



**ANNUAL**

**REPORT**

2023

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# ABOUT US

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AEL Advocacy is a public interest law practice and not-for-profit organization operating remotely out of Ontario. We are Canada's first and only intersectional animal and environmental law organization, providing free legal advice and representation to clients in Ontario who would otherwise be unable to afford legal assistance.

## Our Vision

A legal system that recognizes the interdependence of humans, animals, and the environment.

## Our Mission

AEL Advocacy is committed to breaking down barriers to justice for a more compassionate and sustainable society. We focus on three core areas:



**ADVOCACY:** Utilizing our legal expertise to bolster individuals, communities, and organizations striving to safeguard animals and their habitats.



**EDUCATION:** Raising awareness of animal and environmental law issues through accessible public legal education initiatives and resources.



**LAW REFORM:** Engaging with policymakers, government agencies, and stakeholders to shape progressive laws and policies that protect animals and the environments where they live.

# A LETTER FROM OUR CO-DIRECTORS

Dear friends and supporters,

As we reflect on the past year, we are thrilled to share with you the impactful strides AEL Advocacy has made in advancing our mission to create a more compassionate and sustainable society.

Your unwavering commitment has enabled us to deliver accessible legal services to individuals and communities across Ontario, empowering them to assert their rights in matters of animal and environmental protection. Your support has also facilitated our collaboration with policymakers, government agencies, and stakeholders as we work towards instigating positive change through law reform.

Through your generosity, we've developed and shared accessible resources, empowered advocates at various levels, and successfully increased awareness of intersectional animal and environmental law issues.

As we continue to tackle access to justice in animal and environmental law, we're thrilled to announce that, in 2023, we received a LUSH Charity Pot Grant to support our free Animal and Environmental Law Inquiry Service. Through this service, we provide up to two hours of summary legal assistance to help members of the public understand and navigate their legal issues. A portion of the funds provides freelance opportunities for law students, engaging them in these specialized areas of law early in their careers.

Moving forward, our commitment to a legal system that recognizes the interconnectedness of humans, animals and the environment remains steadfast. Your continued support will play a pivotal role in overcoming challenges and fostering a harmonious, sustainable future for all.

Sincerely,



*K Berkeley*  
**Kira Berkeley**  
Co-Director and Counsel



*K Roussel*  
**Krystal-Anne Roussel**  
Co-Director and Counsel





# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2023

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## ADVOCATING FOR STRONGER ANIMAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION LAWS

In 2023, we were active in engaging the public and the government through our advocacy efforts, including:

### DEFENDING ANIMALS AGAINST INHUMANE PRACTICES

We took a bold stand against the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's proposal to issue licenses for new train and trial areas in Ontario. These are areas where wildlife are kept captive for the purposes of training dogs for hunting and conducting hunting dog competitions. We submitted comments urging the Ministry to withdraw the proposal and proceed with the initial plan to phase out Train and Trial Areas due to the negative impacts it has on wildlife and their habitats and the inhumane and unethical nature of the hunting practice.

### SHAPING CANADA'S BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

In response to the Government of Canada's call for input to guide them in developing a national biodiversity strategy, AEL Advocacy provided crucial recommendations. Our input emphasized the interconnected well-being of humans, animals, and the environment, ensuring a comprehensive approach in shaping the 2030 National Biodiversity Strategy.

## ENDING THE TRADE OF ELEPHANT IVORY AND RHINO HORN

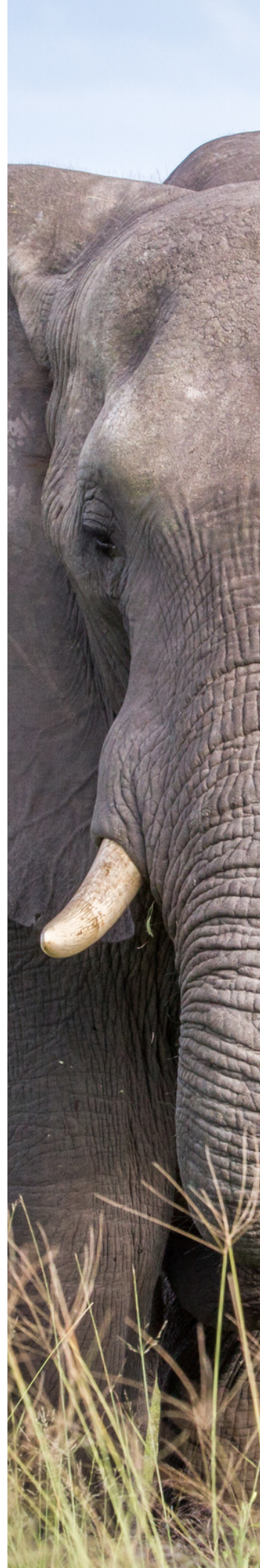
AEL Advocacy rallied behind Canada's initiative to amend the Wild Animal and Plant Trade Regulations to prohibit the elephant ivory and rhino horn trade. We submitted comments calling for swift implementation accompanied by robust monitoring, auditing, and enforcement measures. In a landmark decision in November 2023, the Government of Canada officially passed the amendments, banning the import and export of hunting trophies containing elephant tusks or rhino horns. The changes are set to come into effect on January 8th, 2024.

## RESISTING AG-GAG LEGISLATION

Standing firm in our commitment to transparency in our food system, we opposed Bill C-275, a federal ag-gag style bill, by submitting a brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. Our comments emphasized the potential negative impacts on transparency, animal welfare, environmental sustainability, human and animal health, and constitutional rights, urging the committee to abandon the bill entirely. Additionally, AEL Advocacy stood alongside Animal Justice, Jessica Scott-Reid, and Louise Jorgensen in challenging Ontario's ag-gag law, by participating in a rally of animal advocates dedicated to voicing concerns for those who cannot speak for themselves.

## PUSHING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LAW REFORM IN ANIMAL AGRICULTURE

In our quest to address the profound environmental consequences of factory farming, AEL Advocacy conducted a groundbreaking legislative review of pertinent Canadian and international laws. This comprehensive analysis, encapsulated in the report titled "[Animal Agriculture and Environmental Protection: A Multi-Jurisdictional Legislative Review](#)" included recommendations for legislative and policy reforms to better







address the environmental impacts of animal agriculture. An [in-depth article](#) about our report was published in the National, a Canadian Bar Association publication. We also co-hosted a [webinar](#) with World Animal Protection about the report, which was attended by government representatives, lawyers, animal and environmental groups, and rural residents fighting the expansion of factory farming in their communities.

## **FIGHTING FOR TRANSPARENCY IN OUR FOOD SYSTEM**

In our unyielding pursuit of a transparent food system that prioritizes the well-being of animals, people, and the planet, AEL Advocacy made impactful strides:

### **EXPOSING GREENWASHING BY THE CANADIAN CATTLE ASSOCIATION**

AEL Advocacy took a decisive stand against false sustainability claims made by the Canadian Cattle Association. Filing a false advertising complaint, we called for accountability and transparency in addressing misleading assertions about the environmental impact of beef, urging Ad Standards to retract these deceptive advertisements.



## UNMASKING DECEPTION BY CHICKEN FARMERS CANADA

Challenging deceptive health and welfare claims by Chicken Farmers Canada, we filed a false advertising complaint against their ads on Reddit. AEL Advocacy exposed the disparity between their claims and actual practices, advocating for the withdrawal of these misleading ads to protect health and ethics-conscious consumers.

## HOLDING POWER TO ACCOUNT IN ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT

To ensure the effectiveness of environmental protection laws in Ontario's animal agriculture sector, AEL Advocacy submitted a freedom of information request with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks. Our forthcoming report in early 2024 will unveil the findings, holding authorities accountable for the enforcement of critical laws safeguarding our environment.

## Enhancing Access to Justice in Animal and Environmental Law

At the heart of AEL Advocacy's mission is an unwavering commitment to forge a legal landscape that is accessible and just. Our tireless pursuit of this vision takes shape through various initiatives:

### THE ANIMAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL LAW INQUIRY SERVICE

In February 2023, AEL Advocacy launched our free Animal and Environmental Law Inquiry Service to address the demand for accessible legal support. This service empowers individuals, communities, and organizations in Ontario by offering up to two hours of summary legal assistance to navigate animal and environmental protection-related issues. Our legal team, responding to diverse inquiries on topics such as humanewashing/greenwashing, pet custody disputes, land-



**“Providing individuals, communities, and organizations with the essential knowledge and tools to champion the cause of animals and the environment is more than a goal; it's a pivotal step towards our vision of a world where every voice, human and non-human, is heard and respected.”**

- Kira Berkeley, Co-Director and Counsel, AEL Advocacy





use planning, and ag-gag laws, provided dozens of hours of free summary advice in 2023.

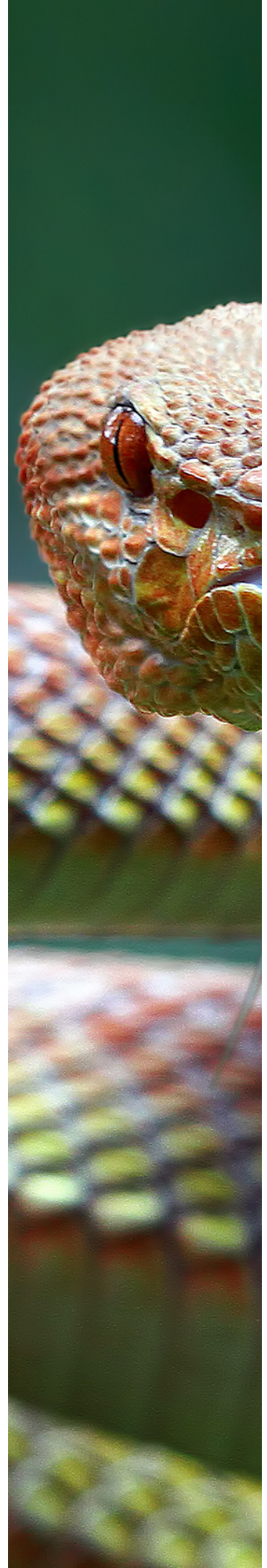
Through our receipt of a LUSH Charity Pot Grant, we were able to expand our core capacity to handle inquiries, spread awareness of the service, and increase the volume of inquiries received each month. A portion of the funds provides freelance opportunities for law students, engaging them in these specialized areas of law early in their careers.

### LEGAL REPRESENTATION

We extended free legal representation to clients in Ontario who would otherwise be unable to afford legal assistance. A notable example includes representing a member of Attawapiskat First Nation in filing a complaint with the United Nations Human Rights Council to expose Canada's persistent violations of fundamental rights to safe drinking water and sanitation in his community.

### LEGAL RESEARCH AND CONSULTING SERVICES

This year, we provided crucial legal consulting services to non-profit organizations and businesses dedicated to animal and environmental protection. Our efforts included providing essential support in scrutinizing the regulatory framework governing the reptile and amphibian trade, aiming to uncover how industry stakeholders sidestep existing regulations and spotlight potential weaknesses in the current legal system. Additionally, we conducted essential legal research on the applicability of the precautionary principle in relation to the impact of plastic pollution on wildlife.



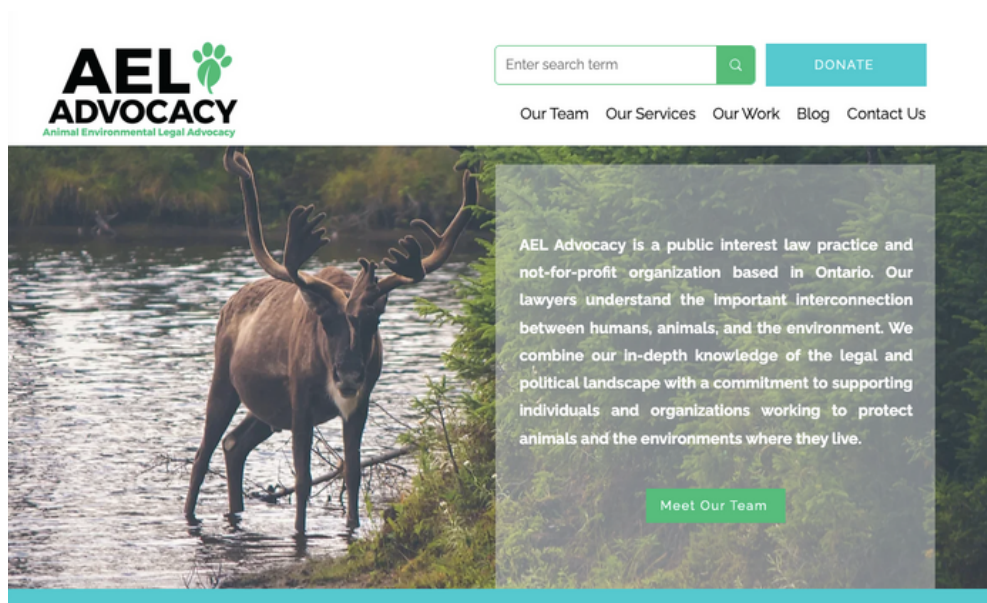


## Providing Accessible Public Legal Education

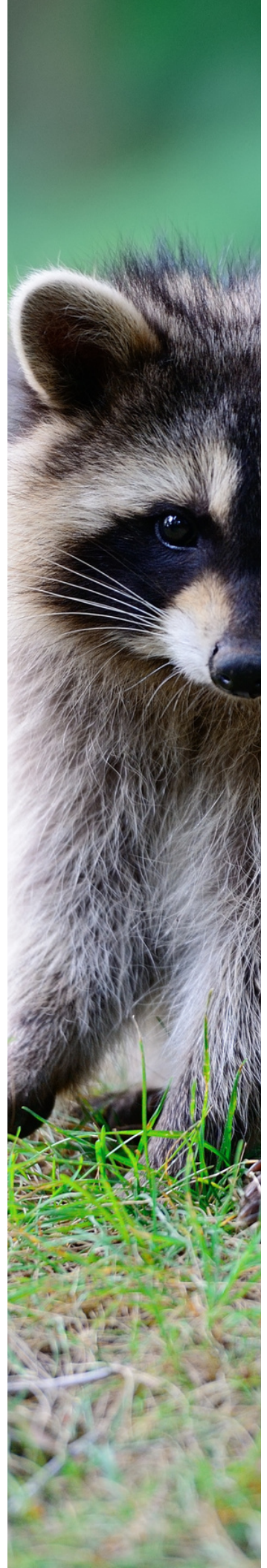
One of AEL Advocacy's main goals is to provide members of the public with access to the tools and resources they need to understand the law and exercise their legal rights. In 2023, we helped individuals and organizations by making legal information readily available through several different platforms, including:

### OUR WEBSITE AND BLOG

Our website provides a central place to browse our services, read about our passionate team members, follow our upcoming events, access our reports and publications, and donate to our organization.



The website is also home to our blog, which is designed to provide the public with brief snapshots of legal issues and updates on animal and environmental law topics. AEL Advocacy is proud to give students and aspiring animal lawyers an outlet to share their voice and knowledge on these topics by allowing them to be guest authors on our blog.



Some topics we covered in 2023 include:

- AEL Advocacy Opposes Ontario's Proposal to Issue New Licences for Panned Dog Hunting (By: Kira Berkeley);
- Combatting Climate Change Through Diet Change: Is Canada Doing Enough? (By: Charles Carter); and
- AEL Advocacy's Recommendations for Canada's 2030 National Biodiversity Framework (By: Krystal-Anne Roussel).

Visit our blog at: [www.aeladvocacy.ca/blog](http://www.aeladvocacy.ca/blog)

## NEWSLETTER

AEL Advocacy's Newsletter keeps members of the public up-to-date on current animal and environmental law issues by promoting our law reform campaigns, upcoming events, activities, and website content.

Subscribe to our newsletter at: [www.aeladvocacy.ca/subscribe](http://www.aeladvocacy.ca/subscribe)

## WEBINARS AND PRESENTATIONS

In 2023, AEL Advocacy hosted free webinars and presentations to educate the public on various topics in animal and environmental law, and provide important





information about the legal options available to address various animal or environmental law concerns. This year, we co-hosted a webinar with World Animal Protection Canada about our newly published report, "[Animal Agriculture and Environmental Protection: A Multi-Jurisdictional Legislative Review](#)." We also presented at the 5th annual Canadian Animal Law Conference at the University of Toronto, where we explained how to use existing environmental laws to tackle factory farming. We were also invited to provide a guest lecture on this topic at the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Law.

All of our webinars and past presentations are available for free on our website at: [www.aeladvocacy.ca/past-presentations](http://www.aeladvocacy.ca/past-presentations)

## SOCIAL MEDIA

AEL Advocacy used social media to get information about current animal and environmental law issues to as many people as possible. This year, AEL Advocacy continued to focus on growing our reach across social media platforms. We reached 143 followers on Facebook, 131 on X (formerly Twitter), 252 on LinkedIn, and 349 on Instagram. Our YouTube channel also provides easy access to recordings of our past webinars and presentations, as well as an informative video about the work AEL Advocacy engages in.

Follow us: @aeladvocacy

**843 LIKES**



**875 FOLLOWERS**



**781 UNIQUE  
WEBSITE  
VISITORS**





## **TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ANIMAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL LAW LAWYERS**

In 2023, AEL Advocacy took significant strides in nurturing the next generation of legal professionals committed to protecting animals, people, and the planet. We proudly welcomed our first summer student, Charles Carter, through a student-proposed internship at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law. This initiative not only provided valuable hands-on experience for a budding legal mind but also enriched our organization with fresh perspectives and insights. Due to the high level of interest we received for this internship opportunity, we have secured eager and passionate students for the upcoming academic semester and summer of 2024.

Moreover, through the generous support of a LUSH Charity Pot Grant, we were able to bring aboard 11 freelance law students to assist with our Animal and Environmental Law Inquiry Service. These students play a pivotal role in conducting essential legal research, expanding the reach and impact of our services. This not only provides practical experience for aspiring lawyers but also enhances our ability to address the diverse legal challenges facing animals and the environment.

At AEL Advocacy, we recognize the significance of mentorship and guidance in shaping the future of animal and environmental law. By investing in and training the next generation, we are not only fostering a legacy of compassion and advocacy but also ensuring a sustainable and impactful continuation of our mission.



# 2023 FINANCIALS\*

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| REVENUE                                     | EXPENSES   | IN KIND CONTRIBUTIONS   |
|---|--|---|
| Grants: \$11,962.45<br>Donations: \$1001.84 | Bank charges: \$36.46<br>Office Expenses: \$46.07<br>Website \$22.59<br>Professional Development:<br>\$452.00<br>Account & Bookkeeping:<br>\$696.09<br>Advertising: \$238.09<br>Travel & Accommodations:<br>\$358.14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pro Bono Legal Services</li> <li>• Google Workspace Grant</li> <li>• Google Ads Grant</li> <li>• Volunteer Services</li> </ul> |
| <b>GROSS PROFIT:</b><br><b>\$12,964.29</b>  | <b>TOTAL EXPENSES:</b><br><b>\$1,849.44</b>  | <b>TOTAL EQUITY:</b><br><b>\$15,896.59</b>  |

\* These 2023 financials are informal approximations

**“AEL Advocacy has come into existence at a time when the interconnectedness and importance of issues related to environmental protection and animal health and well-being are clearer than ever. Their legal team played a pivotal role in Animal Justice's participation in a Federal Court case about Canada's approach to tackling the plastic pollution crisis that kills millions of animals around the world each year and has a devastating impact on ecosystems throughout the country. I look forward to partnering with their strong legal team in future cases.”**

- Kaitlyn Mitchell, Director of Legal Advocacy, Animal Justice







# THANK YOU

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AEL Advocacy is deeply grateful for the work of our dedicated staff, Board of Directors and volunteers, and for the financial contributions of our supporters and funders. Each of you plays such an important role in helping us carry out our mission.

## Our Co-Directors

Kira Berkeley  
Krystal-Anne Roussel

## Our Board

Kira Berkeley  
Krystal-Anne Roussel  
Richelle Martin

## Volunteers

Emma Peckham  
Kirsten Marsh  
Joseph Kim  
Russell Berkeley  
Tyler Hodgkinson  
Shannon Nickerson

## Grant Funders

LUSH

## Summer Student Intern

Charles Carter

## Freelancers

Adam Clasky  
Nada Ibrahim  
Naxi Aze  
Samuel Gruppuso  
Mari Lehoux  
Ana Featherston-Rajcic  
Oscar Li  
Mark Snyder Jr.  
Laura Casciaro  
Olena Stevenson

## We Still Need You

### Amplify our work on social media

You can find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn as @aeladvocacy

### Become a monthly donor

Your donation will help us secure legal protections for animals and the environments where they live. Learn more at [aeladvocacy.ca/donate](https://aeladvocacy.ca/donate)



**AEL Advocacy**

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