

TOGETHER WE STAND  
MILITARY FAMILIES FOUNDATION

2025

ANNUAL  
REPORT



# LETTER FROM OUR CHAIR(S)

## FROM FOUNDER...

Eight years ago, when my wife Lillian and I founded the Together We Stand Foundation to honour and support Canadian military families, we knew very little about the world we were entering. We understood, in abstract terms, that military families move frequently and endure long absences as their loved ones deploy or train. What we did not yet understand was the depth of sacrifice this life demands - an understanding that came only through meeting the families themselves.

As we got to know these incredible families, we saw not just the challenges they face, but their extraordinary resilience. Despite constant disruption, uncertainty, and separation, these families remain among the strongest people I know. They love Canada. They are proud of their serving family members. And they quietly carry a share of the burden of protecting our country.

We also came to appreciate something more structural and just as important: the essential role military families play in Canada's operational readiness. It has been a profound privilege to help build this organization and to serve as its first Chair of the Board. Together, we have assembled an exceptional team of staff and volunteers, and I am deeply proud of what we have built.

As with any healthy organization, evolution is essential. With that in mind, while I will remain on the Board, I am stepping down as Chair.

I am pleased to announce that Duncan Munn will assume the role. I look forward to continuing this journey in a new capacity and to watching the organization grow under Duncan's leadership.

**Rick Ekstein**

Co-founder  
Together We Stand  
Foundation



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## ...TO FUTURE

I accepted the role of Chair of the Board in December 2025 because I believe deeply in what Together We Stand represents - and why its work matters now more than ever. Canada is at a moment of reckoning when it comes to defence. We are rightly focused on infrastructure, equipment, and capability. But a strong defence posture cannot be sustained without equal investment in human capital - and that includes the families who make military service possible.

What drew me to Together We Stand is its clear understanding of this truth. The organization does not operate at a distance from the problem. It listens to military families, responds with urgency and dignity, and brings their lived experiences into conversations where decisions are made. It connects compassion with strategy - and service with readiness.

As Chair, my focus is on ensuring Together We Stand continues to grow with integrity, impact, and purpose. The work ahead is critical.

I am proud to be part of an organization that understands that supporting military families is not optional - it is essential to Canada's security and future.

**Duncan Munn**

Chair of the Board  
Together We Stand  
Foundation



# LETTER FROM OUR CEO & COO

To Our Friends and Supporters,

## **Before anything else - thank you.**

2025 was a critical year. Global instability intensified, adversaries grew more aggressive, and long-standing alliances were tested. In this context, the need for a strong, capable Canadian military became more evident than at any point in most of our lifetimes.

## **But a strong military depends on something far less visible: the well-being of the families who stand behind those who serve.**

Military families shoulder extraordinary pressures - frequent relocations, long separations, and constant uncertainty - often without community support that most Canadians rely on. Rising living costs, limited healthcare access, housing shortages, and employment barriers have pushed too many families to a breaking point.

Increasingly, service members are being forced into an untenable choice: **continue serving Canada, or leave the Forces to secure stability for their families.** As a result, we are losing trained members faster than we can recruit them - at a time when a full, ready force has never been more critical.

## **This is why your support truly matters.**

Together We Stand's ability to respond in moments of need and crisis exists because of you. Your commitment gives us the strength to act when systems stall - ensuring military families receive timely, dignified support when it matters most. We understand a critical truth:

## **Supporting military families is not charity - it is a strategic imperative.**

Family well-being is inseparable from recruitment, retention, and readiness. Canada needs a strong military. A strong military needs strong families.



## **And strong families need you.**

Thank you for standing with military families.

## **And thank you for being part of the foundation that makes this work possible.**

**Stephanie Shapiro**

**Chief Operating Officer**  
Together We Stand  
Foundation

**Rick Seymour**

**Chief Executive Officer**  
Together We Stand  
Foundation

# 2025 IMPACT AT A GLANCE

**\$152,000**

in emergency funding delivered to families facing acute crises

**1,738**

families received care packages during a deployment

**316**

families supported with emergency food security during the holiday season

**100%**

of stakeholder requests for programming fulfilled

**\$2,137,482**

total gift-in-kind and cash distributed

## VOICES FROM THE HOMEFRONT:

Behind every dollar is a military family navigating service - often far from extended support, facing rising costs, and carrying the emotional weight of separation. The stories below reflect the quiet, human impact of timely support, and the difference it makes when help arrives at exactly the right moment.



*"I wanted to follow up and express our heartfelt appreciation for your incredible support. This year has been exceptionally challenging for CFB Shilo due to the large deployment to Latvia, which has added more stress to our military families. With the extremely high prices of groceries and the noticeable increase in food insecurity, **the TWS gift card donations came at the most opportune time.**"*

- Canadian Forces Base Shilo



*"I have no family here to help me when I need additional childcare while my spouse is on deployment. I have been working a lot of evening shifts, so the cost is really adding up, I'm struggling to get the food we need. **This gift has given me the time to figure things out.**"*

- Canadian Forces Base Petawawa



*"The member was in my office on Monday. When I told them that TWS had donated \$500 to fill their fridge, the member broke down and cried. The weight of worrying if their children would have access to food was eating away at them. **You don't know how amazing it is as a Padre to have access to resources that make a real difference.**"*

- Canadian Forces Base Kingston



# 2025 IMPACT AT A GLANCE

## CHANGING THE NATIONAL NARRATIVE FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

In 2025, Together We Stand continued to expand its role beyond direct support - ensuring the realities of military family life were reflected in **national conversations about readiness, retention, and Canada's defence future.**

**MARCH 2025** Together We Stand convened a private lunch with Lieutenant-General (Ret'd) Stuart Beare during the **CANADA STRONG AND FREE CONFERENCE** in Ottawa, bringing together leaders and allies to discuss challenges military families face behind the scenes of service. The conversation focused on issues often absent from public debate - housing affordability, healthcare access, spousal employment, and the cumulative strain of repeated deployments - positioning family well-being as a non-partisan issue with national implications.

**SEPTEMBER 2025** In September 2025, Together We Stand hosted an on-base **EXECUTREK AT CFB COMOX**, bringing civilian leaders into direct contact with military families and base leadership. These conversations, featuring Major-General Christopher McKenna, highlighted how policy decisions, operational tempo, and community infrastructure intersect at home - informing future advocacy and donor engagement.

**NOVEMBER 2025** The emphasis on the human capital of defence carried forward into at the **CD HOWE INSTITUTE CONFERENCE ON DEFENCE**, where Together We Stand hosted a panel with senior military leadership, including Lieutenant-General Erick Simoneau, underscoring a critical reality: recruitment and retention challenges cannot be solved without addressing the lived experiences of military families.

**NOVEMBER 2025** That same month, an op-ed in the **NATIONAL POST** drew national attention to the growing strain on military families - reinforcing an essential message: supporting military families is fundamental to Canada's defence readiness and long-term resilience. **[Click here to access the article.](#)**



# 2017 - PRESENT: 8 YEARS OF RESULTS

**38**

on-base site visits to Canadian Armed Forces installations since 2019

**147**

unique roundtables and meetings with families, chaplains, members & leadership since 2020

**21,400+**

military families supported nationwide since 2017

**13%**

average administrative and fundraising costs combined since 2023

**\$9,046,000+**

in cash and in-kind support delivered to military families since 2017

## OUR CORE PROGRAMS



### MILITARY FAMILY APPRECIATION DAY - #MFAD

(est. 2019)

100M+ media impressions nationwide



### OPERATION CARE PACKAGE

(est. 2017)

\$8.3M+ cash and in-kind gifts sent to 19,000+ families



### OPERATION FALLEN

(est. 2020)

11 families, units and squadrons supported after the loss of a loved one in service



### OPERATION EMERGENCY FUND

(est. 2021)

\$730,000+ cash sent to 2,300+ families



# OPERATION EMERGENCY FUND: WHY THIS WORK MATTERS

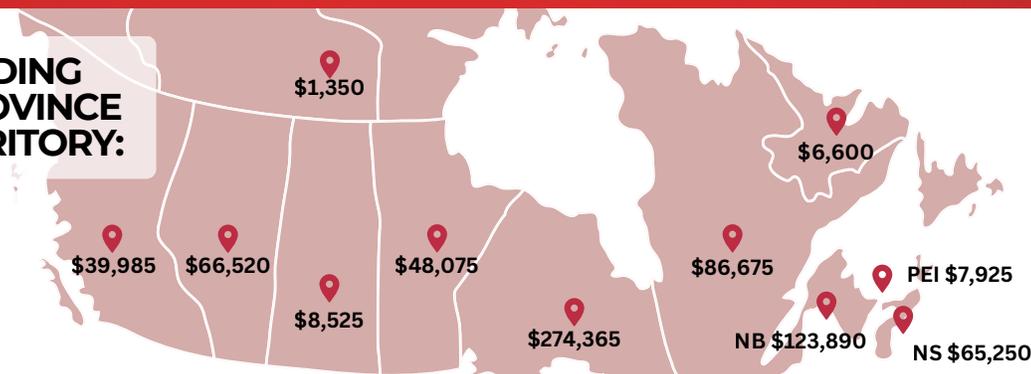
Since its launch in 2021, Operation Emergency Fund has become a defining pillar of Together We Stand's work - **establishing a model of support that has set us apart in the military family space.**

The Emergency Fund was **created to fill a critical gap**: the absence of a rapid, dignified response for military families facing short-term financial crises. When families experience food insecurity, childcare challenges during deployment, or sudden emergencies, timing matters. Traditional systems are often too slow or administratively burdensome to respond when help is needed most - frequently requiring levels of disclosure that can feel intrusive or discouraging for families already under stress.

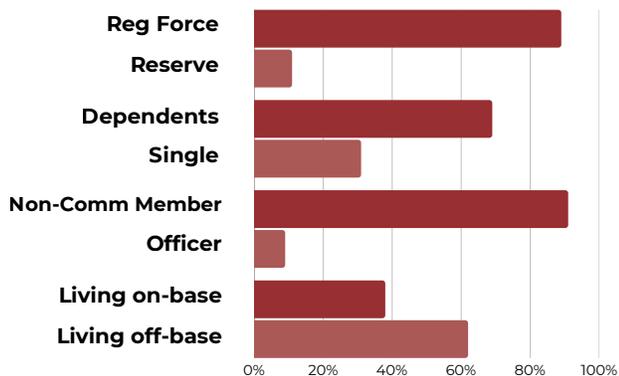
By working directly with Canadian Armed Forces Chaplains - trusted, on-the-ground supports embedded within military communities - Together We Stand delivers immediate relief while also connecting families to longer-term supports. In doing so, the program has become more than a source of assistance; it serves as an early-warning system, offering real-time insight into the systemic pressures facing military families and challenging outdated assumptions about vulnerability.

**\$730,000+ DISTRIBUTED SINCE 2021**

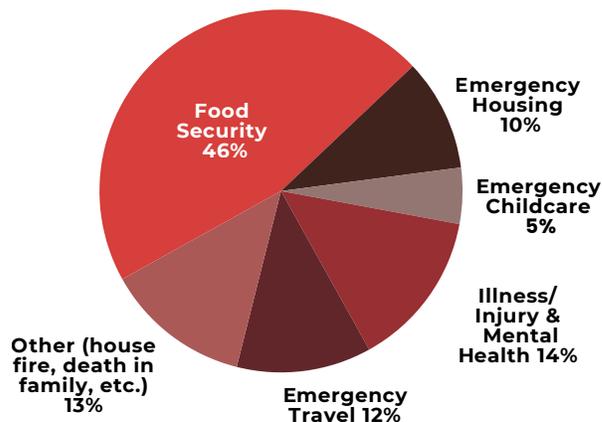
## FUNDING BY PROVINCE & TERRITORY:



## RECIPIENTS BY DEMOGRAPHIC:



## SUPPORT BY AREA OF NEED:



# NEW PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

In 2025, Together We Stand was proud to begin new partnerships grounded in shared values and a clear commitment to military families. These relationships reflect more than financial support - they represent alignment, trust, and a belief that those who serve should never be left without support at home.



We are honoured to highlight ADGA, whose dedication to employing and supporting members of the Canadian Armed Forces community extends naturally to supporting the families who stand behind them. ADGA's leadership demonstrates what it means to invest thoughtfully in the people who make service possible.



*“At ADGA, our commitment to the military community is deeply rooted in who we are. The Together We Stand Foundation recognizes that military members do not serve alone and that strong families are essential to operational readiness and national resilience.*”

*We are proud to stand alongside their work in supporting the families who serve beside the uniform, because strengthening military families ultimately strengthens Canada.”*

**Lieutenant- Gen Jean-Marc Lanthier (Ret'd)**  
**CEO & President, ADGA Group**



# NEW PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



The Senators Community Foundation has built a meaningful tradition for over 20 years to recognize the Canadian Armed Forces through their CAF Appreciation Night. In 2025, Together We Stand joined this effort to help amplify support for military families strengthening a shared commitment to those who serve.



The Senators Community Foundation shared the following reflection on the intent and impact of Canadian Armed Forces Appreciation Night:

*“Canadian Armed Forces Appreciation Night is about more than recognition - it’s about community. It brings people together to acknowledge the service of CAF members and the families who support them every day. By supporting organizations like Together We Stand, we aim to help ensure military families feel seen, valued, and supported, not just on one night, but throughout the year.”*

**Jacqueline Belsito**  
**President, Senators Community Foundation**



# MISSION ALLIES: LONGSTANDING SUPPORTERS

**Together We Stand is strengthened by supporters whose belief in military families - and in this work - has endured. The individuals and organizations recognized here have supported our mission over multiple years, ensuring families in crisis received timely, dignified support when it mattered most. Their sustained commitment has reinforced our programs, stabilized our response during times of increased demand, and enabled us to plan with confidence.**

**We are deeply grateful to these donors whose continued partnership reflects a shared belief that lasting impact is built through trust, consistency, and long-term commitment.**

*“Our success is built on the stability and freedom that Canada provides - stability that is upheld every day by our military families. They endure separation and uncertainty to keep our country strong. Through the Moez & Marissa Kassam Equity Fund, we support Together We Stand so that these families have the same solid foundation they secure for the rest of us. It is our responsibility to ensure that those who protect our way of life are never left behind, and it is our privilege to stand with those who serve.”*



**Moez & Marissa Kassam**  
**Moez & Marissa Kassam Equity Fund**



*“Behind every serving member is a family absorbing the realities of military life - frequent moves, long separations, financial strain, and uncertainty. These families carry a significant burden so their loved one can serve Canada. Supporting them is one of the most meaningful ways we can honour military service in a tangible way. They contribute meaningfully to our national security. I choose to continue my support because military families deserve to be seen, valued, and supported - and Together We Stand delivers that support where it's needed most.”*

**Geoff Smith**  
**CEO, EllisDon**



# MISSION ALLIES: LONGSTANDING SUPPORTERS

*"How many Canadians realize that many families of our Canadian Armed Forces service members are struggling with food insecurity? I was unaware of this until I began learning about this overlooked and invisible community in our midst. In an era where we strive to support the most vulnerable, how have we allowed the families of our bravest citizens to face such hardship? The truth is, this issue remains largely unspoken, and many are unaware of its existence.*

*I am proud to support the Together We Stand, an organization dedicated to bringing this issue to light. They work tirelessly to raise awareness about the sacrifices made by the parents, spouses, and children of our servicemen and women - a group of Canadian heroes who deserve far greater recognition.*

*I believe all Canadians owe these families not just gratitude, but tangible support to ensure they can live free from poverty and the daily worry of meeting basic needs. To that end, I am committed to spreading awareness and making annual donations to TWS, so that we may honour those who stand behind our defenders, both at home and abroad."*



**Scott Sandler**  
**Senior Portfolio Manager, RBC Wealth Management**

Since Together We Stand's inception in 2017, PearTree Canada, under the leadership of Ron Bernbaum, has been a steadfast and deeply committed supporter of Together We Stand.

PearTree's support has gone far beyond financial contributions. Through sponsorship of key events, participation in on-base engagements, and meaningful involvement in critical discussions impacting military families, PearTree has consistently shown up where leadership and allyship matter most.

As a founding donor, PearTree has championed Together We Stand's growth and evolution in profound and lasting ways - helping advance key initiatives while strengthening the long-term sustainability of Together We Stand and the military families we serve.



**Ron Bernbaum**  
**Founder & CEO, PearTree Canada**



# OUR 2025 COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

## THANK YOU FOR BEING THE BACKBONE OF OUR MISSION

### CHAMPIONS - \$20,000+

- Moez & Marissa Kassam Foundation
- Geoff Smith
- Scott Sandler
- PearTree Canada
- Senators Community Foundation
- Rose Foundation
- Edward Bronfman Memorial Legacy Fund
- Arrowhead Resources Ltd.
- Gerard Kroon
- Nancy Player

### IN-KIND PARTNERS

- HelloFresh
- Chef's Plate
- Air Canada
- ScotiaRISE
- Tim Hortons
- Postmedia

### LEADERS - \$5,000 – \$19,999

- ADGA Group
- ScotiaRISE
- Peter & Stella Ekstein
- Anita Ekstein
- ARC Financial Corp

### SUPPORTERS – \$1,000 - \$4,999

- David Hood
- Enterprise Holdings Foundation
- Lechem Ekstein Fund
- Igor Kostiuoutchenko
- National Protestant Chapel Guild
- Spatz Foundation
- Sue Savel
- Michelle Mather
- Robert Paterson
- Larry Berman
- The Minett Foundation
- Jim Spatz
- Asko Feldmann
- Johnna Brace
- Stephen Seymour
- Scott Forrestall
- George Botros
- Irving Weisdorf
- Brian Burke
- Alain J Parent & Associates
- Val and Scott Clancy
- Stephen Harper
- Calgary Foundation
- United Way of Calgary



# OUR 2025 COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

## THANK YOU FOR BEING THE BACKBONE OF OUR MISSION

### FRIENDS - \$1 - \$999

- Chelsey Llewellyn
- Martin Traub-Werner
- Adele Frances
- Buckles & Bulls Brands
- Margaret Vynar
- Glen C Boothe
- Gregory Patenaude
- Albert & Bonni Soberano
- Sophie Sawatzky Dueck
- Beth Korotkin
- Krista McBrearty
- Jennifer Renouf
- Daniel Pelizzari
- Robert Kimmerly
- John Dadosky
- Michael & Janette Diamond Family Foundation
- Anna Kennedy
- Sara Clodman
- Al Meinzinger
- Fidelity Investments Canada ULC
- Christine Dockter
- Ruth Ryan
- James Knight
- James Devito
- Kenneth Kawasaki
- Lisa Pacarynuk
- Justin McAuley
- Richard Norman
- Adrian Gianello
- Philip Abramson
- Paul Karley
- Karen James
- Howard Mains
- United Way East Ontario
- Sara Clodman
- Dean Haack
- Peter MacLaurin
- Paul Hoffman
- Steve Martin
- Charitable Impact Foundation
- Richard Goldstein
- Lucian Brenner
- James Major
- Robert Henley
- Blaine Higgs
- Joseph Trigiani
- Lauren Govostis
- Linda Massie
- Jason Kenney
- Peter Kent
- Dan Mader
- Brian Nathan Moskowitz
- Paula Trattner
- John McAleer
- Jeff Baker
- Cindy Ann Ahearn
- Pamela Sulpizi
- Andrew Hanson
- RAK Consultants CANADA Inc.
- Ellin Bessner
- Stephanie Levitz
- Timothy Egan
- Edward Lidzbarski
- Dean Black
- William Klassen
- Gary Wencel
- Richard Kizell
- Michael Cohen
- Nancy Hill
- John Brine
- Deborah Powis
- Peter Dupuis
- Murray Pearson
- Peter Skakum
- Carl Bird



# OUR 2025 COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

## THANK YOU FOR BEING THE BACKBONE OF OUR MISSION

### FRIENDS - \$1-\$999

- Rhonda McIntyre-Logie
- Wladyslaw Lizon
- Lorna Wright
- Trent Marx
- Morgan Skakum
- Kenneth McLellan
- Howard Chisvin
- Paul Johnson
- Mark Milke
- Jonas Beallor
- Gayle Cividino
- Rick Seymour
- Margaret Mackenzie
- Beverly Jones
- Duty to Dumbbells
- Sydney Erdelyi
- Peter Campbell
- Michel-Henri St-Louis
- Genevieve Dacambra
- Karen Fournier
- Laurie Hislop
- Judith Queale
- Jeff Grosman
- Loreen O'Blenis
- Marieanne & Guy Coderre
- Jim Mogan
- Stephanie Shapiro
- Don MacWilliam
- Robin Ayers
- Jenna Zuschlag Misener
- Daniel Jacobs
- Teresa Robinson
- Jordan Goodman
- Linda Bilyea
- Catherine Abji
- Catherine Center
- Michael Topp
- Eleanor Millar
- Rebekah Mitchell
- Kachchakaduge Rehan Fernando
- Stephen Abrahamson
- William Stevens
- Sharon Mogan
- Joseph Rauhala
- Robert Lewis
- Claude Maurice Perron
- Gabriel Santonne
- Karen Soetaert
- Sharlene Rennie
- Ron Fernhout
- Daniel S Taylor
- Sanjay Dhebar
- Daniel Campbell
- Ned Steinman
- Jamie Ellerton
- Stephen Knobbe
- Brent Pierce
- Nancy Naranjo
- Kimberly Biback
- Linda Gough
- Chuck Watt
- Jessica Montifar
- Kathy L
- Chrissy Kauffledt
- Coyote Tree Ranching
- Andrew Zazowski



# MOVING FORWARD INTO 2026

## FROM NATIONAL PROGRAMS TO NATIONAL CHANGE

For nearly a decade, Together We Stand has worked alongside military families to respond when systems fall short - providing timely, dignified support in moments of need. Our national programs have been shaped by lived experience, built on trust with military communities, and delivered in partnership with those closest to families on the ground.

**As we look ahead to 2026, we are building on this mission to expand our impact beyond support alone.**



In the year ahead, Together We Stand will begin taking a more active role in helping to shape the national conversation about military families. Too often, challenges related to housing, health care, childcare, employment, and transition are framed as individual or family issues, rather than as structural factors that directly affect recruitment, retention, and readiness.

Our focus will be on elevating these realities as matters of national importance - essential to sustaining a modern, capable military today and into the future, particularly as Canada looks to grow and strengthen its Armed Forces.

**The future of Canada's military will be shaped not only by equipment and investment, but by the people willing and able to serve.**



In 2026, Together We Stand will move deliberately from observation to action. Years of base visits, frontline conversations, and data gathering have given us a clear picture of where systems are falling short. Our focus now is on applying that knowledge to influence policy and practice - ensuring the structures surrounding military life align with today's realities and the demands of a growing force.

This means stepping into a more active advocacy role: bringing frontline evidence into policy discussions, challenging outdated assumptions, and pressing for reforms that reflect how military families actually live, move, and serve. The status quo is no longer sufficient.

**Military families deserve systems that work as hard for them as they do for the country.**

This is our next chapter - *and we invite you to be part of it.*



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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CEO, Elevate Finance, President Emeritus C.D.  
Howe Institute

**Rick Ekstein, Chair Emeritus**

President and CEO, Phaze 3 Associates

**Howie Kroon, Vice Chair of the Board**

CEO/Management Consultant, Sage Business  
Services

**Lieutenant-General (Ret'd Air Force)**

**Alain Parent CMM, CD**

Senior Associate, TACTIX

**Lieutenant-General (Ret'd Air Force)**

**Al Meinzinger CMM, MSM, CD**

President, Boeing Canada

**John Cappobianco**

Senior VP and Senior Partner, Fleishman Hillard

**Sean McConnel**

Agency Development Lead, LinkedIn Canada

**Rick Seymour**

CEO, Together We Stand Foundation

**Stephanie Shapiro**

COO, Honorary Lieutenant Colonel, Canadian  
Armed Forces

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**Stephanie Shapiro**, COO, Honorary Lieutenant Colonel, Canadian Armed Forces

**Catherine Abji**, Program Lead

**Cailey Ahearn**, Manager, Marketing and Donor Stewardship

**Morgan Skakum**, Team Support Specialist

**Brian Rowley**, CFO

**Rene Rampaul**, Controller

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**Suzie Fortin**, Chair Emeritas, Ottawa, ON

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