

Partners in the Management of Canada:  
The Changing Roles of Government  
and the Public Service

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The John L. Manion Lecture  
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# Introduction

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*Ole Ingstrup*  
*Principal*  
*Canadian Centre for Management Development*

Chers invités, chers collègues, Ladies and Gentlemen:

As Principal of CCMD, it is my very great privilege to welcome you to the John L. Manion Lecture, an event that is one of the key milestones of the public service year, and of its intellectual life.

It may come as a surprise to our university friends to know that we have one – an intellectual life, that is! But we most assuredly do. As those of us who are privileged to work in it know, the public service of Canada is a place where one encounters daily some of the best minds in our country. And one of them, as I want to underline in a moment, is our guest of honour this evening.

The Manion Lecture takes place in the context of CCMD's annual University Seminar. The University Seminar brings together some fifty of the leading teachers and thinkers in the fields of public management, public administration and public policy from universities across Canada. It enables them to keep their teaching and research up-to-date with thinking and developments

in the federal public service, and it creates an opportunity for exchange between them and the leaders of the public service.

This evening is one such opportunity. It brings together leaders of the public service and leading members of the academic community concerned with governance, as well as guests from other areas and from the private sector. The encounters you have already had, and the discussion among and between all these groups that will take place over dinner are an important part of this event, and one of the reasons for it.

The Manion Lecture, as you all know, is named in honour of Jack Manion, the founding Principal of CCMD and an outstanding model of the public servant. Jack is a man of action, but he is also a man of ideas and imagination, a man concerned now as ever with the role of ideas and creativity in public administration. So it is altogether fitting that an event of this kind and importance should be named in his honour. I am very sorry that he is unable to be with us tonight. Since he is in Florida, I very much doubt that he shares my regret!

This is the third annual Manion Lecture. The first was delivered by Ted Hodgetts, one of the legendary figures in the academic field of public administration in Canada. The second Manion Lecture was delivered by Richard French whose remarkable career spans the academic, political and business worlds, and both official languages! For the third Manion Lecture we have chosen one of our own. But not just any one of us. Marcel Massé exemplifies some of the finest traditions and values of the public service of Canada.

Some of you may know that the motto of CCMD is "Tradition and Excellence". These are words that bear perhaps even greater meaning today than when they were chosen, as the public service seeks to uncover and nourish its roots and core values. Marcel Massé exemplifies these qualities at their highest, and in ways I want to take a moment to underline.

As far as public achievement and contribution to the public good are concerned, Marcel's remarkable career speaks for itself.

Deputy Minister of Finance for the province of New Brunswick at the age of 33, then Chairman of the provincial Cabinet Secretariat, Marcel returned to Ottawa in 1977 and quickly assumed a number of the top positions in the federal public service including, of course, Clerk of the Privy Council and Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Following a period of distinguished international service as Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund, Marcel returned to Canada for a second stint as President of the Canadian International Development Agency in 1989. Only last week the Prime Minister announced that on 1 March 1993 Marcel will be returning to the Federal-Provincial Relations Office, where he will serve as Secretary to the Cabinet for Federal-Provincial Relations, one of the very key positions in the federal public service.

As I said already, Marcel Massé's public career speaks for itself. But his remarkable achievements are not the only reason we have invited him to speak to us this evening, nor the only reason it gives me such pleasure to have the honour of introducing him to you. In addition to the accomplishments and honours of the public servant, Marcel Massé displays in their highest forms the personal qualities of intellect, erudition, clarity of thought and elegance of expression that are also hallmarks of the public service at its best.

Over the past decade or so, as we seek to reform and renew the public service, we have been obliged to lay emphasis on managerial excellence. This emphasis on management competence and standards is something I wholeheartedly endorse, both personally and as Principal of CCMD. It is a dimension of the public service that we must pursue with vigour. And for my part, I intend to do so, both as Principal of CCMD and in my new role, related to public service renewal.

But in emphasizing managerial excellence, as we will continue to do, we may sometimes have lost sight of that other dimension of public service life and leadership: intellectual leadership. The life of ideas, and of the mind. This is one of the distinctive features

of public management at its best and it is something about which CCMD also has strong convictions, and a clear mandate.

One of the advantages of being a new Principal is that I have quite a fresh acquaintance with the CCMD Act. When I read it over, one of the things that struck me – apart from what a splendid legal framework it provides for CCMD – was the prominent place it gives to CCMD in preparing public service executives for their roles as thinkers and advisors to government. At a dinner at CCMD last spring, another former Clerk of the Privy Council – not tonight’s guest of honour! – referred to the public service as one of the “learned professions”. This is indeed an important public service ideal, and it is one of which it is timely to remind ourselves.

It is in large measure because he exemplifies so well the tradition and excellence of the public service as a “learned profession” that we at CCMD are deeply pleased that Marcel Massé accepted our invitation to prepare and deliver the third Manion Lecture. It gives me enormous pleasure to introduce him, as a representative of the public service of Canada, to this distinguished audience of practitioners and students of public administration.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Monsieur Marcel Massé.

# Partners in the Management of Canada: The Changing Roles of Government and the Public Service

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*Marcel Massé*

**I**t is a great pleasure to deliver the third annual John Manion lecture . . . because John Manion is such an unusual person. John is an oddity – one of those persons who actually listens before rushing to a judgment or making a decision. Why this strange attitude? It seems he wants to understand an issue or problem before coming up with a solution,

Given this bizarre behaviour, it is a mystery that Jack survived and rose during 36 years in the public service. But perhaps here is the ultimate irony: Jack has given a number of us what must be many schoolboys' dream – the chance to tell a crowd what one really thinks about the school and how it is managed!

Although I started drafting this lecture in a slightly mischievous frame of mind, it quickly became a much more serious pursuit – something like my testament after 25 years in the public service, at all levels: provincial, federal and international. A lot of what I

am going to talk about is, of course, based on recent literature and the various comparative studies of government and government management that have appeared in recent years. But much more profoundly, it is based on the evolution that I, like all Deputy Ministers, have had to undergo in the last few years.

### **THREE REVOLUTIONS**

The pace of change today is accelerating so quickly that it imposes a new Copernican revolution on our way of thinking. One image will illustrate what I mean. In 1519, Magellan set out on a trip around the world that took three years and 17 days to complete. Four hundred twenty years later, in 1939, Howard Hughes did the same in three days, 16 hours and 56 minutes — 371 times faster. Only 41 years later, in 1980, astronauts were circling the earth in 90 minutes — 17,790 times faster! Hughes' voyage helps us understand that the world has changed. But an acceleration of 17,790 suggests we are not in the same framework of thought and are facing a new world of knowledge.

History has sped up again. In the last four years, we have seen a series of world-shaking revolutions. When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, it symbolized profound changes in our external environment — namely, the near universalisation of democratic systems and of economic liberalism.

First, and perhaps most importantly, political changes in Eastern Europe and the USSR demonstrated the refusal of people to be governed by autocratic systems or minorities — and the depth of their desire to participate in the decisions that affected their lives. Ongoing democratic reforms in many countries in Latin America and Africa show the increasing strength and universality of that desire.

This democratic revolution — symbolized by the image of Boris Yeltsin haranguing a crowd from atop a tank — reflects irreversible trends, both in levels of education in the world and in the capacity to use that education through the newly found ability to obtain and share analysis and information on a global scale. We



should not forget that it was only during the 1980s that, for the first time in human history, more people knew how to read and write than were illiterate.

While the level of education continued to rise worldwide, the ability to spread information globally grew as well. There is perhaps no better symbol of this than the emergence and success of CNN. The information revolution — partly the result of the growth in informatics — suddenly enabled very large numbers of people in almost all societies to obtain information about events as they were taking place, to have access to an immediate analysis of these events, and to know how they were interpreted by people in faraway places. It is therefore not surprising that, after Tiananmen Square, fax machines were outlawed for a time in China.

The desire of people to participate in the decisions that affect them and to take control of their own destinies — this democratic revolution — was only one of the major revolutions of these last few years. The second could be called the triumph of economic liberalism. With the fall of many communist governments, most nations have now acknowledged that central planning of the economy is a formula for disaster and that the role of the state has to be re-thought worldwide. The strengths of the free market system have triumphed in almost all countries around the globe.

As a word of caution, however, we should also be aware of the consequences of global competition. If left unchecked, it soon creates the seeds of social and political instability. Nevertheless, for now, there appears to be no alternative to economic liberalism.

The third revolution, which we are only now beginning to experience, results from the first two and is the revolution of governance. As a result of globalization, nation-states are no longer sovereign. As Harlan Cleveland said a few years ago, in a powerful image:

... power is leaking out of sovereign national governments in three directions at once... The state is leaking at the top, as more international functions require the pooling of sovereignty . . .

sideways, as multinational corporations . . . conduct more and more of the world's commerce . . . and from the bottom, as minorities [and] single-issue constituencies take control of their own destinies.'

The appropriate reach of the state and what tools it has at hand have once again become fundamental problems, as state after state — West and East, North and South — seeks to redefine its role. The traditional role of government has been deeply shaken by the invasion of external forces, which have taken on international dimensions, such as the interpenetration of markets, the free flows of capital, the globalized problems of environment, migration, international terrorism and epidemics.

At the domestic level, the growing desire of people to participate in decision making, the rise of powerful non-governmental organizations and special interest groups, the new and fast-changing sorts of problems we face, and the heightened exasperation of people with government and its programs are all combining to force states to look for new ways of responding to new challenges.

Although these three revolutions underlie the need for changing roles for governments in all countries, the initial factor that caused governments to look for new ways of providing public services has been the scarcity of public money and the size of public sector deficits.

Governments everywhere have felt the need to Streamline bureaucracies and to turn more and more of their traditional programs over to the private sector, which is much more adept at cutting costs and using new technologies. This shedding of program implementation seems bound to continue for a while.

Although the original motivation to reduce person-years and cut costs was the size of deficits, our analysis would show that further reductions will be motivated by these more profound changes in the external and internal environment, which, in fact, require even more fundamental changes in governance.

I cannot say how small the bureaucracy will become between now and the year 2000 — some say 20 to 40 per cent smaller — but

one thing is certain: the trend to downsize the public sector will continue. However, a reduction in the size of the public sector does not necessarily translate into reduced influence. What we will have instead is a smaller, but more influential public service, and here is why.

Domestically, increased levels of education and the much greater accessibility of information have brought their own pressures to bear on government. A better informed and better educated public is far less inclined to accept dictates from on high that affect their day-to-day lives. The desire of so many citizens and groups to be consulted and to participate in the decision-making processes of the public sector has created a need that has not yet been fully met, and can only be met through a more in-depth consultative process between those who govern and those who are governed. This means that those who traditionally simply made decisions will have to spend much more of their time explaining situations, setting out the various options and trade-offs, and persuading those involved, before proposed solutions become acceptable. A good part of the present unpopularity of both politicians and public servants is due to our insufficient adaptation to these new requirements of our jobs.

In other words, these long-term trends in education and information require a much greater level of partnership between the governors and the governed, between the politicians and the bureaucracy, between the people being served and the various institutions through which services are delivered.

At the international level, the growing interdependence of nations, in economic terms and on issues such as the environment, migration, and the drug trade, is encouraging governments to work as partners, usually on a burden-sharing basis, in numerous new international clubs — such as the G-7 — where decisions are reached by consensus.

In the domestic area, there are now virtually no departments where problems are self-contained or where solutions do not involve more than one traditional sector of government activity.

As a result, there is a greater need to find new and more horizontal ways of studying problems and finding solutions. Departments are essentially vertical structures, conceived in simpler times when fields of activity, such as agriculture or forestry or transport, could be considered as reasonably separate domains.

Horizontal coordination is now essential and requires new mechanisms. We have already gone some distance down that path. For instance, we have created amongst Deputy Ministers a horizontal committee to deal with international development activities called ICERDC – the Inter-Departmental Committee on Economic Relations with Developing Countries – where representatives of the Department of Finance, the Bank of Canada, the Department of the Environment, External Affairs and CIDA exchange information on policies and try to make more coherent their various activities. However, horizontal structures are still very feeble and do not yet adequately address the problems raised by interdependence.

Strengthening horizontal links between departments for policy discussions and program implementation will become an increasingly important part of public management reform in the near future. These same trends are taking place in today's industrial, municipal, and service sectors: IBM, Alcan, Digital Equipment, American Express ... in Fairfield or Visalia, even in the school systems in New York. In the words of Rosabeth Moss Kanter, writing in the *Harvard Business Review*:

In a growing number of companies . . . horizontal ties between peers are replacing vertical ties as channels of activity and communication. Companies are asking corporate staffs and functional departments to play a more strategic role with greater cross-departmental collaboration.\*

## NEW ROLES FOR GOVERNMENT

Another consequence of fast-paced change, in both our external and internal environments, is that it is no longer possible to understand immensely complex problems or devise sufficiently

*interdependent* solutions without bringing together groups of people who spend much more of their time understanding their evolving environment and whose advice must be based on constantly updated knowledge.

The public sector is at a disadvantage in the implementation of programs, because of the need for uniform application of rules and regulations and because of the need for detailed control systems in the expenditure of taxpayers' monies.

This has already resulted in privatization and hands-off management through output contracting. However, while the public sector is slowly moving out of implementation activities, it has to become more involved in the areas of consultation, explanation, negotiation, persuasion and partnership. And here also, knowledge must be shared on a horizontal basis, which essentially means a team approach to problem solving.

As I said, the governmental sector can no longer impose its decisions without a fuller consent by the governed. Government must become less a lawgiver and more an arbitrator. Top governmental officials must become less administrators and implementors of programs and activities and more knowledge-based advisors who help determine and explain the parameters within which solutions must be found.

These new roles for government cannot lead to meaningful public management reforms without taking into account political imperatives and without modifications in the behaviour of politicians. As Al Johnson so clearly noted in his excellent study on reform in the Government of Canada (1962-1991):

The heart of the failure, as I see it, was that the advocates of the comprehensive reforms did not adequately cope with the question of how the reforms would "fit" in parliamentary government... How can reform be made workable in the political environment that government operates in, when every exercise of responsibility, and every answer in the name of accountability, is judged in political terms?<sup>3</sup>

No group of ministers, of whatever party, can hope to possess all the knowledge needed to deal successfully with the constantly changing domestic and external environments. Nor can they alone understand all of these changes, explain them, find solutions, or make deals through arbitration. Nor can any group of civil servants. You need both the legitimacy to arbitrate – which politicians have – and the knowledge of the issues – which the professionals have. This means that the present dichotomy between the political level and the public service must evolve towards a fuller partnership.

In the post-modern government, the tasks of understanding, consulting, explaining and persuading must be shared between politicians and bureaucrats. Even more, the partnerships needed for governing must include the people being served, as well as other levels of government. Determining “who does what?” must reflect the ability of various groups to provide the required service efficiently and not traditional functions or jurisdictions. As those who worked on PS 2000 quickly realized, these methods of governance – partnership and the team approach, client-driven solutions, output contracting rather than the blueprint approach – involve a massive change in values and attitudes in the public sector.

Canada has begun to move in that direction, but other countries have already gone much further. Scandinavian countries, such as Sweden, reach major economic policy decisions through a collaborative effort of government, business and labour. These so-called corporatist forms of government are also evident in Germany, Japan and, in one form or other, in many South-East Asian countries. I believe it is no coincidence that these countries are generally regarded as the most successful and best managed in recent times.

If such reforms in public sector management are adopted in Canada, Deputy Ministers will have to change fundamentally their role from being invisible – a duty which Gordon Robertson, my early role model, once clearly explained to me – to being experts at consulting, explaining, negotiating and persuading. Deputy

Ministers will also have to move further away from being doers to becoming experts at steering. They will have to change their understanding of their job from being one of administering a vertical department to one spent mainly on creating the horizontal linkages necessary to solve problems.

To succeed, they will have to encourage innovation through trial and error, or, as Dian Cohen puts it:

... the ability of the public service to be innovative and respond to the challenges of a changing world is being stifled by a management system that protects the steady state and tends to look upon innovators and entrepreneurs as loose cannons... A paralysing fear of making mistakes has led to proliferating rules... so you have a public service where merit is synonymous with compliance. That won't be good enough in the future.<sup>4</sup>

Similar changes will also be required in other institutions — such as labour, management, non-governmental organizations and single-issue groups. They will have to move away from advocacy towards sharing in decision making and in the devising of trade-offs. This responsibility for decision making should entice them to move from pure advice, that sometimes reflects little consideration of the overall consequences, to more practical, more realistic advice. To persuade, you have to include.

Finally, the consumers of government services will have to act less as recipients and more as partners. They will have to be partners in the substantive decision making about the kind and quality of services to be offered. They will have to be partners in devising the necessary changes in the delivery mechanisms, and they will have to be partners in the graduation process from a number of government services.

#### CIDA AS A TEST CASE: FROM ROWING TO STEERING

What I have said so far has been mainly an exercise in deductive reasoning. From a brief analysis of the three global revolutions of recent years, I have drawn conclusions about the evolving roles of

governments in fast-changing external and internal environments. These new roles for the public sector led me, in turn, to posit and describe new roles and relationships for the various actors involved – whether they be politicians, civil servants, institutions or public sector clients. It is, however, possible to identify the changes needed in public sector management by proceeding the other way – i.e., through the inductive approach, based on actual experience. This requires some description of the problems encountered in managing a public sector department in Canada, a review of many models of country-wide financial and economic management, and an analysis of the common elements of solutions that worked. In that vein, let me give you an example of this process of change at work at CIDA.

Most of you probably know that the role of CIDA in the '70s and the beginning of the '80s was to invest in projects – for example, building a road, a hydroelectric dam, or irrigation canals. However, this traditional way of spending development money ran into some important hurdles. For starters, if we built a road – like la route de l'amitié in Niger – and did not, at the same time, ensure that we left behind the indigenous capacity to maintain the road – for example, by ensuring that a proper department of transport existed with the necessary skills, and its share of budget monies – then, after ten years, the road would be gone and we would be back to square one – minus our initial investment.

In the same way, I can give you the example of irrigation works in Mali where we invested large sums of money only to find that, a short time later, the farmers had returned to subsistence agriculture. When asked why, the farmers would immediately reply that the prices set by the government for produce were not high enough to pay for their own production costs. These low agricultural prices were, of course, set to keep the prices of food low in the cities, where those posing the greatest potential threat to government live.

Thus it became apparent that we had to adopt a broader approach that would look at the institutions and policies affecting



development if our first-level investments were to succeed. The severe economic crises faced by a growing number of developing countries in the 1980s also brought home in dramatic fashion the fact that unless overall monetary, fiscal and exchange rate policies were appropriate, countries would quickly run into economic and trade difficulties that would slow, stop, or even reduce their development.

In the latter part of the '80s, we also gained a clearer understanding of the role of the environment in development. We learned that if we did not take environmental concerns into account our projects, and perhaps whole sectors of the developing country economy, would not be sustainable.

And now, in the early years of the 1990s, we are beginning to understand that good governance is an essential ingredient in development. Good governance includes respect for human rights, lack of corruption, and democratic government. Without good governance, economic development is much slower or sometimes does not even take place. In countries with authoritarian governments — as Chile once was — growth can take place, but social and political instability in the medium-term risks destroying all the effects of development investments.

#### HORIZONTAL VERSUS VERTICAL

Finally, we also recognize more fully that a wide range of broader, international factors profoundly affects the development prospects of developing countries.

A few weeks ago, I said to the Deputy Minister of International Trade here in Canada that I was ready to give him Canada's aid budget for Bangladesh if he would remove the constraints on the textile trade between the two countries. I am sure he took this as a joke, but this trade-off would be of greater benefit to Bangladesh than any net transfers from the development budget. And, by the way, it would also benefit Canadian consumers.

I have already mentioned the ICERDC Committee, which brings together a number of Deputy Ministers to discuss the various development problems and policies that have to be dealt with through combined departmental action. ICERDC is, for me, a harbinger of things to come. The issues Canada and other countries face cannot be resolved except through coordinated action, which means horizontal, rather than vertical, structures and approaches.

#### KNOWLEDGE-BASED ORGANIZATION

From project to policy, from a focus on economic development to the development of an entire society, from vertical to cross-sectoral issues and structures — all of these factors have slowly led to a change in the skills required from our staff and in the planning techniques we use.

The new tool CIDA's Executive Committee uses to decide on the allocation of funds in a country is now called a Country Policy Framework. It is a long-term framework — between five and fifteen years — that analyses a country's economic structure, its political, environmental, social and cultural environment, its place in the world system, and its national and international policies. Our decision to invest in that country and our choice of activities is based on this analysis.

At the same time, as our personnel is becoming more knowledge-based, it is also becoming clear that CIDA has to get out of hands-on management. The private sector is often better equipped than we are to administer our projects and to adapt quickly to changing environments in developing countries. Once freed of bureaucratic rules, the private sector — broadly defined to include business, universities and non-governmental organizations — can usually deliver outputs more efficiently than government. This means that CIDA staff are concerned more with setting the criteria for allocating money and contracting by results than with hands-on management.

Another key requirement for CIDA, and for other departments, is communications. In hard times, Canadians find it difficult to spend a **significant** amount of their taxes on developing countries, unless they understand how their money is being used and why aid is a strategic long-term investment in their own future. **Canadians** must therefore be persuaded that money spent in **developing** countries is a good investment for Canada, if the government is to retain the support of its citizenry for **such** a program. That **means** that **politicians** and **bureaucrats** must become better **communicators** in this field also.

These ongoing transformations in CIDA reflect, I believe, the fundamental changes that must take place government-wide and in the way in which the public service is used as an instrument of governance. Changes in the internal and external environment profoundly affect the way government operates, what it **does** and what it **does** not do. It also deeply affects the relationship between the political level and the public service. Both levels must change their skills and their behaviour if we are going to deal successfully with the problems we face.

The stakes in **all** of this are **very** high because it is public sector efficiency that **will** make the crucial **difference** to national **prosperity** in the modern world economy. Efficiency **will** be **forced** on the **private** sector in every country in a **very** direct way by global **competition**. The fight for survival **will** make **private** sector **efficiency** easier to **initiate** and to achieve. The forces exerted on government **will** be **less** brutal and less direct, thus change **may** be slower in **coming** and more difficult to carry **out**. A greater force of **will** and a strong vision **will** be needed to push through essential public sector reforms. Those countries which see the writing on the **wall** and act now to reform state apparatuses **will** have the **lead**. Thus, our understanding of the forces at work and of the changes that are necessary in the public service are a fundamental element in the future prosperity of our country.

I would like to **conclude** by re-emphasizing some of the main points of my analysis.

1. There must be much closer cooperation between politicians and bureaucrats to create stronger partnerships.
2. Senior bureaucrats must reassume their role as advisors to political leaders.
3. In a pluralistic society, change occurs rapidly, and we must adapt at the same pace if Canada is to prosper and find its place in the competitive world of the twenty-first Century.
4. The management of social change must include involved partners and stakeholders.
5. Politicians and public servants share responsibility for the common good, and we must bring partners on board in our decision making.
6. The public sector will of necessity become smaller and more professional. It is not clear how substantial the reductions will be, but they will be a reality for years to come.
7. A society that wishes to remain stable cannot be preoccupied only with the winners in the game of global structural adjustment. It must also devise ways to help the losers adjust. Equity and compassion must remain important values in our society.
8. The public sector must change its approach and assume different responsibilities. Civil servants who now work in hierarchical settings must be ready to work in a more innovative, horizontal environment and learn to communicate better. Managers have a role to play in preparing employees — through better training and education and by designing positions where they can develop the skills and team approaches needed — to deal with a world of globalized, cross-sectoral issues.
9. Finally, as Professor Kanter of Harvard University writes: “managerial work is undergoing such enormous and rapid change that many managers are reinventing their profession as they go.”

Public servants must do the same. Our future depends on it.

NOTES

1. Harlan Cleveland in Steven A. Rosell, et. al., *Governing in an Information Society*, The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1992, pp. 17-18.
2. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "The New Managerial Work", *Harvard Business Review* (November-December 1989): 85.
3. A.W. Johnson, *Reflections on Administrative Reform in the Government of Canada, 1962-1991*, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 1992, p. 15.
4. Dian Cohen, "Rising to the Challenge", *Dialogue* (March 1989): pp. 4-5.
5. Kanter, p. 85.

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