



**Stephenville—Port aux Basques
Regional Council
of the
Rural Secretariat
Executive Council**

Annual Activity Report 2011-12



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1. OVERVIEW OF THE REGION

The 2011 Census population for Stephenville - Port aux Basques Rural Secretariat Region was 29,887. This represents a decline of 3.5 percent since 2006. Over the same period, the entire province experienced a population increase of 1.8 percent since 2006 (514,536 in 2011, up from 505,470).

The 2007 income for every man, woman, and child (personal income per capita) in Stephenville - Port aux Basques Rural Secretariat Region was \$20,400. For the province, personal income per capita was \$24,900. After tax personal income per capita, adjusted for inflation, was \$14,000 for Stephenville - Port aux Basques Rural Secretariat Region in 2007. For the province it was \$16,400.

The 2007 self-reliance ratio for Stephenville - Port aux Basques Rural Secretariat Region was 68.5 percent. This is a measure of the community's dependency on government transfers such as: Canada Pension, Old Age Security, Employment Insurance, Income Support Assistance, etc. The higher the percentage of income that comes from transfers the lower the self-reliance ratio. The provincial self-reliance ratio for 2006 was 79.4 percent.

The unemployment rate for May 2006 for people aged 15 and older was 29.3 percent. The provincial unemployment rate was 18.6 percent. The employment rate for the entire year 2005 for those aged 15 and older was 54.2 percent. The provincial employment rate for the same period was 63.3 percent.

The number of individuals in Stephenville - Port aux Basques Rural Secretariat Region who received Income Support Assistance at some point in the year 2010 was 5,055. The 1991 figure was 9,950.

Census 2006 reported 34.7 percent of people 18 to 64 years of age in Stephenville - Port aux Basques Rural Secretariat Region do not have a high school diploma compared to 25.1 percent of people in the entire province. About 65.3 percent of people in the region aged 18 to 64 had at least a High School diploma in 2006 compared to 74.9 percent in the province as a whole. Approximately 8.5 percent of those people aged 18 to 64 had a Bachelor's Degree or higher in 2006 compared to 13.3 percent in the province as a whole.

A major indicator of well-being is how a person rates their own health status. In 2009-2010, 53.7 percent (+/-5.2 percent) of individuals in Stephenville - Port aux Basques Rural Secretariat Region rated their health status from very good to excellent. The provincial number in 2009-2010 was 60.1 percent (+/-1.6 percent). In 2009-2010, for Canada, 60.2 percent (+/-0.3 percent) of individuals age 12 and over rated their health status as very good to excellent.

Additional information, including gender-specific information and information for other levels of geography, can be found at www.communityaccounts.ca and www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural.

2. REGIONAL COUNCIL OVERVIEW

The Stephenville - Port aux Basques Regional Council is comprised of eight members; four female and four male, with representation from both larger and smaller communities across region. In 2011-12, the council met three times.

The council does not have a budget and, as such, an audited financial statement is not required in this report. Meetings of the council and associated costs are funded through the budget of the Rural Secretariat.

The Rural Secretariat also funds a regional planner position, who among other duties, facilitates the work of the council and acts as an information resource. The planner for the Stephenville – Port aux Basques region is Kim Olson. She started her position with the Rural Secretariat in January 2012, prior to which the position had been vacant since July 2011. Her office is located within the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development in Stephenville.

Regional Council members	Community
Eric Legge	Cartyville
Calvin White	Flat Bay
Dianna Kung	Stephenville
Marlene Farrell	St. George's
Rosa Dollard	Stephenville
Morley Greening	McKay's
Walter Murphy	St. George's
Aneitha Sheaves	Channel-Port aux Basques

* For an updated listing of council members please visit http://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/regional_councils/council.html#spab

3. MANDATE

The Stephenville – Port aux Basques Regional Council's mandate is:

- To develop a common, evidence-based understanding of the social, economic, environmental and cultural realities facing a region.
- To review key economic and social measures (e.g. education levels, demographic trends, health status, income levels, EI usage, economic diversity, etc) and to reach agreement on the priorities for change over the next five years.
- To identify policies and programs which either a) advance b) negatively impact or c) need to be developed to encourage the necessary change over the five-year period.
- To advance regional cooperation through the sharing of information on and discussion about the economic and social measures, and to encourage regional partners to take action on and be accountable for those areas within their mandates.
- To serve as a sounding board in their region for new or proposed initiatives.
- To select an individual to represent the region on the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat.

4. LINES OF BUSINESS

The Stephenville – Port aux Basques Regional Council supports the Rural Secretariat’s four lines of business:

Citizen-based policy advice: The Rural Secretariat supports nine citizen-based Regional Councils, and one stakeholder-based Provincial Council, to develop policy and decision-making advice for submission to government. Typically, councils, with the support of Rural Secretariat staff, hold public engagement sessions involving citizens and/or stakeholder group representatives, and conduct community-based research activities, to inform the development of advice documents.

Collaboration: The Rural Secretariat understands that collaboration is critical for sustainability in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. The Rural Secretariat works to support existing rural collaborative processes such as partnerships. Other times they work to help convene new regional collaborative processes such as networks or alliances. The broad goal is to help build a strengthened ‘culture of collaboration’ in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Research: The Rural Secretariat collaborates with provincial partners on a number of formal research endeavors that help to improve understanding of the challenges facing, and opportunities available to, rural regions of this province. The Rural Secretariat also works directly with regional partners and councils on a host of community-based research initiatives – small regional-level data-gathering efforts that give those involved the information and knowledge they need to effectively advise the Provincial Government on regional and rural policy issues.

Public dialogue and engagement: In addition to supporting councils to conduct public engagement efforts, the Rural Secretariat is also available to assist other Provincial Government departments to design and deliver their own public engagement initiatives. The Rural Secretariat also periodically convenes special deliberative dialogue initiatives on themes deemed to be of particular importance to the rural sustainability of this province, often in partnership with rural stakeholder groups and other government departments.

5. VALUES

The core values explain the character of the organization. The core values of the Rural Secretariat are as follows:

Collaboration: We are committed to building a culture of collaboration within Newfoundland and Labrador and beyond

Creativity/innovation:	We strive to transcend traditional ideas, rules, and patterns, and to work together to create new ideas, relationships, and approaches
Inclusion:	We acknowledge difference and cherish the views and perspectives of all. We take steps to ensure all have an opportunity to express their views
Learning culture:	We accept that we have a lot to learn and relish the opportunity to learn more
Participation/engagement:	We believe citizen/stakeholder/community engagement is essential to the development of good public policy
Teamwork:	We provide support to one another, work co-operatively, respect differing views and strive to make our work environments safe and enjoyable
Honesty:	We are open and honest in all our dealings and maintain the highest integrity at all times
Excellence:	We strive for excellence and quality in everything we do

6. PRIMARY CLIENTS

The Rural Secretariat has two primary client groups: clients within the Provincial Government (departments and agencies) and clients external to government (citizens, nine Regional Councils, one Provincial Council, community and regional organizations, and stakeholder groups). It supports and brokers collaborative relationships between each of these primary client groups.

The primary clients of the Stephenville – Port aux Basques Regional Council include the Rural Secretariat, the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat, and departments and agencies within the Provincial Government, among others.

7. VISION

The Stephenville – Port Aux Basques Regional Council supports the vision of the Rural Secretariat:

Vibrant rural regions and communities where collaborative organizations and engaged and informed citizens work closely with governments to advance rural sustainability.

Through its work, the council is identifying priorities that contribute to regional sustainability which considers economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects.

8. MISSION

The Stephenville – Port Aux Basques Regional Council supports the mission of the Rural Secretariat:

By March 31, 2017, the Rural Secretariat will have worked with regional and departmental partners to improve the sustainability prospects of rural communities and regions.

The Stephenville – Port-aux-Basques Regional Council agrees with the mission of the Rural Secretariat and strives to support it by providing advice to the Provincial Government on issues affecting the region.

9. REPORT ON PERFORMANCE

In its 2011-14 Activity Plan, the council identified one objective: to provide ongoing advice to the Provincial Government on issues that affect the region, developed in consideration of the Provincial Government's strategic directions (Appendix A). In the three years covered by the plan, the Regional Council will focus their efforts on providing policy advice to the Provincial Government on issues related to regional sustainability. In light of the strategic directions of the Provincial Government, the council will utilize a combination of collaborative tools including, but not limited to, citizen engagement and community-based research to help form and corroborate their submissions.

The identified measures and indicators will be used to monitor progress. The council will report on the same objective for each year in the 2011-14 planning cycle.

9.1 Issue: Provide Advice to Government

The Stephenville – Port aux Basques Regional Council believes that access to health care and associated services is crucial to long-term sustainability of the region and well-being of residents within.

In rural areas of the province residents are often left travelling to access specialized services such as radiation treatment as they are not provided within the region (i.e., residents in Stephenville have to travel 770 kilometres to St. John's for radiation treatment). This places increased pressure on individuals and communities, who are left coordinating the associated travel logistics, including expenses. In order to have equal access to health care across the province, a comprehensive and user-friendly strategy is required assist all residents, no matter their geographical location, to access essential services with minimal out-of-pocket costs.

Objective: By March 31, 2012 council will have provided advice to the Provincial Government on issues that relate to regional sustainability.

Measure: Provided advice

Indicators	Accomplishments
Issue Identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At a council meeting on February 7, 2012, council members identified issues of interest by using the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Has potential to positively impact regional sustainability. ○ Is relevant to residents across the region. ○ Is within the Provincial Government’s jurisdiction. ○ Is a timely issue to pursue. ○ Is not being covered by another organization. • At the February 7, 2012 meeting, council members identified issues through a brainstorming process on issues they had witnessed in the region. Those identified include: outmigration (youth and workers), tourism (infrastructure, attractions, collective marketing), education (curriculum), health (staffing, access to primary health care and specialized treatment (particularly radiation therapy)), and community volunteerism (decreasing volunteerism, impact of volunteerism in the region). Each issues was discussed with respect to the above mentioned criteria, this was followed by an exercise which allowed members to vote on their top three issues. Of the issues presented; access to health care, specifically specialized health care, had the most votes and was thus identified as the focus issue for 2011-12.
Researched issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the meeting on February 7, Kim Olson (Regional Partnership Planner) conducted preliminary research on access to health care in the region (through an on-line literature review), and also made initial

Indicators	Accomplishments
	<p>contact with key interest groups including Western Health and the Department of Health and Community Services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A council meeting was held on March 28, 2012. For this meeting a guest speak from Western Health had planned to present on health care in the region, however due to unforeseen circumstances they had to cancel. In lieu of this presentation, Kim Olson presented the results of her preliminary findings. This included a literature review on specialized health care services available to residents in the region such as infrastructure and travel assistance, in addition to wait times for accessing treatment.
<p>Consensus developed on advice to Government</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the March 28 council meeting, members viewed Kim Olson’s presentation. Following the presentation they asked questions, reviewed documents on the subject matter, discussed strengths and weaknesses surrounding the issue of access to specialized health care in the region, and reached consensus on policy options or possible solutions to the identified issues. • The Regional Council’s work is enabled by the Regional Partnership Planner position, which was vacant until January 2012. Due to the limited timeframe of the council to develop and submit their policy advice (required by March 31, 2012), the council focused specifically on the provincial Medical Transportation Assistance Program (MTAP), of which detailed information was available online and through communication with the Department of Health and Community Services. The council reviewed MTAP and discussed possible ways in which the system could be improved.

Indicators	Accomplishments
Communicated advice to Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The council opted to write a letter based on their preliminary research. This was distributed to the Minister of Health and Community Services and the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Rural Secretariat. Included in this letter was an invitation to the respective departments to discuss the findings and issues presented by the council. A letter was selected over a larger research report, due to the tight three-month time frame in which the council was working. The council plans on continuing their work related health care in the region, and expand the efforts by conducting a more in-depth study using tools such as community-based research and citizen engagement.

Discussion of Results:

The Stephenville – Port aux Basques Regional Council recognizes the importance of accessing specialized health care services such as radiation treatment. While there is a system in place that provides travel assistance to residents in the province who must leave their community to access essential health services, the program (Medical Travel Assistance Program) is not well known in the region. Regionally, the council feels efforts need to be made to improve access to health care. The council was pleased that the Medical Travel Assistance Program is in place, but feels it could be improved to better assist residents in more remote communities in the region.

10. ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

The Stephenville-Port aux Basques Regional Council aims to provide input and advice to the Provincial Government on long-term opportunities and challenges facing the region. The council strives to be a regional voice for citizens in the region, identifying key economic, social, cultural, and environmental issues crucial to sustainability. This is a long-term process that will require ongoing collaboration with citizens, stakeholders and interests in the region.

In addition to the points raised in Section 9, an additional highlight is worthy of mention. This is consistent with the Provincial Government’s strategic directions for the Rural Secretariat and council’s mandate, and will serve to inform the work of the council.

- In January 2012, council members attended a Regional Council Renewal and Orientation meeting where Fire and Emergency Services (FES-NL), a government agency, partnered with the Rural Secretariat and asked council members to deliberate and provide advice on the topic of 911 in the province. FES-NL is tasked to prepare citizens, communities, partners and

governments to deal with, respond to and recover from fire, emergencies, and disasters. Participants, asked to discuss the feasibility of expanding 911 services throughout the province, provided their input based on their regional perspectives. Councils were pleased to be asked their opinions and would be willing to participate in similar engagements in the future.

11. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

As the nature of the work of the council is broad-based and long-term in nature, the challenges and opportunities faced by the council remain fairly similar from year to year. It feels that these challenges and opportunities can be categorized along three themes.

Provision of Policy Advice to government

The council's mandate commits it to reaching consensus on the priorities for change in its region and to identifying policies and programs to encourage desired change. The challenge for council, given the range of issues, perspectives, interests and needs within its region, is to reach consensus on priorities for change and on policy advice to provide to the Provincial Government. The opportunity for council is to position itself as an objective, informed and influential advisory body within the region that can both provide informed bottom-up policy advice to government as well as respond to top-down policy level requests from government that may impact on the region.

Regional collaboration

The council's mandate commits it to sharing information, advancing regional cooperation and to encouraging regional partners to more actively participate on matters that can advance regional sustainability. The challenge for council is to position itself as an objective, informed and influential advisory body within the region that can advance collaboration. There are two opportunities for council. First, it can position itself as a broad-based and cross-sectoral advisory body that can lead, participate and/or support regional collaboration across a range of sectors, communities and interests. Second, as a broad-based advisory body, it can identify the various supports necessary to foster collaboration and be a conduit for advice to the Provincial Government to advance efforts.

Regional communications

The council understands that a range of non-governmental organizations in rural areas provide advice to the Provincial Government on a range of policy matters. In large part, these organizations are focused on particular agendas, needs and interests, among others, regional economic development, environmental awareness and protection, social policy advancement and municipal governance. The challenge for it is to clearly and effectively communicate its mandate and role to other regional stakeholders and interests, and to position itself as an

objective, informed and influential advisory body that can assist other stakeholders. The opportunity for it, through new and strengthened relationships with regional stakeholders, is to ensure that a broad range of perspectives are considered as it identifies regional priorities, provides advice to government and fosters collaboration.

APPENDIX A: STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Strategic Directions

1. **Title:** Rural Newfoundland and Labrador

Outcome Statement: A sustainable rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

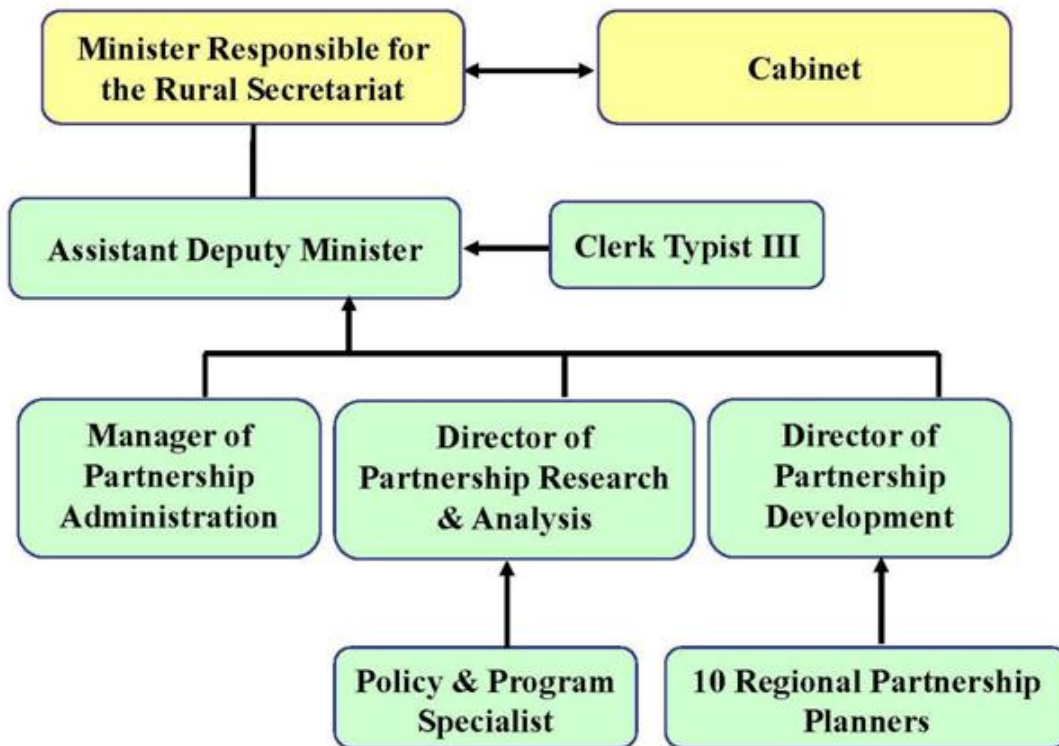
Clarifying Statement: This outcome requires systemic intervention by the Rural Secretariat in the areas of:

- Citizen-based policy advice
- Public dialogue and engagement
- Collaboration
- Research

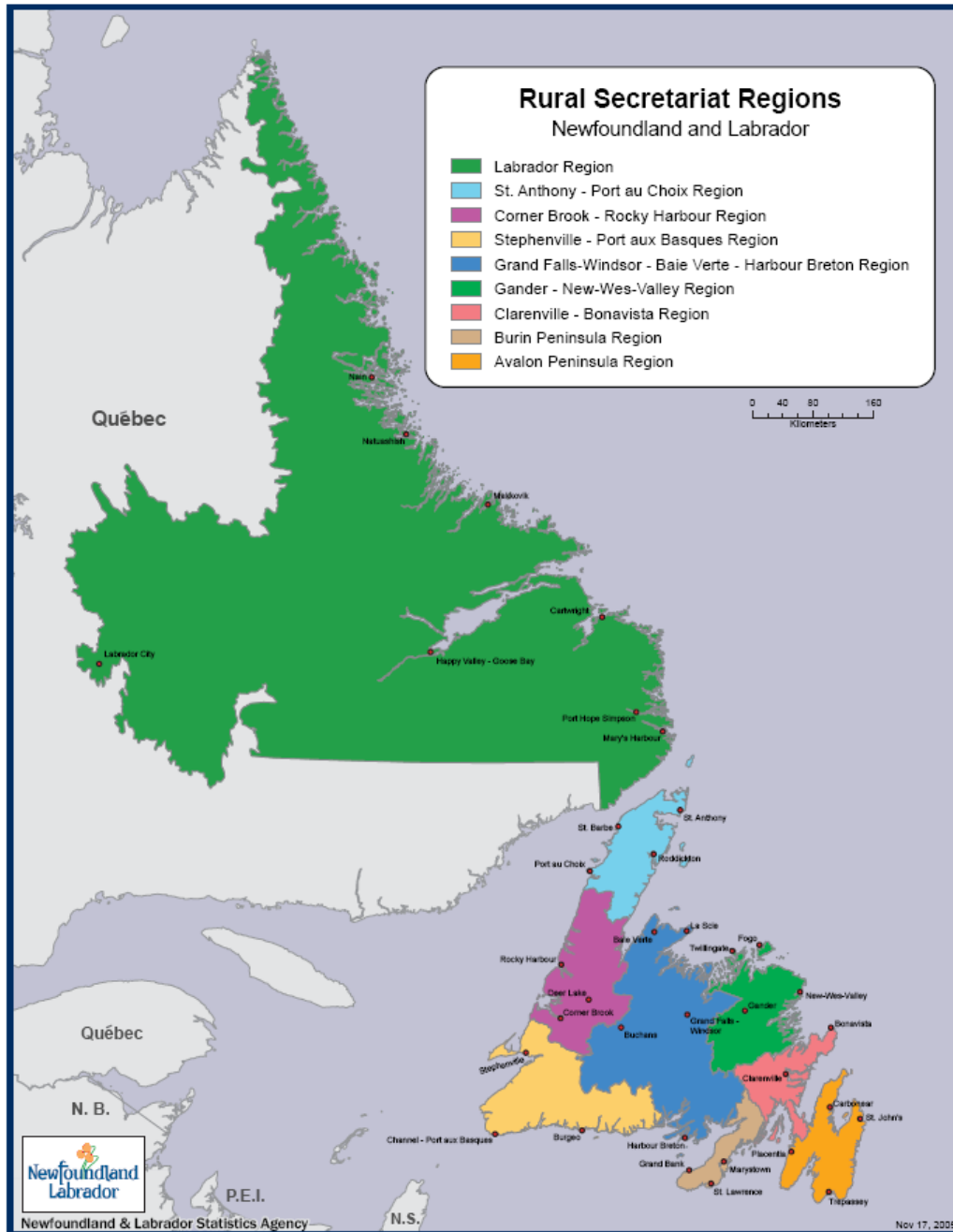
Focus Areas/Components of the Strategic Direction	This Direction is:
	addressed in the council's activity plan
1. Citizen-based policy advice	X
2. Public dialogue and engagement	X
3. Collaboration	X
4. Research	X

APPENDIX B: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Rural Secretariat Organizational Chart



APPENDIX C: MAP OF RURAL SECRETARIAT REGIONS



APPENDIX D: MANDATES OF RURAL SECRETARIAT AND PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

Mandate of the Rural Secretariat

The Rural Secretariat's mandate is to:

- Promote the well-being of rural Newfoundland and Labrador through a comprehensive and coordinated approach aimed at integrating economic, social, cultural aspects of rural and regional development.
- Act as the focal point for government to work with local and regional partners to build strong and dynamic regions and communities.
- Ensure that rural concerns are considered throughout the Provincial Government and promoted at the federal level.
- Carry out research and analysis of economic and social issues affecting rural Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Help communities and regions identify and take advantage of growth opportunities.
- Promote awareness of provincial and federal programs and services regarding rural communities.

Mandate of the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat

The Provincial Council's mandate is:

- To develop a common, evidence-based understanding of the social, economic, environmental and cultural realities facing Province.
- To review key economic and social measures (e.g. education levels, demographic trends, health status, income levels, Employment Income usage, economic diversity) and to reach agreement on the priorities for change over the next five years.
- To identify and advise the Provincial Government on policies and programs which either a) advance, b) negatively impact or c) need to be developed to encourage the necessary change over the five year period.
- To advance cooperation through the sharing of information on and discussion about the economic and social measures, and to encourage government and community partners to take action on and be accountable for those areas within their mandates.
- To serve as an external sounding board for government for the development of strategies, policies, programs and budget issues that will effect Provincial and Regional sustainability.

PHOTO CREDITS:



Courtesy of Kim Olson



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Courtesy of Kim Olson



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