

# PrideHouse Toronto

For the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games

## LEGACY REPORT



February 2016



# LEGACY REPORT

PrideHouse Toronto  
Final Legacy Report

Prepared by:  
Keph Senett

Reviewed by:

David Morris and Catherine  
Meade, Co-chairs,  
PrideHouseTO Leadership  
Team

Date:  
29 February 2016

For More Information:  
David Morris  
DMorris@PrideHouseTO.ca

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519 Church Street  
Toronto ON M4Y 2C9

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## BACKGROUND

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The PrideHouse Toronto (PHTO) project was a comprehensive, province-wide engagement and activation strategy for the lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer (LGBTQ) communities in Ontario leading up to and during the TORONTO 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games (the Games). The Initiative built upon the tradition and success of Pride Houses during Vancouver's 2010 Winter Olympic Games and London's 2012 Summer Olympic Games.

Three years in development, PHTO had the mission to make the TORONTO 2015 Games the most LGBTQ-inclusive multi-sport games in history. Created by a coalition of LGBTQ and allied organizations<sup>1</sup>, it was part of an international movement that is working to transform multi-sport games for everyone.

PHTO was based at The 519 who acted as the Trustee for the coalition of community organizations behind the project. The Trustee provided essential support to the project through both significant financial and staff time contributions as well as effectively managing funds from government and corporate partners such as the Province of Ontario, the City of Toronto and CIBC.

## WHAT WAS PRIDEHOUSE TORONTO?

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### During the Sochi Winter Olympics

With some structure in place long before the Games, PrideHouse Toronto was able to mobilize their volunteers to deliver a Winter Games Lounge at Ryerson University and Devo Park in February of 2014, during the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia.

The Lounge was an outdoor viewing area with a massive television screen and a nightly open skate on Lake Devo at Victoria and Gould Streets. Launch was attended by out gay speed skater Blake Skjellerup.

### During the Glasgow Commonwealth Games and Torch Relay

In April of 2014, PrideHouse Toronto worked with Commonwealth Games Canada to host a leg of the Queen's Baton as it travelled through dozens of territories and nations

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<sup>1</sup> These were: The 519, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the Gay and Lesbian International Sport Association, the Church-Wellesley Village, Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, Outsport Toronto, Ontario Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, Ontario Pride Society, Pride Toronto, Ryerson University, Toronto PFLAG, and the University of Toronto.



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on its way to Scotland for the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow<sup>2</sup>. The Toronto leg was called the “Relay of Inclusion.” The 1.5 kilometre run ended with a reception at The 519, the site of the PrideHouse Toronto Pavilion.

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## During the Pan/Parapan American Games

PrideHouse Toronto was open between 10 am and 11 pm daily, July 8 through 28, 2015 during the Pan/Parapan American Games in Toronto.

For the first time in history, the PanAm Torch was in a Pride Parade, and a torch was specifically gifted to PHTO by CIBC to carry during the Official Torch Relay on Day 40.

The **PrideHouse Pavilion** at The 519 on Church Street and neighbouring Barbara Hall Park offered 47,000 square feet for PHTO activities, exhibitions, and events. These included Games viewings, a summit, art installations, and galas inside the Pavilion, and licensed parties and outdoor Games viewings in Barbara Hall Park. The Pavilion was designed to host LGBTQ athletes, allies, volunteers, visitors and Torontonians throughout the Games, and offer a safe, welcoming space for people to celebrate the Games. **The 519's Sport Inclusion Summit** was a 3-day meeting with experts and advocates to advance discussions about inclusion in recreational sport sector. Pride House representatives from Rio, Brazil (site of the 2016 Summer Olympics), Pyeongchang, Korea (2018 Winter Olympics), and Tokyo, Japan (2020 Summer Olympics) were also in attendance.

**PrideHouse Celebrates!** was weekend programming that took place in Barbara Hall Park and on Church Street between Wood and Wellesley Streets. The **CIBC Sports Zone**<sup>3</sup> was an LGBTQ-friendly outdoor space for play and community engagement. Borrowing from the Open Streets concept, the CIBC Sports Zone opened up to Ontario's sport and parasport communities with soccer, volleyball, boccia, goal ball, wheelchair basketball, and human foosball demonstrations, and offered participants the chance to try out sports in a safe and friendly atmosphere. Each Friday through Sunday, there were special Games-viewing parties and live entertainment in **Barbara Hall Park**.

In partnership with the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and materials produced by the province's school children, two of Toronto's leading artists—Kalpna Patel and Sean Martindale—created an art installation called **The PrideHouse That Kids Built**. Working with a curriculum piece developed by the ETFO, children from elementary schools across Ontario created cardboard 'bricks' decorated with their

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<sup>2</sup> There was a Pride House Glasgow during these XX Commonwealth Games, organized by LEAP Sports Scotland.

<sup>3</sup> CIBC was the first major partner in the history of the Pride House movement



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thoughts on inclusion in sport. Patel and Martindale took these materials prepared an installation that was on view daily at Ontario's Celebration Zone at Harbourfront Centre.

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***PrideHouseTO: Sudbury Celebrates!*** was a satellite Pride House located in a safe and inclusive space at Cambrian College in downtown Sudbury. Events included the QUEER Landscapes QUEER Journeys: Reflections of LGBTQ Rights and Struggles in Ontario Today art exhibition, a public film screening of "United in Anger: A History of ACT UP," a panel discussion under the banner "Leadership in the Ontario Public Service," and a community conference called "How to Create Positive Space in Your Life and Business at Sudbury Theatre Centre." There were also live Games-viewing events. In the second week of August, PrideHouse Sudbury hosted The Pride House That Kids Built. The installation was unveiled on August 7, 2015—the night of the Parapan American Games Opening Ceremonies—both events were marked with a public reception and live stream. In November, PrideHouseTO: Sudbury Celebrates! was awarded the *Human Resources Award of Excellence* from the Ontario Public Service for Excellence in Inclusion, Small Team.

Additionally, there were **regional Pride House activations** in Ajax, Ottawa, Hamilton, Thunder Bay, London, and Guelph.

## REACH

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- PrideHouse Toronto visitors: 31,000 (including Pavilion, Park, Street Festival)
- The Pride House That Kids Built installation at Ontario's Celebration Zone: 4,500
- Social media, Church Street presence, Pride House Ambassadors at Nathan Philips Square: 100,000
- PrideHouseTO: Sudbury Celebrates! visitors: 350
- Stories about PrideHouse Toronto appeared in international media in several languages

## VISITS FROM DIGNITARIES AND ATHLETES

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- Out gay Olympic short-track speed skater Blake Skjellerup launched the Winter Games Lounge at Ryerson University on February 7, 2014
- Out gay member of the Canadian Women's National Soccer Team and Olympian Erin McLeod officially opened the PrideHouse Toronto Pavilion on July 8, 2015
- Dignitaries visiting PrideHouse Toronto have included Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, Her Honour Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, TORONTO 2015 Games CEO Saad Rafi, Toronto Mayor John Tory, Ontario Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport Michael Coteau, and Ontario Deputy Minister Deb Matthew.

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PrideHouse Toronto produced several pieces for their event that have become permanent as installations of digital archives. These include:

- A specially-commissioned anthem by Charlie Andrews for LGBTQ athletes called “Strive.”
- A mural on the side of The 519

## LESSONS

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### *Governance and Planning*

The PrideHouse Toronto Leadership Team began planning four years before the 2015 Pan / Parapan American Games. Initially, the governance structure could be described as a “constellation”—that is, The 519 would serve as trustee<sup>4</sup> and allocate funds to organizations to deliver on various elements of the Pride House program. In response to changing circumstances, this model needed to be adapted. Ultimately, the structure evolved to include a Staff Team of four people from The 519 who offered support to seven Working Groups<sup>5</sup>. The PHTO Initiative became a collaboration of organizations representing social services, education, government, labour, business and sport and recreation sectors.

PHTO was successful in obtaining government funding from the Province of Ontario and the City of Toronto—a first in Pride House history.

### *What we learned about governance and planning*

- PHTO adopted an arms-length approach to working with TO2015, meaning that while each was aware of each other’s work, there was not an official link between the two. The benefit of this arrangement was that PHTO would not be bound to TO2015 in terms of sponsorship<sup>6</sup> opportunities or activism. On the other hand, this approach limited the group’s ability to reach athletes, disseminate material, or have a presence at official events.

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<sup>4</sup> As trustee, The 519 was tasked with administrative and coordination roles to enable volunteer leadership and grantor accountability, building on The 519’s established systems of governance, financial management and risk management.

<sup>5</sup> The working groups supported four project areas (Community Hub, Village Festival, Policy and Advocacy, and Community Ambassadors) plus three logistics teams handling Volunteer Engagement, Marketing and Communications, and Resource Development).

<sup>6</sup> The main PrideHouse Toronto funders were the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Government of Ontario, the City of Toronto, Delta Airlines, and Molson Canadian.





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- Without an official relationship with TO2015, PHTO was unclear about the value of their activities from the perspective of their grantors. In other words, they weren't sure about the appropriate amount of funding to ask for.
- While every grant received brought with it much-needed funding, it also increased the amount of reporting and modified the project scope.
- Having The 519 as trustee helped leverage credibility with partners, but the trustee relationship wasn't well managed and there were unclear compensation expectations for The 519.
- By remaining open to change during the planning and ramp-up phases, PHTO was able to respond to evolving circumstances.
- The project was ultimately able to involve a broad range and number of organizations across the LGBTQ community, which contributed to a strong sense of inclusiveness and a united brand, though some member organizations could have managed the PHTO brand better.
- The working groups were focused, responsive, and ambitious.
- There was some duplication of systems and responsibilities with The 519, and in practice, messages didn't cascade down as expected.
- The structure ended up creating a bureaucracy that wasn't necessary, didn't add value, and consumed energy.
- Many of the discussions at the Leadership level were exclusive, culturally and otherwise, and some felt that once implementation began there was no place to have honest conversations.
- There was some sentiment that the Leadership Team could have been more supportive and less critical of the Staff and Operations Teams.
- The high turnover of leaders left many decisions unmade, or made too late.
- By all accounts, the four-year planning phase was too long and there was an overemphasis on process and responsibilities too early. This resulted in work being done that would have to be changed or disposed of entirely as the circumstances of the Games changed.

## *Recommendations*

1. Carefully consider the relationship you want to pursue with the Games organization. Independence offers certain freedoms but presents challenges to messaging and access. Make your agreements early (at the bidding stage, if possible) and document them formally.
2. If you choose to form a Coalition, establish early what each organization wants to get out of being part of the coalition and work hard to make sure that everyone gets what they want so. Recognize the resources that member organizations require and make sure they have enough to do what they are



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- committing to. Think about where funding goes. Establish mutual expectations for being part of the coalition.
3. Understand the consequences of accepting grants or other monies and choose your relationships wisely. Make sure any agreements are documented and that all parties are fully briefed.
  4. Bearing safety and security in mind, decide in advance how much you want to take the community to the games, and how much you want to bring the games into the community.
  5. Beware of over-planning. Resist the urge to implement too early. Instead, use the early days to create a “skeleton concept” and develop relationships. Execute closer to your event.
  6. Keep it simple. Over-bureaucratization can muddy issues and sap essential energy.
  7. Identify underrepresented groups and strategize ways to support their inclusion.
  8. Build an agile organization that can shift with changing circumstances.
  9. Clarify all roles and responsibilities.
  10. Dream big but be pragmatic.

## ***Operations, Logistics, and Venues***

Working within five<sup>7</sup> broader areas, the team aimed to promote LGBTQ inclusion both in the city of Toronto, and across the province.

The PHTO Lounge, located in the CIBC Ballroom at The 519, was the main physical space. In addition to being a meeting place, it had educational and history, and art and culture installations on display. The Pride House Lounge hosted events like parties, meet-and-greets, and the Pride House Café Series.

The educational arm involved exhibits, events like the Café Series lectures, and outreach, like the Pride House That Kids Built program, an awareness-raising campaign for elementary school children developed in partnership with the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO). These initiatives were, in general, well-attended and -received.

Through a call for proposals, PHTO commissioned public art projects in diverse mediums including dance, radio, visual arts and music.

The PHTO Celebration Zone included a live viewing site serving food and drink, located in Barbara Hall Park, just outside the Pavilion, that featured large-scale outdoor screens broadcasting athletic events. On weekends, the stretch of Church Street outside The 519

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<sup>7</sup> PrideHouse Toronto had programming in five key areas: the Pride House Pavilion, PHTO Education, PHTO Arts and Culture, PHTO Ambassadors, and Pride House TO Celebrates.



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was transformed into the CIBC Sports Zone, offering games and opportunities for outreach.

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## *What we learned about operations, logistics, and venues*

- The CIBC ballroom was well-appointed and provided a nice anchor spot for many events.
- Events with athletes present were especially successful.
- The parties and events in the Celebration Zone were well-planned and offered a comfortable and celebratory atmosphere.
- The goal of the street festival had been to engage the BIA and local businesses to set up booths or outdoor vendors but this was not realized.
- There was a high success rate when specific groups took ownership of certain events. Examples include CIBC's Ballroom, the ETFO's Pride House That Kids Built, and FrancoQueer's skating event at the PHTO Winter Games Lounge.
- There were many times when the spaces were nearly empty. The biggest problem with these venues seemed to be that the PHTO Pavilion was so geographically distant from other Games locations like the Athlete's Village. This discouraged incidental visits and required people to travel to attend.
- All PHTO venues were safe, although the hired security behaved in inappropriate ways despite having undergone Pride House training.
- PHTO organizers noted that documentation was as important as agility and flexibility during the activations. With different shifts of different volunteers working, it was important to document the set-up of all displays, games, and areas, preferably with photographs.
- Organizers needed to take a flexible approach to the space as sometimes changes were needed.
- One major issue that arose around the outdoor Green Space was that people who typically use that park—dog-walkers, families, and homeless people—were pushed out of the space for the month.

## *Recommendations*

1. Think strategically about your venues. If it's safe to do so, choosing a location near events might make more sense than a place already known for LGBTQ-friendliness.
2. Make sure the scope of the events matches your audience.
3. Capitalize on individual relationships at big partners. Find the person in an organization who is sympathetic and let them help you.
4. Get athletes to attend.
5. Keep outreach activities joyful and accessible. The futsal, for example, attracted lots of families.





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6. Be aware of how your event might impact disenfranchised groups and strategize to minimize negative effects.
7. Where possible, empower partner organizations to deliver their own events.
8. Appoint someone to manage relationships with local businesses.
9. Prepare strategies to engage with marginalized people and to support displaced persons.
10. Make sure security personnel are trained in issues around the LGBTQ and other marginalized communities.

## ***Volunteer Management, Inclusion Ambassador Outreach***

PHTO worked with more than 400 volunteers to deliver their programming.

In an effort to maximize outreach potential, Pride House trained Ambassadors in seven communities across the province who delivered workshops and presentations about sport inclusion. Although volunteer-intensive, this project was effective in including a wider community across the province.

### ***What we learned about volunteer management, and inclusion ambassador outreach***

- The use of Kindness Connect, a shift management program, made scheduling easy and efficient. It was noted, however, that there was no accommodation for those with technological or language challenges.
- Volunteers were easy to identify because of their shirts, and while everyone seemed to like the design, there was a need for a wider variety of styles and sizes to fit more types of bodies.
- From a logistics standpoint, there were some issues with under- and over-staffing at times.
- There was no clear way to assess volunteer skill sets or experience.
- There was no follow-up plan to engage the volunteer group in future events.

### ***Recommendations***

1. Produce proper documentation to cut down on the amount of volunteer management needed.
2. Someone needs to be dedicated to maintaining shared online content.
3. Work with your volunteers with an eye to future events and campaigns. Collect emails and produce communications to keep this group connected.
4. Engage the region beyond your city. The whole country is excited and there are outreach possibilities there. These can be low cost and be high return.

## **Communications and Community Relations**



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PrideHouse Toronto handled its internal communications in Google Drive, a cloud-based application, and daily reports were also sent out. PHTO publicity was achieved through its relationship with media, the website and social media, and through community networks.

The project had attractive and recognizable branding that appeared on signage like flags and banners, in publications, and on volunteer T-shirts. This branding was also pushed out into the wider community through partner organizations.

## *What we learned about communications and community relations*

- Cloud-based documentation didn't work well because it was difficult to keep track of changes and developments.
- While the branding was effective where it appeared, there was some concern that the Church Street village could have had more signage and targeted communications.
- There needed to be clarity of who was responsible for marketing and communications execution.
- Building a meaningful connection with cultural- and identity-based groups like First Nations, Latin, and French people proved to be challenging.
- There was inconsistent communications between the project and the neighbourhood residents which led to frustration and complaints.
- Local businesses, while originally enthusiastic for the project, became less engaged as time went on and ultimately did not deliver on their commitments to activate the street.
- Organizers reported more difficulties than expected reaching local sport leagues.
- Promotion of the parties in the Green Space went very well and the events were well-attended, but they weren't very diverse.
- PHTO's social media outreach did not build as planned, partly due to a lack of engaging, sharable (not PDF) content that could pique the interest of audiences.
- The large networks of partner organizations weren't properly used to their fullest.
- PHTO received good press despite the fact that the Toronto media was stretched thin trying to cover multiple activities related to the Games

## *Recommendations*

1. Choose an appropriate system for internal communications.
2. Have all organizations sign off early on communications products and systems, and clarify who is responsible for marketing and communications.
3. Use more resources to build an effective strategy to build a meaningful connection with cultural- and identity-based groups.



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4. Engage with and promote LGBTQ amateur sport in your community, as opposed to just focusing on professional sports.
5. Find multiple ways to communicate with the local communities.
6. Strategize around attracting diverse people to your events.
7. Create “shareables”—that is, items easily shared through social media like photos and videos. Consider a workshop on how to amplify messages might have been useful.
8. Use your networks.
9. Engage with press early.
10. Do less, promote more.

## Advocacy and Government Relations

Advocacy was a key part of the PrideHouse Toronto project. Strategies included working with the TO2015 team as much as possible, preparing documents like the Toronto Charter, hosting the Café Series, and “embedding” advocacy pieces in other elements like the art that was displayed in the Pavilion.

The Café Series comprised five events under the banner of “conversations in sport,” and was one of the ways that PrideHouse Toronto worked to ensure space and opportunities for critical and challenging conversations on key issues shaping the reality of sport today. Bringing together thought-leaders and experts, the Series inspired discussion, debate and capacity-building in four general areas: The Pride House Movement; Investigating Inclusion: LGBTQ Sport in Toronto; Our Games on Native Land: Indigenous Communities and Multi-Sport Games; and, a two-part discussion on Bodies in Sport. These conversations were open to the public, and well-attended.

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## *What we learned about advocacy and government relations*

- Advocacy got lost in the more immediate concerns of events and activations.
- The “arms-length” arrangement with TO2015 limited PrideHouse Toronto’s advocacy opportunities. They were able to get PHTO brochures into the athletes’ packages and updates in their newsletter—another first in the Pride House movement—but nothing more.
- The City of Toronto and the organizing committee were able to spread the message of inclusion province-wide.
- Considerable time and energy went into writing the Toronto Charter, an advocacy piece that was never disseminated.
- The Sport Inclusion Summit was scheduled during the Games, which allowed people to see PanAm activities and participate in the conference, but it could have been longer, both to maximize the time and expertise of the attendees, but



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also to allow for more exploration, especially on the part of attendees coming from far away.

- The art pieces, which were selected with advocacy in mind, were very well-received.

## *Recommendations*

1. Prioritize and clarify advocacy pieces, and make sure they have the resources for delivery. Also make sure you have the authority or mandate for your advocacy pieces.
2. Use your partners to make your reach as broad as possible. Try to include regions outside the main cities.
3. Allot as much of your resources to outreach and communications as you can.
4. If you choose to include a conference, think about the schedule and length in relation to other activities happening in your region. Try to build in the production of actionable recommendations.
5. Think about creative ways to advocate in addition to traditional methods.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZERS OF FUTURE PRIDE HOUSES**

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1. Don't plan too early.
2. When you start planning, make a decision around your relationship with the event organizing committee and decide whether you want to be arms-length or not. Think about what sort of advocacy you want to do. Are you advocating from within or without? If from within, make sure you leverage this relationship. If you decide to work from without, take advantage of your ability to do more in-your-face activism. This decision will affect many aspects of your Pride House experience.
3. Consider the same questions when it comes to where you get your funding. Choose your relationships carefully, and make decisions based on reason and data.
4. Capitalize on individual relationships at big partners. Find the person in an organization who is sympathetic and let them help you navigate.
5. Build an agile organization that can shift with changing circumstances and that will not be slowed down by unnecessary bureaucracy.
6. If you choose to work in a coalition environment, establish early what each organization hopes to get out of their participation, and work hard to make sure that everyone gets what they want. Recognize the resources member organizations need and make sure they have enough to do what they are committing to. Think about where the funding goes.
7. Do less, promote more. Allot as much of your resources to outreach and communications as you can. Begin liaising with media early.

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8. If at all possible, get athletes to attend.
9. Prepare strategies to engage with marginalized people and to support displaced persons.
10. Engage the region beyond your city. The whole country is excited and there are outreach opportunities that can be low cost and be high return.
11. Decide in advance how much you want to take the community to the Games, and how much you want to bring the Games into the community. Keep safety issues in mind.
12. Assess and engage LGBTQ amateur sport in your community.
13. Test events if possible by trying out smaller events in advance. This will help you see what works in your communities, and make sure they are scaled properly in a realistic way.
14. Keep your outreach activities joyful and accessible.
15. If it's safe to do so, set up your venues where the people are. Don't make people travel to get to your events and venues.
16. Dream big, but deliver. Be pragmatic.

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