

### Upcoming

New North Waterworks, April 11-12, Prince Albert Travelodge  
Mayor and Councillor Gathering, April 18, Prince Albert Travelodge

Saskatchewan Association of Northern Communities

# NEW NORTH

This month ..

- SUMA Wrap
- Census 2016
- From the Chair
- New North Updates
- Community Police Board Training

## Monthly Newsletter February 2017

### NSAD Population Nudges Up 1.7% in 5 Years, Apparently

While the province of Saskatchewan recorded one of the biggest ever population jumps in any five year period with the latest census release, the north it seems has been in a holding pattern, having added a little under 500 people, in total, since the last census in 2011.

Division 18, which is the northern census division, grew from 36,557 to 37,064. That's a grow rate of 0.3 per cent a year. The previous 5 year period, from 2006 to 2011, saw a growth rate of 7.7%. In other words, more people were added to the northern population in the north *each year* of the 2006-2011 five year period than were added for the entire 5 year period this time around.

This, apparently, despite the fact that the natural growth rate in the north—that is, the number of

births versus the number of deaths—has remained pretty steady over the last 10 years. On average, since 2006, the north has about 600 more births than there are deaths, equalling a natural growth rate of about 1.6%.

There are two explanations for why the census is showing virtually no growth in the northern population: either there is a lot more out-migration than any of us are realizing, or the census is wrong.

The other statistic released so far is growth in the number of private residences. Here there is some good news, with almost 400 new units added over the last five years, or a growth rate significantly above the population growth rate, of around 4%. 

### New North Upcoming Advocacy, Consultation and Capacity Building Agenda

#### March NEW NORTH EXECUTIVE MEETING:

Minister for Rural and Remote Health Ottenbreit is scheduled to meet with the Executive, with a number of items on the agenda including mental health funding, speech language services, electronic record sharing, and quite possibly that health restructuring thing people are talking about. The Executive is also scheduled to meet with representatives from Cameco and the RCMP.

**March SARM CONVENTION:** New North Chair Bruce Fidler and Vice Chair Robert St.Pierre are New North's special delegation to SARM this year.

#### March COMMUNITY POLICE BOARD TRAINING

#### April NEW NORTH WATERWORKS

#### April MAYOR AND COUNCILLOR GATHERING

#### June NEW NORTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Community Visits:** We are always looking for opportunities to come pay you a visit, so keep an eye out for us!

# NewNorth News & Updates

## Education Governance Reform

Consultations for this ended back in January, and it was very pleasing to see people across Saskatchewan getting out in relative force to have their say on educational governance reform, with some 3500 submissions coming through the government's door (including New North's). This is a sharp and very notable contrast to the number of submissions sent in for health reform last year, which amounted to about 350.

We have no idea when the decision will come down on how many school divisions they want, but we're expecting some news around budget time.

## Marijuana Legalization

If you haven't read "A Framework for the Legalization and Regulation of Cannabis in Canada," you can check it out by Googling it. Government is presently wondering how legalization will affect municipalities, so if you have any thoughts, let us know.

## Revenue Sharing Pools

It's a census year, so the pools have to be looked at again. Presently, the north receives about 7.5% of the pool, the cities get about 47%, the rurals 28%, and the rest of the urbans about 16%. We expect consultations on the pools with SUMA, SARM, New North and government to get underway directly, as my Grandad would say.

## New North Waterworks: Prince Albert Travelodge, April 11 & 12, 2017

New North trains 60 to 70 water operators from around the north every year, and even some that are not, at our waterworks, and this year won't be any different. With so many municipalities in the north sharing water systems with neighbouring First Nations it's pleasing that many of the operators we see coming along are from the local reserves. Planning for this year's event is in the early stages. Look for an agenda and registration details soon.

## New North Mayor and Councillor Gathering April 18, Prince Albert Travelodge

Hold onto your hats, because with Spring comes the Spring New North Mayor and Councillor Gathering, April 18 at the Travelodge in Prince Albert.

We are referring to this Gathering as a "post-provincial budget huddle," which of course might be completely appropriate if they decide to do something crazy like turn the heat off.

An agenda is in the works, but in the meantime, don't be shy to send to in any items you'd like to see on it to [matt.newnorth@sasktel.net](mailto:matt.newnorth@sasktel.net).

## "Empowering Our Communities": Community Police and Safety Board Training, March 13-15, Prince Albert Travelodge

A whole bunch of people from the Ministry of Justice, the RCMP and even New North have been hard at work putting together the latest Community Police Board/Safety Board training event, which we are calling "Empowering Our Communities."

The agenda is now officially out, and can be found by going to [www.newnorthsask.org](http://www.newnorthsask.org), and clicking on the link to the Community Police page (on the left).

Registration is completely free for all CPB members, but if you are not a CPB member and you'd like to come, you're more than welcome (the fee is \$100 for non-CPB members). Go to the link above to find the non-CPB registration form, and send it in. But hurry: space is limited (and we actually mean that: you should see how many people belong to these things), so first come, first served.

## From the New North Chair

BY BRUCE FIDLER, MAYOR OF CREIGHTON

Hello, everyone! I hope you enjoyed the early taste of Spring that we had a while back. Let's hope we see it for real soon!

Speaking of Spring, I think many of us are anxiously awaiting the Provincial Budget to be released next month. The Premier at SUMA didn't give much away, so it'll be a case of "wait and see" to find out what impact there will be on our education system, on municipal finances, and a great much else. Whatever happens I know we can get through it, and probably even come out stronger on the other side.

It was great to see a large turnout at the SUMA Convention—one of the biggest ever northern contingents, I think. I hope everyone found it interesting and got something out of it. It was a little disappointing for many of us that the byelection being called interfered with some of the presentations. I know a lot of you were looking forward to the solid waste presentation to find out what the government has in store on that file. I hope that at our New North Gathering, on April 18, we can help fill in some of the gaps



there.

The New North Executive had a very good meeting with members of the SUMA Board over dinner on the Monday night. We discussed many issues to do with the north, including the mental health challenges, the importance of revenue sharing to northern municipal operations, and how SUMA can help us move our agenda forward.

The Executive also had a very frank and honest discussion with the Minister of

Government Relations, Donna Harpauer.

The New North Executive will have their first proper meeting in March. We think this is going to be a pretty interesting few months coming up, and the Executive is raring to go.

Make sure you put April 18 in your calendar for the first Mayor and Councillor Gathering for 2017. If you are new to New North you may not know that we try to have 3 events like this each year—one in Spring, one in Winter/Fall, and our AGM in Summer. We'll let you know what's on the agenda real soon hopefully. In the meantime, feel free to send any ideas/resolutions you'd like to see discussed. Take care, and see you then!

## Sasktel Says it's Done Upgrading

If you live in Dore Lake, Patuanak, Stony Rapids, Jans Bay, Turnor Lake and any number of smaller communities in northern Saskatchewan, then you've probably (or hopefully you have) noticed the Internet's gotten a little bit faster, with Sasktel now having completed its installation of fibre optic backhaul from Cigar Lake to Collins Bay, and another 9 kilometres of fibre between Dillion and St. George's Hill.

The cost was about \$9 million, with Sasktel chipping in about \$2.5 million of that, and the rest coming from the federal government's

*Connecting Canadians* Program, a program so awesome they had to italicize it.

The federal government has committed itself to bringing speeds of 5 megabytes per second to every Canadian. That none of us in the north actually get anywhere near the 5 megabytes per second in the real world, even on the best day, actually makes the government's pledge even more depressing, since apparently what we are getting now is about as good as we're going to get, at least under the current program.

But enough of the griping. There's Netflix to be watching buffering!



## Census 2016

# Census Serves Up Dog's Breakfast in North

It is staggering to think that in time when it is possible for someone half-way around the world to pin-point, to within a few feet, the location of my iPhone, or my whereabouts on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015, by looking at the geo-location information tagged to my Twitter account; and when companies like Amazon or Google are able to remember not only what I got my wife for her birthday a decade ago, but that it was actually her birthday (which came in handy, I'll admit), that the best way government has to collect one of the most rudimentary of all sets of data—the number and composition of the people that live here—is still done in the same way the Ancient Greeks, Romans, Babylonians, Chinese, sheep farmers and grade school teachers have done it: getting everyone to sit still for five minutes, and counting them.

Of course, it's a little more complicated than that, and in the north, with our highly fluid population, it's just as reliable as it's always been. The accuracy of the census is not just a question of field enumerators screwing up; some communities will tell you that distrust of “big brother” also plays a part. Despite assurances about confidentiality, there are still families who'll under-report the number of people living in their household for one reason or another. And there are those who simply don't fill out the forms.

Looking at the combined numbers for the Northern Towns, Villages and Hamlets, the population dropped by almost 1200 people, or about 7%, between 2011 and 2016, according to the census. In all, 7 communities saw increases, while 16 saw decreases. The biggest drops in percentage terms were Cumberland House and Pelican Narrows (20%) and Beauval (15%). Weyakwin lost 63% of its population, apparently. Gainers include Pinehouse (7.6%), Green Lake (2%) and Air Ronge (6%), among others.

### **What can health region enrolments tell us about northern population?**

The short answer is: it depends. On one hand, there is clearly a discrepancy between the northern population as expressed in the 2016 census and the numbers reported by the health regions. The combined health region population, including the communities of Cumberland House and Cumberland House Cree Nation (which don't belong to the northern health regions, but to Kelsey Trail), is about 41,000. The census, for more or less the same communities, is about 37,000. On the face of it, you'd say the census is off by about 10%, give or take.

On the other hand, trying to pinpoint, community by community, where exactly the discrepancy is coming from is very difficult. This is because health region enrolments are not linked to residential addresses, but to whatever post office people use. In most cases,

people will use the post office in their own community. Many communities don't have their own post office, of course, so they'll be coded to the nearest larger centre.

There is a way around this by looking at regional numbers, and making assumptions about where people are getting their mail delivered, and this is where things get interesting. Let's take the communities of La Loche, Clearwater Dene Nation and surrounding communities of Bear Creek, Black Point and Garson Lake. Their combined census population is about 3300. However, their combined health region enrolment is more than 4100. We can even make a guess about which community is being shortchanged. The enrolment for Clearwater is about 825, against a census population of 850. La Loche, on the other hand, has an enrolment of 3100, but a census count of 2300. Even taking into account surrounding communities using their post code, it's possible their census count is off by as much as 400 people. (And, as to the question of whether on-reserve residents using off-reserve mail boxes would show up in the “res codes” of a municipality: that happens, but generally individual First Nations have their own “res codes” as determined by the band of which they are members, not necessarily by where they live).

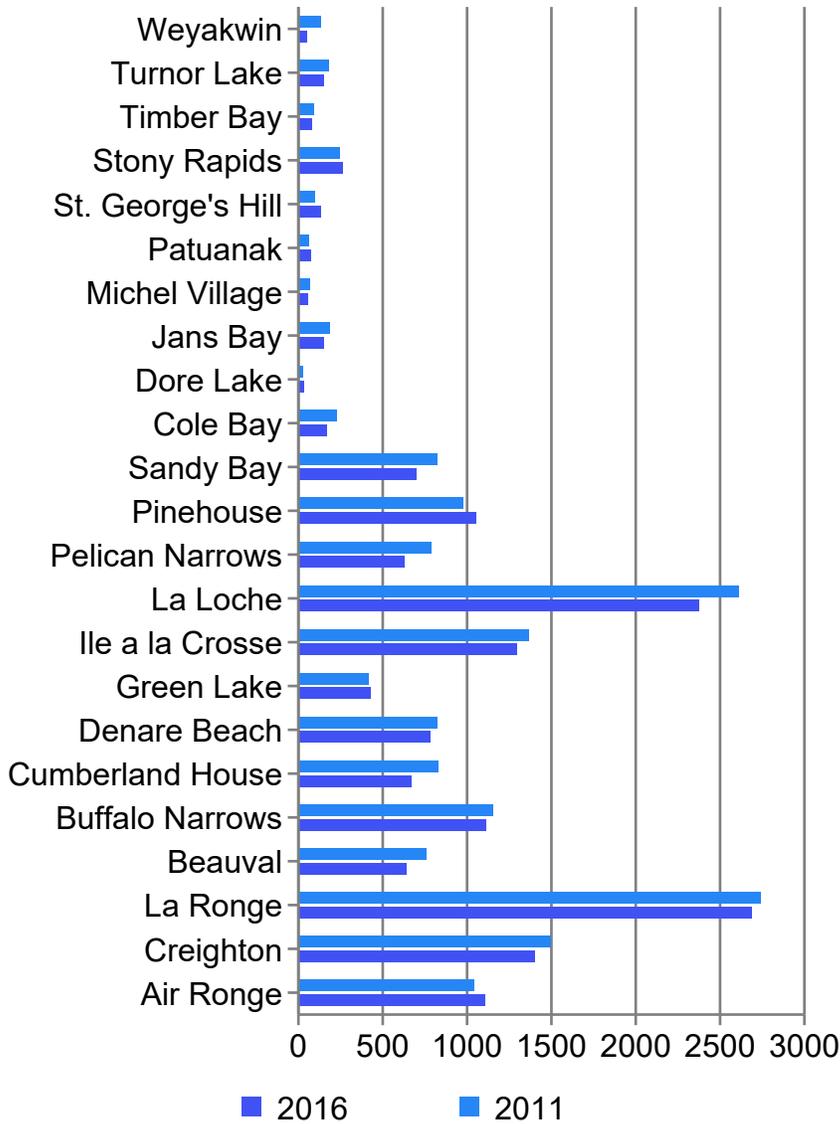
### **Why is the census important anyway?**

The 2016 census is the “base year” for determining allocations under a number of federal and provincial government grant streams. The federal Gas Tax program, for example, allocates around \$60 per capita each year to every community (it's proposal based, though; you don't automatically get it unfortunately). The northern municipalities' unconditional funding has a per capita component to it, as does the Northern Capital Grants Program (that one is also proposal-driven, darn it).

You can see straight away that a 7% drop in the “official” northern municipal population will see about \$70,000 less each year coming to the north in the Gas Tax's capital grants. That's significant when you look at which communities would be most affected: La Loche would lose \$24,000 annually, La Ronge about \$4,000, Creighton about \$6,000. For some smaller communities, given the compliance costs, the loss of half their Gas Tax funding would make the grant not even worth applying for.

For the per capita allocation under the Northern Revenue Sharing Program the story is a little more complicated. The NRS, as most of you know, is allocated based on the “actual cost” of delivering 4 essential municipal services (water and sewer, road maintenance, landfills, and general government), and a little cherry on top they call “Other Community Services.” The OCS is the per capita part, and it is

Census: 2011 versus 2016



|                   | 2016 | 2011 |
|-------------------|------|------|
| Air Ronge         | 1106 | 1043 |
| Creighton         | 1402 | 1498 |
| La Ronge          | 2688 | 2743 |
| Beauval           | 640  | 756  |
| Buffalo Narrows   | 1110 | 1153 |
| Cumberland House  | 671  | 831  |
| Denare Beach      | 779  | 820  |
| Green Lake        | 429  | 418  |
| Ile a la Crosse   | 1296 | 1365 |
| La Loche          | 2372 | 2611 |
| Pelican Narrows   | 630  | 790  |
| Pinehouse         | 1052 | 978  |
| Sandy Bay         | 697  | 824  |
| Cole Bay          | 170  | 230  |
| Dore Lake         | 30   | 28   |
| Jans Bay          | 152  | 187  |
| Michel Village    | 57   | 66   |
| Patuanak          | 73   | 64   |
| St. George's Hill | 131  | 100  |
| Stony Rapids      | 262  | 243  |
| Timber Bay        | 82   | 93   |
| Turnor Lake       | 149  | 179  |
| Weyakwin          | 49   | 135  |

arrived at by dividing up whatever is left over once the 4 pillars have been taken care of, and distributed based on each community's population. Because the northern municipal population has decreased—and assuming everything else stays equal—the per capita figure used to allocate the OCS portion to each community should actually go up. Simple math tells the story: let's say the OCS pool is \$3 million (and FYI: we have no idea what it is; it's just a number we're plucking out of the air). Under the 2011 population figure of 17,000, the per capita allocation would be around \$176. With a population of 16,000, the per capita would be \$186. For instance, with a community like La Ronge, even though their reported population has fallen by 70 people or so, their total OCS portion would, at least in theory, actually *increase* by about \$20,000 a year. For communities that have seen a larger than average decrease in their population, they will still see their OCS portion

fall, but not by as much as if the total population pool had increased (and, of course, none of those calculations take into account that other pillars might also use population figures, which just muddies things even further).

Of course, for the purposes of the NRS, government can use whatever formula they like to determine each municipality's allocation, and this includes choosing which population figures they'd like to use to distribute the OCS portion. It is only a matter of policy that government uses the census figures, but they could, in theory, allocate it based on any number of variables, such as the number of dogs running wild (with the downside of actually incentivizing communities to let their dogs run wild), the number of potatoes grown in any one year, or the number of men with beards. We call that one "the northern beard factor." 

## 2017 SUMA Wrap-Up Premier Gives Little Clue for What's to Come

SUMA Convention 2017 once again delivered something it somehow manages to do every year: the coldest weather of the season.

And so, after an early taste of Spring in January, the temperature plummeted just in time for the opening bell of Convention on February 5, and doubled-down during the 4 days of the event as the prairie winds sent delegates scrambling for extension cords and warmer frocks for the President's Banquet, although those two things were apparently mostly not related.

The turnout was up, perhaps because it was the beginning of the new term for elected officials, or perhaps because now, more than ever, people could sense the importance of coming together in force to talk about the big issues of the day, and maybe to get a glimpse of what might be coming their way.

To this extent, the Premier's Address to delegates on the first day was something of a disappointment, as little if anything was revealed by Mr Wall about what government has in mind for the provincial budget, other than "everything is on the table," a mantra we have been hearing, quite literally, since the last budget back in June 2016.

Instead, the Premier's address was all about trial balloons. And there were lots of those. In no particular order, we heard that the revenue sharing formula would be re-thought; that items previously excluded from the PST might be included in it; that Education Property Tax would "have to be looked at"; that public service salaries might need to be rolled back; that a "middle of the road" approach to dealing with the deficit of \$1.2 billion might be to fire 4900 workers in the health and education sectors.

And despite earlier referring to the budget as an "austerity budget," the Premier sought to clarify that this was not the same kind of austerity that the unemployed or struggling business owners were currently dealing with.

He was right about that, of course—although it was somewhat difficult to reconcile such talk with the firings government had already undertaken, or imposed, in health, education and different parts of its operations over the last year or so.

He also said that the carbon tax defied "prairie common sense," and praised the Prime Minister for his work in getting pipelines approved. There were a couple of acknowledgements of the struggles of the uranium industry, and praise for "the ongoing leadership we see at the local level in La Loche and in northern communities who face unspeakably difficult challenges on the part of their citizens."



**"B. Wall  
General Delivery,  
Swift Current,  
Saskatchewan."**

The Premier Brad Wall delivering his address at SUMA (photo by New North.)

### Education Sessions

SUMA is famous for bringing home the bacon when it comes to capacity building, and the education sessions scattered throughout were no exception. Delegates from the same communities figured out that it would be good idea to split up and report back on what they'd seen, which in the case of the Solid Waste session, wasn't much, because it was cancelled due to the byelection. The buzz going in on Sunday was all about the effect the byelection would have on the role and attendance of government employees, who are forbidden during such periods to do anything government-y, apparently, except for dressing sharply and standing around a lot and communicating with each other via beard vibrations.

Still, of the sessions we managed to catch, the Asset Management one, featuring the work of Shellbrook in mapping their road system, was pretty interesting, if you're into that sort of thing, although possibly more revealing for the relatively small amount of money they intend or need to spend on road upgrades over the next approximately million years than anything else.

In other happenings, The Northern Sector election saw Bobby Woods elected as the new northern SUMA representative, with Gerald Roy his alternate.

As expected, the resolutions session produced something related to carbon tax.

# Executive Meets with Harpauer

The new Minister of Government Relations is not really new anymore, but SUMA Convention was the first time a New North Executive has had a chance to meet with Hon. Donna Harpauer since she assumed the role back in August last year.

With so much to talk about, and so little time, the discussion moved briskly through northern revenue sharing, the NSEQC, and sundry other items, before it was time for the minister to race out into the main hall to deliver her address to delegates.

Hopefully the minister will have time in her calendar to come to our AGM in June. In the meantime, it was nice to have finally had a chance to take the minister's temperature, so to speak, on a whole range of issues, and to get a photo of Donna with a couple of good looking guys—although Robert and Keith were all we could rustle up at the time!



**Robert St. Pierre, Minister Harpauer, and Keith Laprise, at SUMA this year.**

## About that SUMA-New North MOU ...

Back in 1999, New North was, apparently, going around signing all sorts of MOUs—or Memorandums of Understanding. This makes complete sense: as a new organization, it was important for New North to establish formal relationships with other organizations.

One of those organizations was SUMA. The MOU New North signed with SUMA recognized that there is a bit of overlap between the mandates and mission statements of each organization, so it was important for them and us to “clarify [our] roles and responsibilities in relation to one another.”

The terms of reference of the MOU outline how each association can work together to achieve the goal of making the life of northern residents a little bit better. Some of those terms of reference are still very relevant today: for example, it's more important than ever to for each association work together to lobby federal and provincial

governments; and it's still very important for us to help build each others' capacity when it comes to communicating with the membership.

Not all SUMA members are New North members, though. With that in mind, one of the terms of reference has allowed non-SUMA members who are New North members (namely, the Hamlets) to access SUMA benefits via a service agreement New North has with SUMA. Under this agreement, the Hamlets have most of the benefits of being actual members—like cheaper hotels, Groups Benefit Program, the newsletter and the Urban Voice.

However, this agreement does not make the Hamlets full SUMA members, and so they cannot vote on resolutions or at sector meetings.

If you want to see what the SUMA-New North MOU looks like, go to our website, where you'll find a link.

## Did You Pass Your Code of Ethics Bylaw?

February 23<sup>rd</sup> was the date that councils needed to pass their Code of Ethics bylaws. If this is news to you, then make sure you ask your administrators about it, since they have been sent samples of what such a thing might look like. Weyakwin, we are reliably informed, has a pretty good one you could look at, too.

At a minimum the Code of Ethics has to include how members will act when dealing with members of council, municipal employees, and the public, and a process to deal with contraventions of the Code of Ethics. That's the minimum.

## FROM THE CEO

**MATT HELEY**

It is well-known that the Premier, Brad Wall, has a very good sense of humour, especially about himself: in his address to delegates at SUMA he gave one particularly important piece of advice to the newly elected: stay off Twitter.

He was perhaps referring to any one of his infamous Twitter battles over the years, one of which was with renowned Canadian left-wing intellectual Naomi Klein.

Although that battle with Klein was about climate change policies, he might also, if given the opportunity, take issue with her notion of how governments often use fiscal or other crises to push through other-wise unpopular and untenable economic policies that seem more about ideology than economics.

Klein refers to this as the “shock doctrine,” and she popularized it in her book of that name released in 2008.

We haven’t seen the budget yet, so we don’t know if the government will go “shock doctrine” on us or not. The current discourse of “transformational change” comes as close to shock doctrine, Saskatchewan-style, as we are likely to get.

On the table so far are the privatization of Sasktel, the radical reforming of educational

governance, and the merging of all the health regions into one.

We might also see, if the Premier is to be believed, changes to PST, revenue sharing and Education Property Tax, just to name a few.

Would any of these have been possible or even thinkable had we not been looking at such a massive budget deficit?

We might argue that none of them would have been needed had the bottom not dropped out of the resource sector.

But then this is where some people see the disconnect: the government has repeatedly said the reforms to education and health are not about the money. In other words, although reforms in these sectors—which may still involve wage roll-backs and lay-offs—are not fiscally-motivated, it is the fiscal situation of the province that has made them possible, even palatable, to the public.

Of course, the selling of Sasktel—which the government says it won’t do unless it gets a good deal—is all about the money. But it is also entirely a red-herring. Not only would it lead to higher phone bills and worse service for Saskatchewan residents, it’d spell political trouble for the SaskParty, at least for now. Government may or may not be going full shock-doctrine, Saskatchewan-style, but they’re not crazy.

**About New North ...**

Since 1996 New North has been the voice of the municipalities of Northern Saskatchewan. Our goal, as defined by our mission statement, is to advocate, negotiate and initiate improvements in well-being of the residents of the Northern Saskatchewan Administrative District. Organized on the basis of strength through unity, New North partners with all northern stakeholders, from government and non-government agencies, associations and First Nations, to enhance the quality of life, create opportunities and build better futures, for the people of the north.

**New North Executive**

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Mayor Gord Stomp (Treasurer)  
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