



Intake and Resettlement of Syrian Refugees: A Provincial Perspective to Responding

**Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
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Executive Summary

A refugee crisis is unfolding in Europe and the Middle East as hundreds of thousands of Syrians flee conflict and war in their home country. The Government of Canada has made a commitment to taking in 25,000 of these as Government-Assisted Refugees by the end of this calendar year, as well as others who come as privately-sponsored refugees or partly-privately-sponsored refugees.

Refugee identification and acceptance is solely a Federal matter, overseen by the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship (formerly Citizenship and Immigration Canada). However, should New Brunswick be designated the arrival point for significant numbers of these refugees, it is important that a contingency plan be in place for resettling them here.

There is precedent for this. In 1999, over 1,000 of the 5,051 refugees Canada accepted from Kosovo arrived at Camp Argonaut, located inside CFB Gagetown near Oromocto. A highly coordinated response by Citizenship and Immigration Canada staff, the Red Cross, immigrant-serving agencies, charitable and volunteer organizations and the Province ensured that they were well-cared for, with many eventually resettling in New Brunswick and Canada.

That experience taught many lessons about the process of taking in, assessing, processing and helping resettle large numbers of refugees. In this document, the Province lays out proposed roles for Provincial Departments which will be called upon to serve and assist this refugee population should it arrive. Departments like Health, Education and Early Childhood Development, Social Development, Public Safety, Transportation and Infrastructure, Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, and Environment and Local Government will all have key roles to play in the eventuality of an influx of refugees. Immigrant-serving agencies and other community stakeholders will also have important roles to play. And there will need to be considerable coordination – both inter-departmental and provincially – of resources, donations, volunteers, and direct service provision.

Having and executing contingency plans before any announcement of refugees destined for New Brunswick will be fundamental to the successful resettlement and integration of any of these newcomers in our province. The framework outlined below identifies important steps the Province needs to take to prepare for a significant increase to our refugee allocations.

Background

Hundreds of thousands of Syrian people are currently displaced due to war, violence and/or persecution in that country. Many are currently in neighbouring countries like Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan, while tens of thousands more are making or have made the perilous journey to Western Europe.

The incoming Canadian Government, elected on October 19, 2015, has pledged to bring 25,000 of these refugees to Canada by the end of the calendar year. There is considerable speculation about whether that timeline can be adhered to; regardless, provinces like New Brunswick must be prepared to be notified that we may be receiving significant numbers of government-identified refugees at any point from this time forward.

There are essentially three ways for refugees to be resettled in Canada:

1. As Government Assisted Refugees, through the federal Resettlement Assistance Program.
2. As privately sponsored refugees, supported fully or partly by a community group. Within the private sponsorship program, there are various streams or programs through which a group may sponsor.
3. Through the “Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program”, informally known as “shared sponsorship”. In these cases, the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship partners with organizations to resettle refugees with special needs.

Refugee identification and admission is entirely a federal issue and area of jurisdiction; however, the province must be prepared to facilitate the reception and resettlement of these refugees with the aim of retention and integration in any way we can. To that end, this framework outlines New Brunswick’s response to any influx of refugees. As of November 10, 2015, New Brunswick has not received explicit instructions from the federal government on any refugee allotment.

History

New Brunswick has a history of dealing with a large influx of refugees in a short time period. In 1999, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) asked Canada to be one of the recipient countries for Kosovar refugees fleeing conflict in Kosovo. Canada agreed to receive 5,000 refugees, eventually taking in 5,051 through Operation Parasol. These refugees were flown to CFB Trenton, in Ontario, and CFB Greenwood, in Nova Scotia. From Greenwood, they were bussed to Aldershot and Halifax in Nova Scotia, and to Gagetown, near Oromocto, in New Brunswick. Camp Argonaut, located inside Base Gagetown, became a reception centre and temporary home for 1,073 Kosovar refugees.

Camp Argonaut was set up like a village, with a medical centre, a dining hall, a recreation centre, and a clothing store on-site. There was also a children's art centre and a teen centre. English language training was available. A storage building was converted into a mosque.

Immigrant-serving agency staff from around the province and even beyond it worked with Citizenship and Immigration (now Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship) staff to assist with the reception and resettlement of the newcomers from Camp Argonaut into communities across New Brunswick. Community volunteers were also a key part of the process. In all, hundreds of Canadian staff and volunteers worked with Kosovar refugees at Camp Argonaut and beyond.

Proposed Provincial Response - A Three-Step Plan

On average, New Brunswick welcomes and resettles approximately 180 refugees per year. In the event that the Province is asked to accept and resettle significant numbers of Syrian refugees over and above this annual average, this contingency plan will address the necessary provincial response.

The three steps are:

Step One: An Interdepartmental Ad-Hoc Committee and Departmental Roles and responsibilities.

Step Two: GNB Front-Line Worker Cultural Competency Training.

Step Three: Identification of Arabic/Kurdish Speaking Translators and Interpreters.

Step One: An Interdepartmental Ad-Hoc Committee and Departmental Roles and Responsibilities

The first step in a coordinated response to refugee reception is the creation of an ad hoc, inter-departmental committee to serve as a central point of planning and contact. This committee will be chaired by the Deputy Minister of the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. It will meet as needed during the initial period of refugee reception to ensure all departments are in apprised of the current situation and in coordinated agreement with measures to facilitate the welcome and initial settlement of refugees.

Proposed Departmental Roles and Responsibilities

Health

The Department of Health will have a pivotal role to play in the intake and resettlement of these refugees. The Department will be important in screening high-need refugees from among the newcomers. The development of an inventory of Arabic/Kurdish speaking healthcare professionals, like doctors and nurses, will be an important first step pre-arrival. Provincial healthcare personnel will be assigned on-site at the reception center to do medical assessments and referrals of the refugees.

As with Operation Parasol, a medical centre will need to be set up and staffed on-site. The Department will develop its own internal response plan to deal with the assessment and long-term health care of the newcomers, many of whom may have spent long periods of time in refugee camps or on the move without access to proper health care. Health must also be prepared to deal with mental health issues that sometimes affect refugees, many of whom have had traumatizing experiences.

Service New Brunswick

Service New Brunswick can facilitate refugee healthcare by having staff go to the reception centre to process refugee Medicare card requests. This will be much more efficient than trying to get refugees with no transportation to Service NB centres to apply for cards. After initial processing, SNB staff will travel to the reception centre to set up a pop-up office once a week to meet other needs of the refugees (driver's licenses, etc.) as they are gradually resettled into housing away from the reception centre.

Social Development

The Department of Social Development has a number of key roles to play in the reception and resettlement of the Syrian refugees. Like Health, they will be an important factor in determining which of the refugee are high-needs and need special attention. Social Development may also play a role in connecting refugee families with social workers if necessary to assist with their resettlement into the community.

Another important role will be working closely with settlement workers to find affordable housing for the refugees once they are ready to leave the reception centre and be settled into a community. A list of affordable housing available across the province will be an important tool in this regard.

The Department can also be a key player in the offering of Parenting information sessions to help orient Syrian parents to the education system and parenting norms in Canada.

Education and Early Childhood Development

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will play a large role in the lives of refugees with children who will be integrated into the school system. Like Health, Education will need a strong internal plan to respond to a potentially large influx of children with no English or French language skills into their classrooms.

They will also be responsible for the identification of high-needs refugee children within the refugee population. Many of these children may have had traumatic experiences during their refugee journey – all will be to some degree unsettled. Education staff will need to be prepared to assist those children in their settlement process. To this end, the development of a list of Arabic-speaking staff or community resource people pre-arrival will be important.

Public Safety

Public Safety will be an important player in garnering security clearances for volunteers who wish to work with these refugees, many of whom are vulnerable. They will also have a role to play in ensuring the reception centre itself is a safe and healthy environment and in minimizing the risk of outbreak of disease in somewhat crowded conditions.

Transportation and Infrastructure

The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure will have responsibility for locating and determining suitability of the reception centre for the incoming refugees during initial intake. Staff from that Department will need to liaise closely with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship staff as well as settlement agency staff to gain a full understanding of the needs of this refugee group, the suitability of accommodations, how to accommodate families as well as single individuals, the length of time they will be occupying the reception centre, and other pertinent facts as they locate proper temporary accommodations.

Environment and Local Government

Environment and Local Government has an important role to play in liaising with municipalities on this issue. As the refugees leave the reception centre and move into communities across the province, those municipalities can take an important leadership position in championing the welcoming of the newcomers into their new communities and in ensuring municipal services, such as transit, are accessible and appropriate for the needs of refugee families settling in to their new homes.

It will be extremely important that municipal law enforcement and emergency response teams are prepared for the arrival of the Syrian refugees. Cultural competency training and orientation on the background story of the refugee journey for these first responders and law enforcement personnel is strongly encouraged. Again, pre-arrival cataloguing of Arabic speakers who can serve as a resource in encounters with refugees will be key to ensuring positive outcomes.

Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour

Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour will play the main coordinating role in this effort with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship headquarters.

The Population Growth Division will have key responsibility for the messaging surrounding the province's efforts to welcome and retain the Syrian refugee families. There is a strain of opposition to the intake of any immigrants in this province by people who don't understand the demographics and real labour market picture, as expressed in online comments in response to media articles. The message that the reception and retention of these refugees is a good thing for New Brunswick needs to be made, and more importantly, explained, to ensure our communities are welcoming to the newcomers which greatly enhances retention.

The Employment Division will have a role to play in assisting the refugees with finding suitable employment as they move from the reception centre into communities across the province. Appropriate employment is the number one indicator of retention for all immigrants and these refugees, most of whom are well-educated, are no different.

As these refugees move forward in their resettlement journey into the labour market, the Population Growth Division and employment counselors will play a role in assisting with foreign qualification recognition – assisting with determining the status of foreign-acquired education, experience and certification/licenses in the Canadian labour market.

Public libraries will be an invaluable resource in the event of a coordinated effort to resettle large numbers of refugees. Located in communities large and small across the province, they are a network of centres to use in the distribution of resources. Arabic resource materials of use to refugees may be distributed through the public libraries, as may information about the contributions of refugees to their new countries for local citizens. Libraries may also serve as centres for the training of volunteers who wish to help with the welcoming and resettlement process.

Step Two: GNB Front-Line Worker Cultural Competency Training

It will be very important that a coordinated and concerted effort be made across the Provincial government to prepare for the arrival of significant numbers of refugees above the usual annual number. As a first key step, all front-line GNB employees should receive cultural competency training through entities such as the New Brunswick Multicultural Council or its member agencies, who have a "Creating Inclusive Workplaces" training program in place. This training assists employees in developing the skills necessary to work across cultural norms and barriers to encourage mutual understanding and successful cross-cultural communication.

Step Three: Identification of Arabic/Kurdish Speaking Translators and Interpreters

Another key step for Departments will be the identification and recruiting of Arabic/Kurdish speaking people who are subject matter experts (for example, healthcare workers or educators) and who can assist individual Departments in dealing with Syrian clients. This measure must be applied across all government departments and will involve reaching out through personal and professional networks as well as making connections with ethno-cultural and other organizations. These people may be trained or volunteer informal interpreters, depending on the situation at hand. All relevant Arabic/Kurdish resources and materials available must be attained wherever possible.

Initial Intake

Past experience has shown that the most efficient intake, assessment, evaluation and service provision can be done when large groups of refugees are received in one central location. During Operation Parasol, the newcomers were located at Base Gaagetown; however, it is unknown if the quarters are winterized and would be suitable for refugees arriving in the fall or winter.

The Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship's Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) designates communities as refugee-receiving centres, and funds immigrant-serving agencies in those communities to assist refugees throughout their resettlement process. The three immigrant-serving agencies in New Brunswick with RAP programs are:

- The Multicultural Association of Fredericton
- The Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area
- The Saint John Y Newcomer Connections

Immigrant-serving agency RAP staff from those agencies with experience in refugee resettlement will relocate temporarily to the center where the refugees are being received. Wherever the refugees are housed, staff from all three RAP programs can relocate there to assist with the intake and settlement process. During Operation Parasol, staff from RAP programs in other provinces even came to New Brunswick to assist; that is a scenario that could occur again depending on how the refugee resettlement plan unfolds federally.

At this location, reception will include assessments and interventions by a number of provincial entities, whose proposed roles in the initial intake will be outlined below.

New Brunswick Multicultural Council (NBMC)

On November 3, 2015, a teleconference was held between representatives of the Population Growth Division, the New Brunswick Multicultural Council, and immigrant-serving agencies throughout the province. During that teleconference, the New Brunswick Multicultural Council informed the group that it had been in communication with the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and was submitting a proposal to them to play the role of pan-provincial coordinator of response to the refugee resettlement project in New Brunswick.

There was general consensus during that call that the NBMC would be a suitable choice to play that role due to their pan-provincial scope and their strong network of stakeholders, including their member immigrant-serving agencies, province wide. If the proposal is successful, NBMC would play a role in coordinating resources as well as being responsible for public education messaging in cooperation with the Population Growth Division.

Immigrant-Serving Agencies

Non-governmental agencies like Immigrant-serving Agencies (ISAs) will have the primary role in the resettlement and adaptation of these refugees. They will be involved in every aspect of the intake and resettlement process, with provincial departments assisting and facilitating their work with the newcomers.

It is important to note that while the three ISAs mentioned above in Fredericton, Moncton and Saint John have in-house Resettlement Assistance Programs and experience resettling refugees, other immigrant-serving agencies in other areas of the province have expressed a desire to see some of these refugees eventually resettle in their communities. Settlement capacity in New Brunswick has developed rapidly over the past ten years with the addition of new agencies such as:

- Multicultural Association of Charlotte County
- Association Multiculturelle du Restigouche
- Centre d'accueil des nouveaux arrivants de la Péninsule acadienne (CAIENA-PA)
- Multicultural Association of Carleton County
- Multicultural Association Chaleur Region Inc.
- Centre de ressources pour nouveaux arrivants au Nord-Ouest Inc.

These regions now have the capacity to help newcomers settle and integrate. In some cases staff at these agencies are using the RAP program staff at the three urban ISAs as resources to help with issues specific to the resettlement of refugees, to positive effect.

In addition to Government-Assisted Refugees spreading out across the province following initial intake, many organizations across New Brunswick are stepping up in response to the current

crisis and privately sponsoring refugee families. That includes many organizations outside the three urban centres. This means that the Syrian refugees may be expected to settle anywhere in the province. Regional offices, such as PETL Employment Centres and Service NB outlets, need to be prepared to be partners in settling these refugees wherever they decide to settle.

A list of provincial immigrant-serving agencies is included as Appendix A.

Community Stakeholders

A number of community stakeholders will have important roles to play in this process. The Red Cross was very visible and active during Operation Parasol and will have important roles in providing and allocating resources during the initial reception phase. The Salvation Army similarly played a key role during Operation Parasol, particularly in the sorting and distribution of clothing, and doubtless would again with a new influx of refugees. Municipal organizations as well as the Réseau en immigration Francophone du Nouveau-Brunswick will also play a vital role in ensuring the successful resettlement of Syrian refugees across the province. Other community charitable and fraternal organizations, volunteer organization, and churches can be expected to play a role in the provision of volunteers or resources. And of course, some of these organizations will be privately sponsoring refugees outside of the Government-Assisted Refugee stream, adding another dimension to their roles.

Ethno-cultural communities and organization will be important in supporting the Syrian refugees. Community imams and mosques will obviously have an important role in the welcoming and support of Muslim newcomers. The province's universities, and especially Muslim and other Syrian student organizations, can be an additional support.

Financial Considerations

Immigrant-serving agencies' settlement staff workers deal with a significant case load on a daily basis. For that reason, depending on the numbers of refugees allocated to New Brunswick, the Province should consider a funding allocation, which is not currently provided for settlement agencies through core funding, for one or more Settlement Workers at involved immigrant-serving agencies. The location(s) would depend on allocation of refugees.

Cultural competency training for front-line government staff will involve incurring costs.

Other costs may arise as we receive more information about federal plans.

Best Practices

Provinces and territories across the country, as well as their immigrant-serving agencies and councils, have been working to prepare plans for the welcome and processing of Syrian

refugees and of the resettlement and integration process that will unfold after it. For this reason New Brunswick is able to draw on some best practices which already exist across the country.

Conclusion

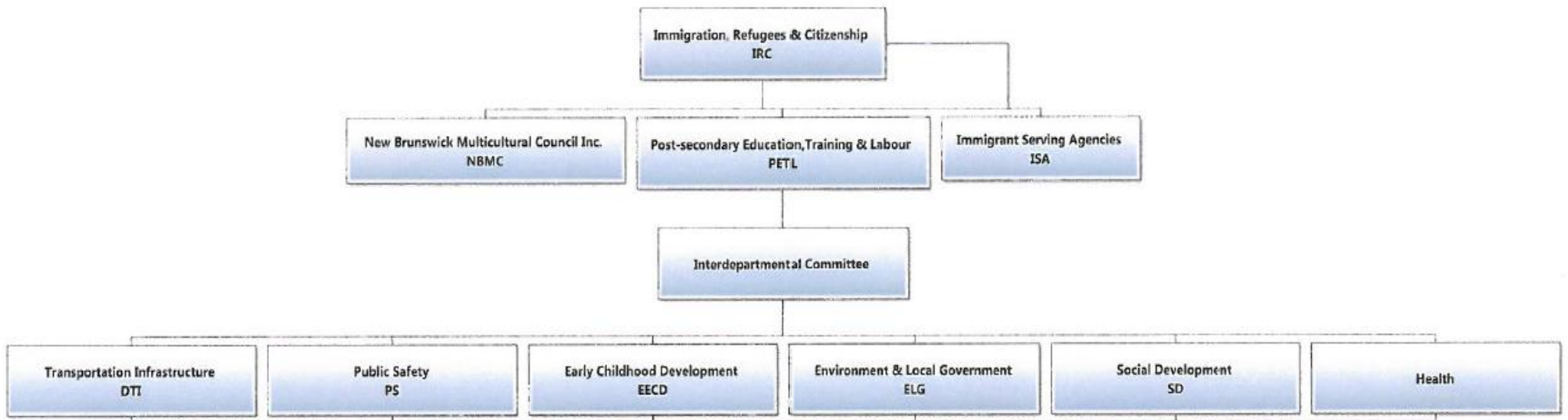
Should New Brunswick be called upon to welcome a significant number of Syrian refugees, we know it can be done; we have done it and done it well in the past. The lynchpin of the entire operation's success, however, is preparedness. The importance of internal plans for Departments like Health and Education and Early Childhood Development cannot be overemphasized, nor can the importance of a strong inter-departmental ad hoc committee of people committed to this effort.

Preparing and implementing the plans and actions outlined in this framework gives the Province the opportunity to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis, once federal allocation announcements are made, in a timely and organized approach. With commitment and effort, our response can assist in the successful resettlement of many of these refugee families looking for a safe place to call home.

Appendix A: Immigrant-Serving Agencies in New Brunswick

- Multicultural Association of Carleton County
- Saint John Multicultural and Newcomers Resource Centre (SJMNR)
- YM-YWCA Newcomer Connections – Saint John
- PRUDE (Pride, Race, Unity, Dignity, Education) – Saint John
- Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area
- Centre d'accueil et d'accompagnement francophone des immigrants du Sud-Est du Nouveau-Brunswick (CAFI)
- Atlantic Human Services Inc. (Employment counseling for newcomers)
- Multicultural Association of Fredericton Inc.
- YMCA Employment Counselling for Newcomers to Canada Program - Fredericton, NB
- Multicultural Association Chaleur Region Inc.
- Centre d'accueil des nouveaux arrivants de la Péninsule acadienne (CAIENA-PA)
- Centre de ressources pour nouveaux arrivants au Nord-Ouest Inc.
- Miramichi Regional Multicultural Association
- Multicultural Association of Charlotte County
- Association Multiculturelle du Restigouche

Committee Structure



Appendix B: Map of Settlement Agencies

List of New Brunswick Immigrant Servicing Agencies

- 1 Multicultural Association of Fredericton**
 Telephone: (506) 454-8292
 Fax: (506) 450-9033
mcaf@mcaf.nb.ca
www.mcaf.nb.ca
 Services offered in English and French 
- 2 Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area**
 Telephone: (506) 858-9659
 Fax: (506) 857-9430
info@magma-amgm.org
www.magma-amgm.org
 Services offered in English and French 
- 3 Centre d'accueil et d'accompagnement francophone des immigrants du Sud-Est du Nouveau-Brunswick**
 Telephone: (506) 382-7494
 Fax: (506) 382-7495
info@cafi-nb.org
www.cafi-nb.org
 Services offered in French 
- 4 Saint John Multicultural and Newcomers Resource Centre**
 Telephone: (506) 642-4242
 Fax: (506) 634-6080
info@sjmnr.ca
www.sjmnr.ca
 Services offered in English and French 
- 5 Saint John YMCA-YWCA**
 Telephone: (506) 646-2389
 Fax: (506) 634-0783
www.saintjohnny.com
 Services offered in English 
- 6 PRUDE Inc.**
 Telephone: (506) 634-3088
info@prudeinc.org
 Services offered in English 
- 7 Multicultural Association of Carleton County (MACC)**
 Telephone: (506) 392-6011
 Fax: (506) 392-6411
admin@maccnb.ca
www.maccnb.ca
 Services offered in English 
- 8 Multicultural Association of Charlotte County (CCMA)**
 Telephone: (506) 755-9295
multiculturalcc@bellaliant.com
www.ccmnb.com
 Services offered in English
- 9 Multicultural Association Chaleur Region Inc. (MACR)**
 Telephone: (506) 547-7651
 Fax: (506) 547-2576
info@macr-amrc.ca
www.macr-amrc.ca
 Services offered in English and French
- 10 Miramichi Regional Multicultural Association**
 Telephone: (506) 773-5272
 Fax: (506) 773-0812
info@mrma.ca
www.mrma.ca
 Services offered in English 
- 11 Comité d'accueil, d'intégration et d'établissement des nouveaux arrivants de la Péninsule acadienne (CAIENA-PA)**
 Telephone: (506) 727-0185
 Fax: (506) 727-0181
info.caiena-pa@bellaliant.com
www.nouveauxarrivants.ca
 Services offered in French 
- 12 Centre de ressources pour nouveaux arrivants au Nord-Ouest Inc.**
 Telephone: (506) 735-0604
 Fax: (506) 735-0878
www.crna.ca
info@crna.ca
 Services offered in French 
- 13 Restigouche Multicultural Association**
 Telephone: (506) 789-7747
 Fax: (506) 789-4933
Info.amr-rma@nb.aibn.com
 Services offered in English and French 

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