# Showcase 1998-1999 Get ready for Snowmobile Week November 23-29

# SNO-pinion: Stand up for snowmobiling this winter

**by Craig Nicholson** Saturday, September 19 marked an important milestone for organized snowmobiling in Ontario. That was the day the Mike Harris government provided \$4.98 million to the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs for upgrading existing trails, building new trails, installing bridges and culverts, and purchasing groomers in Northern Ontario. In eastern Ontario, the Canada Ontario Business Recovery Assistance Program (COBRA) anteed up \$1.25 million to repair snowmobile trails. Both programs make snowmobiling a potential public target yet again.

Some bulls-eye seekers will argue against any money being invested in snowmobiling while schools and hospitals need help. Others will say it's unfair to fund one recreational group and not others. Those opposed to snowmobiling will rant against any proliferation. Opportunists will use snowmobiling to attack the government. In many cases, the naysayers will be uninformed, misinformed or deliberately provocative and misleading. It's important for those of us who love snowmobiling to learn the facts and spread the word to snowmobilers and non-snowmobilers alike.

According to the recently published Winter Gold Study, snowmobile trails motivated Ontario snowmobilers to spend \$586 million on goods and services related to the sport in 1996/97. That same year, snowmobiling generated \$932.5 million of economic activity and contributed \$322.5 million to the

province's gross domestic product, to say nothing of generating \$73 million in tax revenues for provincial coffers! These revenues repeat on an annual basis each winter, totalling billions over a few short seasons. Within this economic context, an infusion of several million dollars hardly seems out of line.

Snowmobiling's substantial numbers translate into significant job creation and business growth, especially in snowbelt Ontario communities where winter economic opportunities are often limited and unreliable. Snowmobiling has also motivated winter tourism marketers at both the provincial and federal levels to invest millions of dollars more to lure snowmobilers to Ontario. And the cornerstone of all this economic activity can be summed up in two words, snowmobile trails.

Think about it. Without Ontario's 49,000 kilometres of groomed trails, there would be no economic impact. Trails are the product that generate the revenues; trails are the product that tourism marketers are selling; trails are the reason out-of-province riders come to Ontario in increasing numbers each winter. Five million dollars invested to improve this product makes good business sense. So does the \$1.25 million in ice storm recovery investment from COBRA. The increased prosperity that follows will pay long term dividends for business, tourism, communities, government and yes, probably for Ontario's schools and hospitals too. And remember, this is no free ride: as contributing partners, the OFSC and its

clubs are also expected to make significant investments to uphold their end of the deal.

Meanwhile, snowmobiling may become the target of a few ill-informed snowmobilers too. Some may argue that suddenly 'rich' snowmobile clubs no longer need their financial or volunteer support. Others may say that with government funding, trails should be free. Freeloaders may use the funding announcement as another excuse not to buy a trail permit again this winter. These folks really need to understand the

The Winter Gold Study confirmed that each kilometre of snowmobile trail in Ontario costs \$412 to operate each winter. So 49,000 kilometres of groomed trails multiplies into an annual tab exceeding \$20 million. The OFSC user pay system generates about half of this total \$10 million. This half includes the operational dollars that keep the groomers running.

The remaining half includes the capital dollars invested each year by local clubs into new groomers, bridges, and construction. It is to this capital area where the government's dollars will be directed. The new investment is not operational; it doesn't guarantee that trails will be open or groomed all winter, only that some of the required infrastructure and equipment will come on line sooner than the clubs could afford on their own. And make no mistake: these investments do NOT address every capital challenge or assist every club in the province.

That's why it's more crucial than ever for individual snowmobilers to support ongoing trail operational costs locally by purchasing an OFSC Trail Permit this winter. Buying a trail permit is your only way of ensuring the trails you ride will be kept up, enabling clubs to improve the provincial system significantly, but it will not keep the system running. Your contribution will help clubs scare up enough cash to uphold their end of putting government investment to work. It will also signal loud and clear that user pay is alive and well, and that snowmobilers are prepared to invest in trails too. It could even help the OFSC persuade the powers-that-be to remain at the table with longer term sustainable

It's time for snowmobilers to stand up and be counted. As you can see, we have a lot to be proud of.

The last two years of this century could see substantial new dollars go on to the snowmobile trails across Ontario. I hope snowmobilers support the cause by buying a trail permit this season, because if everyone climbs on board, we're going to see the best snowmobiling we've ever

Craig Nicholson's syndicated column The Intrepid Snowmobiler appears in many Canadian newspapers. He also hosts The Intrepid Snowmobiler on radio and appears regularly on Snowmobiler Television. He writes feature touring stories for Snow Goer Canada and Outdoor Canada magazines. ©1998 by Craig Nicholson. All Rights Reserved.

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#### President's message

# Are you ready for a terrific winter?

Remember back not too long ago recreational snowmobiling meant heading out into the snow with a bushel basketful of spark plugs, spare parts, tool box and a constant awareness of the nearest gas station. Also keeping in mind the old saying about being able to snowmobile further into the back woods in an hour than it is possible to walk out in a day. I remember the days of riding in the cutter behind mom, watching her pounding dad on the back to slow down for the four foot moguls ahead.

Snowmobiles and snowmobiling sure has changed over the past few years. We now have access right from our back years over 35,000 kilometres of smooth, well-marked trails in Ontario. There are over 120,000 snowmobilers that enjoy the sport in Ontario.

Hey sledders, I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer and are you ready for a terrific winter with above average snowfall. Who knows! It has to happen sooner or later.

In June, I was again elected president of the Nation Valley Snowmobile Association (NVSA). I am honored for one more year to serve the 880 members who belong to the clubs of NVSA. Since the beginning of NVSA I have been dedicated to better snowmobiling in our area. We are now to the point of smooth, wide well-marked safe trails in this part of Ontario.

The NVSA and member clubs now own two operating groomers and the clubs maintain over 600 kilometres of snowmobile trails. Non of this would have been possible without the hard work of volunteers and the support from the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs.

The NVSA has been busy, especially this fall. The ice storm of 1998 was a disaster to the trails in our area. Many volunteers responded and dedicated weekends this past winter to open the trails enough to get the groomer through. This work was enough to salvage the rest of the snowmobiling season. There are many trails that are still not open and many hazards that exist along the trails. The government of the day has responded due to the dedicated volunteerism and the \$900 million economic impact in Ontario and Canada. The NVSA and clubs have been working hard to submit proposals for funding to clean up the damage the ice storm left behind. Our plan is to hire contractors over the next year to clean up the mess.

Once the trails are announced open this year, a notice will appear in the local newspapers. The clubs need sufficient time to open gates, fences, erect signs, disc ploughed fields and remove hazards. The clubs will need an extra hand this fall due to the ice storm. If we do receive an early snowfall, be very cautious if you decide to try out the new sled.

One problem we continue to face is ride safe — ride smart.

the lack of volunteers. Since the beginning of NVSA, our volunteer numbers have stayed about the same. We are finding that there are no new people to replace the old ones that have worked hard over the years. If snowmobilers want better trails or even want to keep the standard we have now, they are going to have to spend some volunteer time with their local club. Last year membership went from 700 to 880 members. Surely there must be some people who want the sport to continue and can volunteer some time. Contact your local club or myself if you are interested.

As most of you are aware, the NVSA has been around for five years. The executive feels it has accomplished the original goals it had set out to complete. Our main objectives now are to put the NVSA and the clubs in a position that will sustain snowmobiling in the future. Our challenge is to come up with a business plan to accomplish this goal. If anyone has any comments, ideas or concerns I would be happy to hear from you.

I would also like to congratulate all the dedicated volunteers in the clubs and NVSA who have made snowmobiling the success it is today in our area.

I look forward to representing you for this season and hope to see all of you on the trails this winter.

And remember, stay on the trails and



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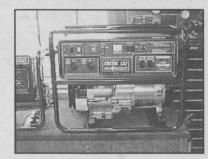
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MOTORSPORTS

# The heart of snowmobiling: the club volunteer

WINCHESTER — Organized snowmobiling has grown by leaps and bounds in Ontario over the past 10 years.

Figures for the 1996/97 season indicate that sledding exerts a billion dollar impact on the provincial economy. Manufacturers and dealers are making a good living from supplying the needs of an ever increasing number of riders.

Hospitality operators have added a second lucrative season to enable their businesses to survive these tough economic times. Snowmobiling-related fuel and sales taxes generate a substantial amount of revenue for provincial (\$73 million) and federal coffers.

With the fast growth of snowmobiling and the key role it plays in so many lives today, it is appropriate that we pause to consider the cornerstone of the industry, the heart of organized snowmobiling. Without this participant, there would be no trails and no future.

Snowmobiling is sustained by one person. Although he or she has many faces, I see a quiet person, trudging through the bush with a chain saw in hand every summer and fall weekend. However, this person could also be taking time off work to wrestle a work permit through the bureaucratic nightmare known as MNR. Or they could be selling raffle tickets or

attending to club paperwork or approaching a stranger about land use permission. This person is the club volunteer, unaware that a whole industry balances on his or her unpaid shoulders

This lack of awareness is just as well, because the industry usually seems to be unaware of the volunteer

The only time the volunteer seems to get noticed is when the beneficiaries of the sport — business people, riders, government — suggest that he is not working hard enough and should have given up every weekend instead of just two out of three.

The riders criticize grooming and signage. The businesses want a new trail so they can cash in on the boom. The OFSC thinks trails should be wider. The government increases regulation until one needs a lawyer to get a simple permit and so on.

The only payback the volunteer gets is pride in a job well done. Let all those who benefit from snowmobiling, industry and rider alike, take a close look at what really makes the heart of snowmobiling beat. Take a close look before the crushing weight of their demands brings cardiac arrest to those who make it all possible. Club volunteers are the heart of snowmobiling. The beat goes on and on and on

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#### **Mountain Trail Blazers**

#### Superb trails, clubhouse await snowmobilers

**by Kerry McCann**MOUNTAIN — There was a time when a snowmobile clubhouse was a little shack in the woods, where tired snowmobilers could stop, light a fire and warm up before continuing on their journey. Sometimes there were supplies on hand to make a cup of hot chocolate or a coffee, but that meant that you had to stay long enough to boil water on the wood stove.

Many of the newer clubhouses such as the Mountain Trail Blazers clubhouse have set a new standard in comfort and convenience. The Trail Blazers have turned what used to be a portable school room into a bright and roomy stopover that many consider to be a destination, rather than just a resting spot.

On the weekends, the clubhouse is manned by volunteers, heated by the wood stove, electrically powered by the club's portable generator and is rarely empty. Snowmobilers exploring the attractive and wellgroomed trails around Mountain may stop in to warm up, but usually they stay to have a cup of hot chocolate, a coffee or a soft drink. Many also decide to try a bowl of chili, a hot dog, a cup of soup or, when available, really excellent chicken wings.

Although the clubhouse is a drawing card, trails are the main attraction and the efforts of members of the Mountain Trail Blazers Snowmobile Club have resulted in trails that are among the best. Visitors to the area now have an opportunity to enjoy the natural landscape and scenery provided by trails that meander across the fields and through woodlots in Mountain Township. Even local residents are pleasantly surprised when they discover that snowmobiling affords them a unique opportunity to enjoy the scenery from a perspective that emphasizes the area's natural beauty.

În 1994 the Mountain Trail Blazers joined with five other area clubs to form a parent organization called the Nation Valley Snowmobile Association (NVSA), which is now responsible for grooming and maintaining all of the member clubs' trails. It has been discovered that a single organization can apply economies of scale, resulting in better and wider trails. In the past few years, the association has also improved the markers and destination signs along the trails. These improvements have resulted in increased membership of the NVSA member clubs.

According to the constitution of

the Mountain Trail Blazers Snowmobile Club, some of the purposes of the club are: "to stimulate and advance the general welfare and safety of snowmobiling", "to serve the interests of snowmobile owners" and "to develop a fraternal spirit among local snowmobilers".

Superb trails and a warm, inviting clubhouse help achieve the above goals, but there's more to it than that. The Mountain Trail Blazers sponsor a number of events related to snowmobiling, such as the grass drags in October or November, the annual Sweetheart Rally and Dance in February, member nights at the clubhouse (also known as wing nights), a children's Christmas party in December and a land owners appreciation banquet in April. During the off season, members are invited to join in a golf day, a camping weekend and a baseball game competing with another club.

Becoming a member is as easy as buying a trail pass from one of the participating local merchants. If you don't own a snowmobile and would still like to participate, you can become a social member.

For more information, contact Rick Cauvier at 613-989-2351, Charlie Berends at 613-826-2414 or Edwin Duncan at 613-989-2838.

#### Did you know?

Snowmobiling generates almost \$1 billion revenue a year in Ontario. Premier Mike Harris has announced that the province is committed to handing over almost \$5 million to the OFSC for upgrading trails and promoting tourism in northern Ontario.

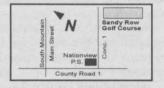


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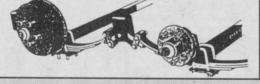
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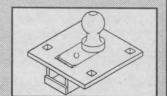
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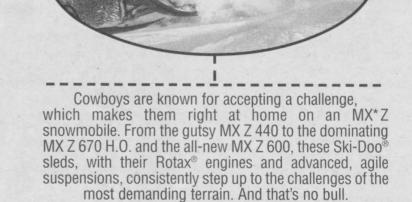


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## Volunteers work tirelessly to ready trails

**by Greg Erwin**HALLVILLE — Well, the mercury is starting to dip, the leaves are long gone and everywhere you look there's red, yellow and blue stakes popping up.

The wife has nearly worn out the starter on her new sled, showing it off to anyone she can drag to the barn, and my trail bosses are walking around like kegs of dynamite ready to explode on anyone who dares to suggest it would be great to get some early snow.

Brushing and clearing trails and installing signage is far tougher when you're wading through a foot of snow. If there's no post in the ground, grooming is next to impossible. Four years ago we buried a groomer in a wet hole near Williamsburg. A lot of hours, some cold men and eventually a hi-hoe got it back

A perfect fall would be much like this one so far — mild and dry. This allows farmers an opportunity to get their crops off and plowing done. We can then disc and sign. Turning cold around the first of December for about two weeks is needed to get a good layer of frost into the ground. Then let it snow. We need a foot or more to justify grooming, however it's usually not until we have two feet or more of snow that we can really start to smooth things out.

A lot of time and effort has been put out over the last few years to rid our trails of some of those rougher spots. The reason is that the smoother the base under the snow the faster and easier we can bring things up to par.

Tight, twisting trails are being straightened and widened as every corner tends to get torn up by stopping and starting, thus requiring more grooming.

A lot of hours are put into planning and preparing your trail system to please both you and the landowner. This makes it very frustrating when signs are damaged, stolen or ignored.

I've been putting a lot of pressure on our wardens to increase patrols against these problems and to prosecute offenders. I know their numbers are few but one bad egg can ruin it for everyone.

In last summer's newsletter I wrote about how there were some strong rumors about trail funding coming down for ice storm clean-up. Well, the rumor was true but no one could have guessed that it could have this much impact.

The ice storm clean-up really goes in two stages. The first stage is the assessment process. This consists of a trail measurement and damage assessment of all clubs done by a professionally trained assessor. This part has been completed already, along with the applications to the grant committee (COBRA).

The second stage is the actual cleanup. This is strictly safety oriented, designed to be done by manual labor only (except in special and pre-approved cases) and must be co-ordinated with the clubs and landowners.

Branches and trees which pose any potential hazard to the trail will be cleared. A lot of time and work has gone into this process. Be sure to thank your trail boss for the effort. However,

because of this extra workload you may find him a little stressed.

It's tough to attend meetings and talk on the phone all week, then have to load up the truck with signs and work all weekend. A handful of volunteers are putting in 20 to 30 hours a week at this time of year for no pay or restitution. This is why they might be a little cranky when approached or forced to deal with

The other parts of the grants which we weren't sure of look like they may be the big surprise. Although it's still a little gray yet as to exactly how much and where these funds can be spent, we could be coming into a windfall for signing, promotional and management purposes. I don't want to go too far hereuntil I get the final OK but it helps NVSA to move towards the next step in trail development and helps to unload the heavy volunteer workload.

Every spring I go whining, crying and begging to the budget committee for more trail funds. This year, thanks to excess budget money from NVSA of \$10,000, a gift of \$2,500 from Mountain Trailblazers and \$1,250 from Pitston

Mainsville snowmobile club, I felt like I'd just broken par at Sandy Row (an event I'm sure is just around the corner anyway).

Last spring I ordered 2,600 more field stakes out of previously acquired money. I've now ordered over 2,000 new trail signs and an additional 500 signs come from the OFSC. We've also spent some money in Mountain to do some bulldozing and install a culvert.

As in every year, there's a lot of trail changes coming your way. Some are minor, possibly just changing how we cross a field in order to get the best snow cover. Other changes are for trail improvement or safety and lastly, the one we don't like, due to lack of access. Like I said, one wrong move can cause a lot of grief.

In Mountain this year we've been granted permission to keep a trail through what is now a sod farm. We've made some big changes in how we're going through here so it's important that you pay attention to the signing. The bent grass sod in these fields is worth \$5 per square yard.

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#### Trails

The entire trail system in the northeast corner of Mountain has major changes. We no longer go through the permanent gravel pit, and the intersection in the pines with trails going to Osgoode, Winchester and Mountain has been moved two kilometres east and a bit north. The top trail north of the train tracks has been swung further east to eliminate some road running and a new house. The branch trail from the top trail at the train tracks into Mountain has been closed.

We've put a new cross trail in, starting just south of South Mountain, running through Sandy Row golf course (stay off the greens or kiss this one good bye) where the restaurant will be open all winter.

The trail then follows Sandy Row road east to the Brinston road and the Mountain and Brinston Trail.

If all goes well we also plan to run a trail into Hallville to access the Vinaigrette restaurant, Hallville Garage and Loughlin's store.

Winchester will once again swing the top trail to Winchester back along its old route and cross Hwy. 31 just north of Ben's Gas Bar. The trail into Morewood is being moved to the west a little. They hope to move around the new trail they put in last year to access their new club house slightly to get rid of some road running. They also plan to get rid of some road running at the end of Gypsy Headline when they get to Chesterville.

Pitston is closing the trail that looped from Dixons Corners past Brinston.

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They've rerouted the east-west trail near Pitston and closed a redundant west loop. Keep in mind, there's still one trail on the west side that's closed. This will be opened when the grant money comes

Finch has done a small reroute of their trail to Newington. There's still no word if Seaway Valley Snowmobile Association can meet us there.

Finch has also run a trail into the Finch Legion. Crysler has done some reroutes first to better access their clubhouse and secondly to improve the route through Crysler. South Dundas has changed the top trail east from Hwy. 31 for better access and less road running. They also have changed the south trail coming into their clubhouse and have closed the trail to Iroquois golf course.

These are all the changes I have for now, however there's usually a few last minute ones we haven't counted on.

As always, take it easy on your first trip through. If the gates are closed or there is no signing done, it could be that the trail has either been moved, closed or just isn't ready yet. In any case, you do not have the right to enter. If you do, you are trespassing and possibly endangering both your life and property by running on an unopened trail.

The damage you cause to our reputation as a responsible sport and our relationship with our landowners is often catastrophic. If you've any questions or ideas please contact your club. Your cooperation and assistance are always greatly appreciation.

#### Snowmobile for Easter Seals Kids

# The Ultimate Snowmobile Event

# Sunday, February 7

Chesterville

For information about starting time and place, please call

Martin Derks 448-3256 or Brent VandenBosch 774-0887

All participants who collect pledges will earn the following high quality Snowarama fundraising incentives:

\$75-\$149.99: Ultra Slim Pocket Light
\$150-\$299.99: Ultra Slim Pocket Light AND 25th Anniversary Baseball Cap
\$300-\$499.99: Ultra Slim Pocket Light, 25th Anniversary Baseball Cap AND 25th Anniversary T-Shirt

\$500-\$999.99: Ultra Slim Pocket Light, 25th Anniversary Baseball Cap, 25th Anniversary T-Shirt AND 25th Anniversary

Sweatshirt
\$1,000-\$2,999.99: Ultra Slim Pocket Light, 25th Anniversary Baseball Cap, 25th Anniversary T-Shirt, 25th Anniversary Sweatshirt AND Multi-season Jacket AND One Entry Ballot into Trip Draw
\$3,000-\$4,999.99: Ultra Slim Pocket Light, 25th Anniversary Baseball Cap, 25th Anniversary T-Shirt, 25th Anniversary Sweatshirt, Multi-season Jacket, E-Z Traxx Lock AND Three Entry Ballots into Trip Draw
\$5,000-\$9,999.99: Ultra Slim Pocket Light, 25th Anniversary Baseball Cap, 25th Anniversary T-Shirt, 25th Anniversary Sweatshirt, Multi-season Jacket, E-Z Traxx Lock AND Five Entry Ballots into Trip Draw
\$10,000+: Ultra Slim Pocket Light, 25th Anniversary Baseball Cap, 25th Anniversary T-Shirt, 25th Anniversary Sweatshirt, Multi-season Jacket, E-Z Traxx Lock AND Ten Entry Ballots into Trip Draw

\*TRIP DRAW: Win tickets for two, anywhere Air Canada flies excluding Asia, India and Middle East. Incentives are cumulative. To be eligible for incentives, all pledge money must be handed in on the day of the event. The Easter Seal, Society, Ontario, reserves the right to substitute prizes of equal or greater value.



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#### New wardens hit the trails

MORRISBURG — Thinking of riding the snowmobile trails this winter without a valid trail pass? Well think

On Thurs., Dec. 3 at the MacIntosh In Morrisburg, new trail wardens will be trained to patrol the trails this winter. If you are caught on the trails this winter without a trail permit it is going to cost you \$160. Club volunteers are fed up with people who are trying to ride for free and not staying on trails.

Keep in mind, without the money from the trail permits, snowmobiling would not be what it is today. The trail permit money goes directly back into trails for grooming, paying groomer operators, safety signs, fuel and administration of the Nation Valley Snowmobile Association (NVSA). This year you will be seeing many new safety signs on the trail. The NVSA has invested \$10,000 into local clubs for safety signs and stakes for the trails.

Trail wardens will also be keeping a close eye on people who are not staying on the marked trails and trespassers such

If you meet a warden on the trail give him/her a wave of support. After all they are the volunteers who are helping to protect the sport of snowmobiling.

If you are an experienced snowmobiler and would like to become a trail warden, contact your local club representative.

#### Snowmobile Operator course offered

by Ray Godard

WINCHESTER — Another snowmobiling season is on our doorstep and club instructors for the Snowmobile Operator course are getting geared up for another busy season.

Most courses are offered in different areas during the months of October, November and December. Some will be offered in January and February, depending on demand.

Participants must be 12 years of age when they register for the course. A copy of a birth certificate or other proof of age must be provided upon registration. The cost of the course this year is \$20.50 some of the instructors will provide a lunch for a small fee.

The course length is six hours. It is recommended that you register early so that participants can have a chance to study the course material before the course date.

The following snowmobile clubs have instructors who offer the course: Eastern Snowmobile Club, Hawkesbury, Casselman; Carleton Regional Snowmobile Club, Sarsfield; Glengarry Snowmobile Club, Green Valley; Seaway Valley Snowmobile Association, Monkland; Riverside Snowmobile Club, Morrisburg; South Dundas Snowmobile Club, Iroquois; Mountain Trail Blazers, Mountain; Osgoode-Carleton Trail Building Club, Vernon, Metcalfe; and Finch North Star Snowmobile Club, Finch.

Should you wish to find a course date in your area, you can call Ray Godard at 613-989-3157. Remember, if your present driver's license is under suspension you cannot receive a Motorized Snow Vehicle License.



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