



WMRC Article

08 January 2004

CONTENTS

New Prime Minister to Make
his Mark on Canada

Canada: New Prime Minister to Make his Mark on Canada

For the first time in ten years, a new Prime Minister has taken office in Canada, marking the end of a long-standing left-leaning government led by a career politician and the beginning of a centrist government led by a former business tycoon who intends to quickly reverse a number of the previous incumbent's policies.

New Prime Minister Paul Martin is expected to make immediate changes to the Liberal Party agenda and set a more centrist course for his government including focusing on repairing political and economic ties with the US, expanding Canada's role in global affairs including the war on terrorism, increasing military spending, improving the government-run health service, and the continuation of fiscal discipline and economic reforms. Martin, who easily won enough support for the premiership, will enjoy strong party loyalty and is likely to achieve many of his goals for the first year of his term, backed by strong popularity with the public and respect among members of Parliament in the majority and minority parties, although he will be challenged by a newly-unified right and a smaller but emerging left.

Key Findings

- Martin's agenda will be a substantive shift to the centre compared to the left-orientation of former prime minister Jean Chrétien.
- The inclusion of Martin loyalists in the cabinet and several more MPs on the Privy Council will ensure strong majority party support for Martin's proposals.
- The merger of two national conservative opposition parties will not have an immediate impact on the political landscape in Canada.
- The secessionist movement to make the province of Quebec autonomous from the federal government will lose nearly all remaining support.
- The fiscal position of Canada will continue to be strengthened under Martin's leadership through tax cuts, reduced spending, and deficit reduction.
- Relations between the US and Canada will dramatically improve and Canada will play a larger role in certain international affairs.
- Martin will lead the Liberal Party to victory when the next parliamentary elections are held.

The End of an Era

Jean Chrétien announced he would step down after ten years as Canada's prime minister in August 2002 as it became clear that the party rank-and-file wanted new blood at the helm. Chrétien, one of the longest-serving prime ministers in Canada's history, is from a working class family and is the 18th of 19 children. A lawyer by training, when he came to Parliament in 1963 as a Member of Parliament from Quebec he had yet to learn English. In all, he served 40 years in Parliament, held six different cabinet posts under the reign of former PM Pierre Trudeau, and spent 13 years as head of the Liberal Party, with 10 of those years as the Prime Minister.

Throughout his ten years as prime minister, the opposition never overtook his government in opinion polls, but 60% of Canadians polled in November wanted Chrétien to step down. The public wanted a new leader and, based on whom they chose, a new direction for Canada. He was originally going to serve out his term that ends in February, but as his successor took on a more pronounced role in anticipation of assuming the office, his colleagues in the Liberal Party quietly encouraged him to step down early in order to ensure a smooth transition. Adding to the pressure to leave early was criticism over two emerging scandals that involved conflicts of interest in the Liberal Party and what was viewed as his government's mishandling of the increasingly souring relations with the neighbouring US.

The Chrétien Legacy

A recent poll of Canadians found that half of them could not name any three accomplishments of Chrétien's, as he prepared to step down. He is perhaps most well known for narrowly preventing the secessionist movement in Quebec from being successful in 1995, leading a defeat of the referendum by the slimmest of margins (49.4% in favour, 50.6% against). After a second defeat by a much wider margin in 2001, the Party Québécois faded from view and the secessionist movement died. However, Chrétien's accomplishments went beyond this political victory. When he took office in 1993, Canada had a fiscal deficit of C\$42bn (US\$32bn) and a debt-to-GDP (Gross Domestic Product) ratio of over 70%. Over the last ten years, Chrétien's government balanced six consecutive budgets and recently enjoyed large budget surpluses, cut taxes, and reduced the debt-to-GDP ratio to 40%. Chrétien's staunch fiscal discipline was equalled by his championing of social causes such as aboriginal rights, protection of endangered species, university scholarships for underprivileged youth, expansion of national parks, and - more recently - gay marriage, greenhouse gas reduction (he endorsed the Kyoto Protocol), and marijuana decriminalisation.

Chrétien was not known as a visionary but rather as someone who could solve problems. He had a rough style and was not afraid of confrontation with members of his Liberal caucus, the opposition or the press. He reportedly often used caucus meetings to 'twist arms' and keep his fellow Liberal Party members in line. Despite all of this, he considered his greatest strength to be the fact that he was often underestimated since he was viewed as an unintelligent and inarticulate rube, but he continued to lead his party to the majority.

History is likely to view Chrétien as a 'caretaker' PM, as someone who kept the country on a steady course toward stability rather than a leader who brought about dramatic shifts in government policy or changes in society and culture. In an increasingly volatile and uncertain world, his historical title of caretaker may prove to be one of high honour.

Martin's Ascension to Power

The new Prime Minister, Paul Martin, officially took office on 12 December - 18 months after being sacked by Chrétien from his position as Minister of Finance, having served in the position for eight years. Martin's background is nearly the polar opposite of Chrétien's. Martin is a millionaire businessman, a respected economist and the son of a renowned minister. Martin's father was a cabinet minister for 25 years, but never achieved his dream of winning the Liberal Party leadership and becoming Prime Minister - a legacy that is not lost on the new Prime Minister or his colleagues in the Liberal Party. He studied law, but decided to pursue a business career and made his millions in the shipping industry, becoming the principal owner of Canadian Steamship Lines.

Martin first ran for the Liberal Party leadership in the 1980s when the party seemed destined to remain stuck in the opposition, and he lost a bitter fight for the leadership to Chrétien. Several years later in 1993, Chrétien led the Liberals into power and Martin was made finance minister, tasked with passing unpopular spending cuts, slashing federal government transfers to provincial governments, and cutting military and social spending. However, his ruthless budget-cutting paid off and in 1998 he became the first Canadian finance minister in 27 years to present a balanced budget. For the five subsequent years, his budget resulted in a surplus, which gave the federal government a chance to reduce its crushing debt. Although his reputation as Minister of Finance was heralded for his fiscal discipline, Martin also had a social conscience, as evidenced by his fight for debt forgiveness for the poorest countries.

Taking advantage of his success, then-Minister of Finance Martin began building his political support in anticipation of Chrétien's eventual retirement. However, as he built his leadership war chest and became more outspoken regarding his differences in opinion from Chrétien, he was sacked and replaced by John Manley, who immediately became his chief political rival and Chrétien's chosen successor. But Martin used his forced liberation from the government to campaign openly to replace Chrétien, which put increasing pressure on him to step down. Following Chrétien's announcement to retire, Martin revealed he was already too far ahead in the race for Liberal Party convention delegates for anyone - including Manley - to catch up having spent the better part of a year campaigning all over Canada. Since August, Martin has had the unofficial title of 'prime-minister-in-waiting' in advance of the Liberal Party leadership convention in November.

Profile: Prime Minister Paul Martin

Paul Martin is Canada's 21st Prime Minister and enjoys the widest margin of Liberal Party supporters in recent memory. All other challengers having bowed out of the race for party leadership, only former Minister of Canadian Heritage Sheila Copps stood to challenge Martin, who had the support of 94% of the delegates to the Liberal Convention that took place in November. He amassed C\$11m (US\$8.4m) in campaign donations - the most ever -

and 3,806 delegates compared to Copps C\$900,000 (US\$685,000) and 427 delegates.

Martin assumes the post of prime minister with an overwhelming mandate from his party and with popular support from the public and deep respect among the opposition. He is expected to be a more inclusive leader and be much more open to the views of others, likely taking a more 'hands-off' approach to governing. He sent a message to the Liberal Party's Parliamentary caucus early on by not showing up at the meeting, preferring instead to allow the rank-and-file to develop their own views. In a clear comparison of his open style to that of Chrétien, Martin said he wanted to correct the 'Democratic deficit' in Parliament by encouraging more dialogue within the caucus. In fact, his style has already attracted a defection of Robert Lanctot from the Bloc Québécois who decided to join the Liberals at the beginning of December.

The Martin Cabinet

Prime Minister Martin's 38 cabinet ministers were sworn in on the morning of 12 December. Sixteen of these previously served in outgoing prime minister Chrétien's cabinet, but Martin dropped 22 ministers from the Chrétien government - the most ever for a sitting government in Canadian history. Other noteworthy facts include his entrusting the two most powerful positions to MPs from Western Canada. Ralph Goodale of Saskatchewan is finance minister and Alberta's Anne McLellan is the deputy prime minister and minister of public safety and emergency preparedness - a newly created position that includes the justice portfolio and reflects the importance of security after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the US. Eight ministers hail from Greater Toronto, and eleven are women - the greatest number ever. Martin also chose to name 26 MPs members of the privy council so they can participate in cabinet meetings.

Prime Minister Martin's New Cabinet		
Prime Minister	Paul Martin	Former Minister of Finance for eight years, Martin is a millionaire shipping tycoon from a well-known political family with a strong legacy in Canada. A lawyer by training and an accomplished economist, Martin easily won the support of 94% of Liberal Party convention delegates, despite the fact that he was not retiring Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's chosen successor. Martin is a business-friendly, centre-left leader who is expected to make a number of changes to some of the policies instituted by fellow Liberal Party member Chrétien.
Deputy Prime Minister/ Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness	Anne McLellan	First elected as Member of Parliament in 1993, she was appointed Minister of Health in 2002. McLellan served as Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada from 1997 to 2002, and Minister of Natural Resources and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians from 1993 to 1997.
Finance Minister	Ralph Goodale	First elected to Parliament in 1974, he served as leader of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party and in 1986 was elected a member of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly. Goodale was appointed Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and then served as Minister of Natural Resources Canada from June 1997 through January 2002, and was appointed Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister responsible for Communication Canada in 2002.
Foreign Affairs Minister	Bill Graham	First elected as Member of Parliament in 1993, Graham was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien in January 2002 and reappointed by Prime Minister Paul Martin in December 2003. From 1995 to 2002, Graham served as Chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.
Defence Minister	David Pratt	First elected Member of Parliament in 1997, Pratt has served as Chair of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, as well as on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. Pratt was Chair of the National Capital Region Caucus, and chaired the first Caucus committee on Foreign Affairs, National Defence and International Cooperation.

Industry Minister	Lucienne Robillard	First elected to the House of Commons in 1995, Robillard was appointed Minister of Labour and Minister responsible for the federal campaign in the Quebec referendum. In 1996, she became Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and Co-Chair of the Electoral Platform Committee. In 1999, she was appointed President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure.
Justice Minister	Irwin Cotler	First elected to the House of Commons in a by-election in November 1999, he has served on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and its sub-Committee on Human Rights and International Development, as well as on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. Cotler was appointed Special Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the International Criminal Court.
Environment Minister	David Anderson	First elected Liberal Member of Parliament for Victoria in 1993, was appointed Minister of National Revenue and Minister responsible for British Columbia. In 1996, Anderson was appointed Minister of Transport and re-elected as Member of Parliament for Victoria in June 1997, and immediately appointed Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.
Citizenship and Immigration Minister	Judy Sgro	First elected to the House of Commons in 1999, she was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services. She is also Chair of the Prime Minister's Caucus Task Force on Urban Issues and a member of the Standing Committee on Health. Since her election, she has served as a member on the standing committees on Justice and Human Rights, Human Resources Development, Public Accounts and the Sub-Committee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.
International Trade Minister	James Peterson	Elected in 1988, he was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and most recently Secretary of State.
Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister	Robert Speller	First elected to the House of Commons in 1988, he was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Trade and was a member of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. He also served on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the CPA International Executive Committee, the Parliamentary Steel Caucus (1993, 1994, 1998) and the Joint Inter-Parliamentary Council.
Natural Resources Minister	Ruben Efford	First elected in 2002, he was a member of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans before being named Minister of Natural Resources.
Fisheries and Oceans Minister	Geoff Regan	First elected to the House of Commons in 1997, Regan was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader. He also served as the Vice-Chair of the Atlantic Liberal Caucus and the Chair of a working group of his Caucus colleagues developing strategies for economic development in Atlantic Canada.
Transport Minister	Tony Valeri	First elected in 1993, he was appointed to the Standing Committee on Finance and then to the post of Minister of Transport in 2003.
Health and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister	Pierre Pettigrew	First joined the Canadian government in 1996 as Minister for International Cooperation and Minister responsible for La Francophonie. Appointed Minister for International Trade in August 1999, chairing the Ministerial Meeting of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the Working Group on Implementation at the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference.
Labour Minister	Claudette Bradshaw	First elected to the House of Commons in 1997, Bradshaw was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation and Minister Responsible for the Francophonie. She was appointed to Cabinet as Minister of Labour in 1998 and Federal Coordinator on Homelessness in 1999.
National Revenue Minister	Stan Keyes	First elected to the House of Commons in 1988, he was Chair of the Standing Committee on Transport (SCOT). In 2003, Keyes' peers in the House of Commons and the Senate of Canada elected him as National Liberal Caucus Chair.

Western Economic Diversification Minister	Rey Pagtakhan	First elected to the House of Commons in 1988 and was re-elected for a fourth term in 2000. Previously, he served as Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific and Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.
Veterans Affairs Minister	John McCallum	Elected as a Member of Parliament in November 2000, he was appointed Minister of National Defense by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. He served as Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions) from January to May 2002.
Public Works and Government Services	Stephen Owen	Appointed Minister of Public Works and Government Services in December 2003 after having been elected to the House of Commons in November 2000. He was appointed Secretary of State (Western Economic Diversification) (Indian Affairs and Northern Development), and from September 2001 to January 2002 he served as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice.

The First 100 Days

Following the four weeks Martin has given himself to form his new cabinet, he intends to call Parliament back into session on 12 January and give a throne speech to reveal his legislative plans in more detail. However, he has already laid out in broad strokes several initiatives that will receive top priority from his government.

- US-Canadian Relations:** Prime Minister Chrétien did not foster strong relations with the administration of US President George W Bush other than to increase border security co-operation following the attacks of 11 September 2001. The rift between the two leaders widened over the war in Iraq as Chrétien was increasingly outspoken in his opposition to the war. Martin has ranked the reparation of this critical relationship as his number one priority on the foreign agenda. Within days of being sworn in, Martin discussed several issues with Bush over the telephone and the two leaders are planning to meet during the Summit of the Americas in Monterrey (Mexico) in January 2004. Top of their agenda will be increasing co-operation on the war on terrorism, and trade. Martin's policy will be guided by a newly created Cabinet Committee on US-Canadian relations, to be chaired by him.
- Ethics Scandals:** The closing months of the Chrétien government have been marred by two scandals. The first involved the awarding of contracts to Liberal Party financial supporters through the C\$50m-per-year Public Works Canada programme, and ministers' use of free flights on private jets owned by corporations that have business before the government. During his campaign Martin suffered criticism from opposition parties when it was revealed that his shipping company was awarded nearly C\$30m in government contracts since 1990. In order to ensure his image is above reproach, Martin the shipping tycoon relinquished all control of his shipping company to his three sons before assuming office. He also announced he would re-introduce the position of Independence Ethics Commissioner to oversee the government and Parliament and call for a ban on all free flights and gifts worth more than C\$1,000 (US\$770) to ministers.
- Healthcare:** Canada's national health system is known for its efficacy, but costs are spiralling out of control - health costs account for 50% of spending by the provinces - and the lines of people waiting for care are getting longer and longer. In February, Chrétien agreed to increase federal health spending, by more than C\$30bn over five years, but as provincial governments are primarily responsible for healthcare expenses, Chrétien promised them more than C\$2bn-worth of the anticipated Fiscal Year 2003 budget surplus to help offset rising costs. The immediate challenge will be whether or not to honour the financial commitment made by Chrétien, which would limit Martin's options for tax cuts and debt reduction. The longer-term issue is speeding up the waiting period for care, which will require a more radical approach such as allowing the affluent to purchase private healthcare or adjusting the formula through which funding is redistributed from better-off provinces to poorer ones.
- Maintain Fiscal Discipline:** Martin's claim to fame was as Minister of Finance where he helped restore Canada's fiscal stability, making it one of the strongest economies in the world. Martin-led initiatives eliminated the country's fiscal deficit, balanced federal budgets, and reduced the debt-to-GDP ratio from 71% in 1997 to 40% in 2003. Now Martin wants to further reduce that ratio to 25% of GDP, further rein in public spending, and maintain the C\$4.4bn-worth of corporate tax cuts due to come into effect in January 2004.
- Encourage Economic Growth and Investment:** As a businessman, it is not surprising that encouraging private economic growth and investment is a priority for Martin's government. Martin wants to use tax incentives and elimination of regulatory barriers to spawn further growth in the environmental and medical technology sectors - two areas of strength for Canada. He believes firmly that government needs to 'get out of

the way' of business and allow it room to grow. However, restrictions on foreign investment such as in the banking sector will also need to be addressed in order to attract more foreign capital that otherwise goes to the more investment-friendly US.

- **Improve Provincial Relations:** The two most populous provinces in Canada - Quebec and Ontario, which account for two-thirds of all Canadians - have elected Liberal premiers, which is making it easier for Martin to call for stronger ties to provincial governments. Martin believes in devolving more power and control over spending to the provinces, and is planning to offer a scheme to provide municipalities with a higher percentage of the petrol tax in order to fund road and bridge improvements. To demonstrate his commitment to better relations, his first act was to go to a gathering of all provincial premiers in Saskatchewan to meet them and discuss their concerns, and it is out of that meeting that Martin agreed to establish a National Health Council to address the problems of the federal health system.
- **Native Poverty:** In one of only a limited number of areas in which Martin intends to carry on the work of Chrétien, the new Prime Minister will propose a new set of programmes to reduce poverty among Canada's native populations - although only making up 4.3% of Canadians, aborigines are the fastest-growing population in the country, yet 80% of them are unemployed. A recent study found that only 30% of native people aged 18 to 20 had finished high school, against 63 per cent of non-natives in the same age group.
- **Domestic Security and Military Spending:** Martin has pledged to continue to beef up Canada's domestic preparedness against terrorism - including the threat of weapons of mass destruction - through increased border security co-operation with the US and through a top-to-bottom review of the Canadian military's preparedness to be deployed abroad to fight the US-led war on terror (Canada has 2,000 troops in Afghanistan). A recent report found that Canada would have to spend C\$15bn over the next five years in order to bring the military up to date.

Despite Martin's mandate and public popularity, what the public is truly clamouring for is significant change in the way government is run. A recent poll found that 83% of Canadians expect Martin to 'really shake things up' and they believe that would be a 'good thing,' while those who do not expect him to shake things up regard this as a 'bad thing'. The general belief is that Martin will have roughly 100 days to plough through some of the priorities on his agenda before the public will want an announcement regarding the next round of federal elections.

The Other Issues

A number of other issues that must be confronted by the Martin government, although not necessarily in the first 100 days, are primarily issues left over from the Chrétien government, such as the following:

- **Gay Marriage:** Due to a decision from the Canadian Supreme Court, same-sex couples must be afforded the same rights as heterosexual couples regarding marriage. Chrétien supported legislation granting gay couples the right to marry, but Martin's position is unclear, although he is suspected to oppose the legislation.
- **Kyoto Protocol:** Chrétien ratified the international treaty to reduce greenhouse gases, but Martin is believed to oppose implementation of the protocol in Canada.
- **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS):** Nearly 50 Canadians died after contracting SARS, primarily those living in the Toronto area. The outbreak harmed tourism and in spite of steps taken by health officials since last year, another outbreak in the coming months cannot be ruled out.
- **Trade:** A number of trade issues will need to be addressed by the Martin government, including the World Trade Organization (WTO) talks that have stalled primarily as a result of agricultural subsidies, the Free Trade of the Americas Agreement (FTAA) that is still being negotiated by countries in North and South America, ongoing concerns over Canadian beef exports due to bovine spongiform encephalopathy or 'mad cow disease', and bilateral trade disputes with the US over soft wood, fishing, and other products.

Conservatives Marshal Their Forces

The Liberal Party's dominance over federal parliamentary elections has been characterised as hegemonic as the party has held a firm grip on the government for the last ten years. Throughout Chrétien's tenure, no opposition came close to challenging his position. Now as the Liberal Party has united behind Martin in what might as well have been a coronation, the Conservative opposition parties are marshalling their forces in order to put up a challenge to Liberal dominance in the next election.

For the last year, the leaders of the Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative Party have been negotiating a merger of their two parties and earlier this month their members voted in favour of uniting under a single party banner - the Conservative Party of Canada. Members of the two parties voted 96% and 90% in favour, respectively. The new entity's interim leader is Progressive Conservative Senator John Lynch-Staunton. He is a low-key figure chosen to smooth the early transition. A permanent leader will be formally elected on 20 March 2004 - the choice is between the existing leaders of the two constituent parties, Canadian Alliance head Stephen Harper and Progressive Conservative Peter MacKay. However, several MPs in both parties are threatening to defect, which will harm the new party's chances of having any real sway in Parliament, especially considering that even an entirely unified Conservative party would only equal 75 MPs to the Liberal Party's 171. With elections due in the spring of 2004, it is unlikely they will have time to mount any kind of serious challenge to the Martin government. Recent polls have shown that if a federal election were held tomorrow, the Liberal Party would still see an outstanding majority with 48% national support, and the newly merged party would see only 21%, with a handful of disparate minor parties making up the other 31%.

Outlook and Implications

With a clear mandate, solid experience in government and the private sector, fresh ideas, new blood in the government, and a unified party eager to be led in a bold new direction, Prime Minister Martin's primary enemy is the high expectation that he will have to live up to. With all of these factors in Martin's favour, he is expected to achieve a great deal and in a short period of time. His Liberal Party colleagues, the media and the public share the same view: Martin has so much going for him that if he does not succeed, he has no one to blame but himself. Thus far, Martin has laid out an agenda that should resonate within the centrist and conservative-leaning members of his party as well as with much of the public, but it is not overly ambitious - perhaps in anticipation that with all of the expectations for him meet his goals, it would be easy to fail.

The challenge facing the Martin government from the now partially unified right will not be of concern in the upcoming elections. Internal strife, defections, and a battle for leadership of the new party will distract its members from being able to mount a meaningful challenge to the dominant rule of the Liberal government, although Martin needs to keep his eye on them. An eye should also be turned to his left as his more centrist and even conservative positions may invoke the ire of the more liberal members of his party or the minor left-leaning parties in Parliament such as the New Democrats, who may oppose some of his more fundamental spending reduction proposals.

Another challenge Martin faces is the legacy of Jean Chrétien. After ten years in power, Chrétien's informal influence over the party's agenda will remain, if only behind the scenes, as he strives to protect his place in history. The last thing he wants is for his policies to be undone by a fellow Liberal Party member. However, in order to ensure a Liberal Party victory in the next election, Martin needs to be thoughtful and practical in the development of his agenda, but also bold in order to carve out his own distinct position rather than be viewed as simply filling the shoes of Chrétien. To do this, Martin will have to offer the left-leaning members of Parliament some commitments to social programmes, like those championed by Chrétien, which will prove difficult in the face of Martin's commitment to reduce taxes, public debt, and overall government spending.

Overall, Martin should do well as Prime Minister. He has been preparing for this role for many years and he appears more than capable of handling the challenges that lie ahead. Compared to the liberal champion of social causes Jean Chrétien, the centrist Paul Martin's legacy will likely be judged by closer ties to the US, continued fiscal discipline, business-friendly policies, tax reduction, and economic development.

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