable and resilient energy supply. For more information check OSPE's <u>Ontario</u> <u>Electricity Supply Mix Study</u>.

Grid Modernization and Resilience:

The recommendation involves investing in the modernization of the energy grid to accommodate the integration of renewable energy sources. This strategic move supports the transition to a more sustainable and resilient energy landscape, ensuring that the province is equipped to integrate and optimize renewable energy sources effectively.

Furthermore, OSPE recommends enhancing grid resilience through the adoption of smart grid technologies and decentralized energy systems. This approach fortifies grid reliability and resilience against disruptions, enabling effective management of electricity flow, rapid response to outages, and seamless integration of renewable energy sources.

Energy Efficiency Programs:

The proposal involves allocating resources to energy efficiency programs that promote responsible energy use and reduce overall consumption. By channeling resources into programs focused on promoting responsible energy use, Ontario can diminish its environmental impact, lower energy costs, and contribute to long-term sustainability goals.

Additionally, OSPE suggests providing incentives for energy-efficient practices in industries, commercial buildings, and residential properties. This strategic initiative aims to drive positive change in how energy is consumed and utilized, contributing to a more sustainable and eco-friendly landscape.

Nuclear Energy:

OSPE strongly advocates for strategic investments in nuclear energy technology, including both large-scale nuclear plants and Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). The recommendation acknowledges the essential role of nuclear energy in meeting Ontario's energy demand and ensuring a reliable and sustainable power source. Investments in advanced nuclear technologies, including SMRs, represent a forward-looking approach.

Moreover, OSPE recommends allocating funds for public awareness regarding the safe disposal of nuclear waste. This initiative recognizes the importance of educating the public about the secure and responsible management of nuclear waste to mitigate potential environmental and health risks.

Thermal Energy:

OSPE recommends strategic investments in thermal energy solutions that harness otherwise wasted thermal power. This initiative focuses on energy efficiency optimization and minimizing environmental impact by capturing and utilizing thermal energy that would otherwise go unused, contributing significantly to enhancing sustainable energy practices in Ontario.

EV Charging Stations:

OSPE proposes funding for the widespread deployment of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, aiming to promote cleaner transportation options. This strategic initiative focuses on expanding and enhancing the accessibility of EV charging stations throughout the province, stimulating the adoption of electric vehicles and contributing to a more sustainable and environmentally friendly transportation system.

Additionally, OSPE emphasizes the need to raise awareness among consumers about the benefits of overnight EV charging, leveraging the Ultra-Low Overnight (ULO) Electricity Rate Plan. Caution is advised when using DC Fast Chargers to prevent significant strain on the grid. Allocating resources to educate consumers on sustainable EV charging practices aims to empower them to make informed and cost-effective choices while ensuring grid stability.

Moreover, OSPE recommends allocating funds for the responsible disposal of EV batteries. As the adoption of electric vehicles increases, investing in proper disposal methods is crucial to address environmental concerns and ensure the safe and responsible handling of EV batteries at the end of their lifecycle. Allocating resources for this purpose contributes to sustainable waste management practices, environmental conservation, and the overall well-being of Ontario's communities. OSPE encourages the government to prioritize funding for initiatives promoting environmentally conscious practices within the rapidly growing electric vehicle industry.

Emerging Technologies

In advocating for enhanced funding for research and development initiatives in engineering and emerging technologies, with a focus on cybersecurity and artificial intelligence (AI), OSPE seeks investments in various areas to promote innovation and competitiveness in the province.

Cybersecurity:

Funding for initiatives to address emerging cyber threats, enhance data protection, and improve cybersecurity resilience is recommended. OSPE emphasizes the need for robust cybersecurity measures in an increasingly interconnected world, with the proposed funding supporting innovative projects and programs dedicated to staying ahead of evolving cyber threats.

Additionally, OSPE recommends investment in cybersecurity infrastructure to ensure robust protection of critical systems and data. As technological advancements shape our interconnected landscape, fortifying cybersecurity frameworks, implementing cutting-edge technologies, and establishing comprehensive measures are essential to safeguard essential systems and sensitive data from evolving cyber threats.

Support for the development and implementation of advanced cybersecurity technologies is crucial. Recognizing the dynamic nature of cyber threats, this investment aims to foster the creation and deployment of cutting-edge cybersecurity solutions, staying ahead of evolving risks and enhancing the overall cybersecurity posture.

Artificial Intelligence:

Initiatives exploring the application of AI in enhancing cybersecurity detection and response capabilities are crucial. The proposed investment supports research, development, and implementation of AI-driven solutions, empowering cybersecurity measures with advanced capabilities to stay ahead of increasingly sophisticated threats.

OSPE strongly advocates for funding educational programs that promote understanding and awareness of AI and cybersecurity. As integral components of our evolving technological landscape, fostering knowledge and awareness is essential. The proposed funding facilitates the development and implementation of educational initiatives, ensuring comprehensive understanding of AI and cybersecurity principles.

Investment in research and programs dedicated to ethical AI development and responsible use is recommended. As AI continues to shape society, prioritizing ethical considerations and responsible practices is crucial. The proposed investment supports initiatives exploring ethical frameworks, guidelines, and best practices in AI development and deployment.

Investment in AI-driven solutions for incident response and threat detection is essential. Recognizing the dynamic and evolving nature of cybersecurity threats, the proposed investment aims to support the development and implementation of cutting-edge AI technologies to enhance incident response capabilities and bolster threat detection mechanisms.

Data Governance and Privacy:

Investment in legislation addressing privacy concerns posed by smart technologies is proposed. With technologies capturing personal information becoming more prevalent, the investment aims to create robust legislative frameworks to safeguard individual privacy rights, establish ethical guidelines for data collection and usage, and address concerns linked to the widespread use of smart technologies.

Wastewater:

Investment in exploring Decentralized Wastewater Treatment (DWWT) as a more cost-efficient and resilient wastewater treatment option is recommended. The proposed investment supports research and initiatives focused on the development and implementation of DWWT systems to enhance cost-effectiveness, improve wastewater treatment resilience, and contribute to sustainable and adaptable wastewater infrastructure across Ontario. For more information on the benefits of DWWT systems, see <u>here</u>.

Carbon Capture Technology:

Investment in the exploration of innovative carbon removal and storage projects is proposed. In response to the imperative to combat climate change, the investment directs resources towards exploring innovative carbon removal and storage projects, advancing technologies and initiatives that effectively remove and store carbon emissions, contributing to global efforts in achieving carbon neutrality.



Protecting Public Health and Occupational Safety

Indoor Air Quality:

Responding to the imperative of safeguarding public health, the proposed investment allocates funds to restrict exposure to harmful fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and hazardous airborne viruses. This strategic allocation supports initiatives like the proposed <u>Clean Indoor Act</u> for Ontario by OSPE, with the goal of implementing comprehensive measures that improve indoor air quality and shield individuals from the detrimental effects of particulate matter and airborne viruses. OSPE asserts that this investment is pivotal for cultivating a healthier environment, prioritizing public well-being, and positioning Ontario as a forefront advocate for indoor air quality standards.

Similarly, recognizing the necessity for comprehensive regulations governing indoor air quality, the proposed investment directs funding towards developing legislation that incorporates ASHRAE recommendations. This strategic allocation aims to establish legal frameworks in harmony with ASHRAE standards, ensuring optimal indoor air quality across diverse settings. OSPE argues that this investment will contribute to the formulation of effective regulations, fostering healthier indoor environments, and positioning Ontario as a leader in embracing industry-best practices for air quality standards.

In conclusion, the proposed investment underscores a commitment to public health and safety by addressing indoor air quality concerns. Through strategic funding and legislative initiatives, Ontario aims to create healthier indoor environments, safeguarding its residents from the adverse effects of particulate matter and airborne viruses while positioning itself as a leader in advocating for and implementing stringent air quality standards.

Multiple studies have demonstrated that improvements in Indoor Air Quality increase productivity for workers in an occupational setting, and enriches student outcomes at school.



Education and Employment

Implementing Blue Ribbon Panel Recommendations for Postsecondary Education:

We propose allocating resources to adopt the recommendations outlined in the <u>Blue Ribbon Panel</u> report, specifically tailored for engineering education within Ontario's postsecondary sector. The report emphasizes the need to increase funding for engineering education, improve student outcomes, and reduce costs. By investing in these crucial aspects, Ontario can fortify its engineering education system, ensuring it remains accessible, efficient, and aligned with industry demands. The report also underscores the importance of fostering closer collaboration between engineering institutions, industry partners, and other stakeholders to enhance students' readiness for the engineering workforce.

Support for STEM Education:

Allocate additional funding to STEM education programs to nurture a proficient workforce and meet the rising demand for engineers. This proposed investment underscores the essential role of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education in addressing the growing need for engineers. The strategic allocation aims to enhance STEM education initiatives, fostering the development of a highly skilled workforce capable of meeting the increasing demand for engineering professionals.

Support for Professional Development:

Increase funding to support engineers' continuous professional development programs, workshops, and training opportunities. This proposed investment underscores the importance of providing resources for ongoing education, ensuring that engineers remain updated with industry advancements. The strategic allocation aims to bolster professional development initiatives, empowering engineers to acquire the latest skills and knowledge essential for success in a rapidly evolving industry.

Promotion of Diversity and Inclusion:

Allocate additional funds for programs and initiatives dedicated to promoting diversity and inclusion in the engineering profession. This proposed investment emphasizes the significance of supporting endeavors aimed at creating a more representative and equitable workforce. The strategic allocation aims to fortify programs and initiatives focused on fostering diversity and inclusion within the engineering field, creating a community of professionals that is more inclusive and representative.

Bridging Program for International Engineering Graduates:

We propose allocating dedicated resources in the upcoming budget to establish comprehensive programs supporting the integration of international engineering graduates into the Ontario workforce. This strategic investment aims to address challenges related to skills recognition, language proficiency, and industry adaptation, ensuring a smooth assimilation process for these professionals. By funding initiatives focused on skills assessment, language support, cultural adaptation, mentorship, and collaboration with educational institutions, Ontario can harness the diverse expertise of these engineers, contributing to economic growth, innovation, and workforce diversity. This proposal aligns with the province's commitment to inclusivity, leveraging international talent to bolster the engineering sector and strengthen Ontario's position on the global stage.

Indigenous Bridging Program for Mining and Critical Minerals Projects:

We advocate for a strategic investment in initiatives aimed at fostering the participation of Indigenous individuals in engineering careers, with a specific focus on the mining and critical minerals sector. Allocating resources to programs tailored for Indigenous communities will include educational outreach, mentorship opportunities, and partnerships with industry stakeholders. This investment seeks to encourage Indigenous youth to pursue engineering careers, ensuring their active involvement in the development of mining and critical minerals projects. By nurturing talent within Indigenous communities, Ontario can enhance diversity in the engineering field, promote sustainable resource development, and contribute to economic prosperity.

Regulatory Efficiency and Streamlining

Regulatory Review for Innovation and Efficiency in Engineering:

We propose a review of the Professional Engineers Act to align it with contemporary needs for innovation and efficiency in engineering projects. The review should explore measures to streamline permitting processes, reduce bureaucratic obstacles, ensure effective regulation of emerging disciplines and technologies in engineering, and enhance collaboration between the government and the engineering sector. Allocating resources to this review would enable Ontario to establish a regulatory framework that upholds engineering standards and encourages innovation, ensuring the province's leadership in technological advancements. Addressing the current regulatory gap will position Ontario as a leader in adapting to technological advancements, fostering innovation, and maintaining the highest standards of safety and professionalism in engineering practice. This effort reflects would reflect a commitment to a progressive and collaborative approach, benefiting both the engineering industry and the broader economic landscape of Ontario.

Review of Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO) Operations:

We recommend investing in a comprehensive review of the operations of Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO) to ensure that the duties and requirements of a self-regulating body are effectively met. This initiative aims to assess the current functioning of PEO, identifying areas for improvement, efficiency enhancement, and alignment with contemporary standards in professional regulation. By allocating resources to this review, Ontario can strengthen the regulatory framework governing the engineering profession, ensuring that PEO continues to uphold the highest standards of professionalism, accountability, and ethical conduct. This proposal reflects our commitment to maintaining a robust and responsive self-regulatory system for professional engineers, ultimately contributing to the integrity of the engineering profession in the province. For more information on OSPE's recommendations for amendments to the Professional Engineers Act, <u>see here</u>.



Collaboration with Professional Organizations

We propose allocating funding and adopting programs that facilitate collaboration with professional organizations, such as the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE). This initiative aims to ensure that engineering expertise is integral to decision-making processes related to energy policy, green housing solutions, and infrastructure development. By investing in collaborative efforts between the government and professional engineering organizations, Ontario can leverage specialized knowledge, foster innovation, and make informed decisions that align with sustainable engineering practices. This strategic investment supports our commitment to incorporating diverse perspectives and expertise into critical decision-making, ultimately contributing to the advancement of responsible and forward-thinking policies in the fields of energy, housing, and infrastructure.



Conclusion

Through this submission, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE) presents a comprehensive guideline for strategic investments across crucial sectors. These recommendations have been developed to address contemporary challenges, promote sustainability, foster innovation, and enhance inclusivity. By embracing them , Ontario has the opportunity to pioneer engineering-driven solutions, build resilient infrastructure, lead a green energy transition, and foster a diverse and skilled workforce. OSPE would like to thank the dedicated members of our committees for their engineering thought leadership that has been instrumental in the development of this submission. OSPE extends special thanks to our:

- Research and Innovation Task Force
- Climate Crisis Task Force
- Energy Task Force
- Sustainable Cities Task Force
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Accessibility Task Force
- Indoor Air Quality Advisory Group

OSPE is committed to collaborating with the government, contributing expertise, and championing initiatives that will propel Ontario into a prosperous and sustainable future. The successful implementation of these proposals will not only advance the engineering profession but also position Ontario as a global leader in responsible and forward-looking policies.



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