



Connecting for our clients

A GUIDE TO DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN
EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO AND NON-EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO
SERVICE PROVIDERS



MARCH 2017



Contents

Introduction 3

What is Service Integration? 4

The Link between Service Integration and Communication 8

Effective Communication Strategies 10

Best Practices to Assist with Effective Communication 11

Tips for Internal/Vertical Communication 13

Tips for External/Horizontal Communication 14

Effective Communication in Practice 15

Tools to Assist with Effective Communication 16

Attachment A: Ontario Works/CES Referral Form 18

Introduction

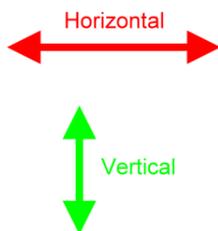
Welcome to the *Guide to Developing Effective Communication between Employment Ontario and Non-Employment Ontario Service Providers*. As a service provider, you undoubtedly have lots of experience with communication. This guide is designed to be a resource to help you with using communication as a tool to develop closer working relationships with other service providers. Why? So that you can work together to best meet the needs of the clients you both serve.

The need to enhance communication within an organization and between organizations working with shared or common clients is something many sectors struggle with. This is true for many service providers in their work with employers and job seekers. Poor communication across and between sectors has often made it more difficult for service providers to offer a cohesive continuum of services to their clients, or to work together to address common issues in the community. According to the Partnering Initiative,

“...partnering is above all a communication challenge, and that, far from being incidental or peripheral, good communication is actually the heart or, perhaps more accurately, the heartbeat of all effective partnering.” (Source: https://business.un.org/documents/resources/talking_the_walk.pdf)



As part of the Local Employment Planning Council’s (LEPC) 2016-2017 Strategic Plan, a goal was identified that states, *“There is a need for more effective communication between and among Employment Ontario and non-Employment Ontario service providers to better support employers and job seekers.”* This guide has been developed to respond to this goal, and to help with developing best practices for effective communication between and among Employment Ontario and non-Employment Ontario service providers.



Communication can be both vertical (between areas/programs in one organization), and horizontal (across multiple service providers/agencies). In this guide you will find content, tips, and resources to help you communicate effectively in both these scenarios.

What is Service Integration?

Service integration is facilitated by agencies that come together to agree on how they will coordinate their services so that clients experience a whole system that works together. This is an ongoing process in which local service providers and stakeholders engage in progressively greater degrees of joint planning and service delivery activity to provide individuals with better access to service. The progressive degrees of joint activity engaged in by service providers can be represented in a continuum. This continuum has five stages of varying inter-organizational relationships. As you move along the continuum, the relationships become more formalized and purposeful (see below).

AWARENESS	COMMUNICATION	COORDINATION	COLLABORATION	INTEGRATION
<p>Level 1 No collaboration</p>	<p>Level 2 Basic collaboration by sharing information</p>	<p>Level 3 Close collaboration with some system integration</p>	<p>Level 4 Close collaboration approaching an integrated system</p>	<p>Level 5 Full collaboration in a transformed, integrated system</p>
Definitions				
<p>Organizations are aware of one another's programs and services, but they organize their activities based solely on their individual agency mandate and planning processes.</p>	<p>Organizations actively share information with each other, but they organize their activities based solely on their individual agency mandate and planning processes.</p>	<p>Organizations use their knowledge of other services to guide and modify their own service activity to avoid duplication and to improve links between services.</p>	<p>Organizations jointly plan the offering of services in their community, and actively modify their own services as a result of advice and input from mutual discussions.</p>	<p>Organizations identify and collect common outcomes and system measures to monitor and analyze the effectiveness of the system. The system evolves to respond to the changing needs of the population.</p>

AWARENESS	COMMUNICATION	COORDINATION	COLLABORATION	INTEGRATION
Key Service Planning Features				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Organizations plan and deliver programs and services according to their own mandate and goals ➤ No coordination or management of collaborative efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Organizations plan and deliver programs and services according to their own mandate and goals and may share their plans with each other ➤ Some provider buy-in to collaboration, and value placed on having needed information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Organizations share information about programs and services and future plans with other groups and receive similar information from community partners for consideration in individual planning and decision-making processes ➤ Organization leaders support integration through mutual problem solving of some system barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Organizations plan and organize programs and services together ➤ Organizations support integration, if funding allows, and put effort into solving some system issues without changing fundamentally how programs and services are offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Organizations plan and organize the system of programs and services for the community and identify providers with the strongest capacity to deliver different components of the system ➤ Organizations collaborate driven by a shared vision for the community ➤ Organizations strongly support integration with expected change in service delivery and resources provided to move forward

AWARENESS	COMMUNICATION	COORDINATION	COLLABORATION	INTEGRATION
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Key Service Delivery Features

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Programs and services are delivered independently ➤ Organizations may never meet in person ➤ Communication between organizations is driven by service provider need ➤ Organizations all have separate funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Programs and services are delivered independently ➤ There is dialogue amongst organizations ➤ Communication between organizations may be driven by specific client issues ➤ Organizations all have separate funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Programs and services are often delivered independently, but may also be available at the same time/ place as other programs and services ➤ Organizations may share resources to address common issues ➤ Organizations may merge resources to create new programs or services ➤ Organizations all have separate funding, but may share grants, office expenses, staffing costs or infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Programs and services are delivered independently, as well as in combination with programs and services from other organizations, when appropriate ➤ Organizations build an interdependent system of services to address issues and opportunities ➤ Organizations are willing to pull resources from existing programs and services to meet community needs ➤ Organizations may have blended funding based on contracts, grants or agreements. There is a structure in place to share expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Programs and services are delivered in locations that best meet the needs of clients ➤ Services are co-located and/or delivered in combination, whenever appropriate ➤ Organizations have integrated funding, based on multiple sources of revenue. Resources are shared and allocated across programs and services, which are provided by more than one organization
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AWARENESS	COMMUNICATION	COORDINATION	COLLABORATION	INTEGRATION
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Questions to Determine Level of Service Coordination

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are organizations aware of programs and services available in the community? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Is information (written or electronic) routinely shared amongst organizations? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do organizations communicate on a regular basis to address specific client issues? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are organizations working together to address system issues for clients? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are resources balanced, truly shared and allocated across the whole system? ➤ Is all client information equally accessible and used by all organizations to inform service provision? ➤ Has leadership in organizations adopted and committed to integration as the model of service delivery for the whole system? ➤ Is there only one “plan” for all clients and do all relevant organizations have access to the plan? ➤ Do organizations track and analyze common outcomes?
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Moving from Concept to Practice

There are a number of groups in Elgin, Middlesex and Oxford that are working together to ensure integrated service delivery to clients. Some examples include:

The Apprenticeship Network ... a membership of 22 individuals and groups working collaboratively to promote apprenticeship as a first-choice career option, and to provide accurate apprenticeship information to employers, youth and job seekers in the Elgin, Middlesex and Oxford county region.

The Ability First Coalition ...a group of business professionals motivating and supporting employers to hire and retain persons with disabilities. The coalition carries out this mandate by bringing employers together to share success stories, best practices and experiences related to hiring and retaining persons with disabilities. The Ability First Coalition works closely with **Partners in Employment**, a collective of service providers committed to helping businesses and employees with disabilities come together.

The Link between Service Integration and Communication

According to many sources and research, effective communication is a key factor to creating and maintaining strong working relationships with other organizations. Communication needs to become a part of the partnership-building process. Working together is, above all, a communication challenge...communication is central to collaboration and collaboration is the basis of working together.

In an earlier document produced by the LEPC (*Best Practices and Approaches in Service Planning*, March 2016), a number of key elements were identified which create successful service integration processes. These include:

Vision and Outcomes	A shared vision and outcomes provide a clear sense of direction to a group. Once a group has defined its vision (what it ultimately wants to achieve) and outcomes (what will be different as a result of its work) the group can very easily identify what actions it needs to take to move toward achieving these two things.
Time to Plan	Have a unifying purpose, set measurable goals and objectives and then develop a work plan to achieve them. Make sure meetings are effective.
Governance	Establish a terms of reference for the group, including mandate, guiding principles, leadership, membership, roles and responsibilities, decision making structure, guidelines for working together, etc.
Leadership	Effective leadership of the group is critical. The group leader should be boundary spanning and portray a collaborative and inclusive style.

Inclusivity	Membership in the group must be open and a common language should be developed.
Communication	Open, clear and frequent communication and information sharing is required.
Relationship Building	Strong working relationships need to be built. Positive working relationships are founded in trust, mutual respect and understanding. Conflicts are resolved in a respectful manner.
Resources	Key resources must be in place for the group to achieve success. Key resources include: leadership, funding, staff, materials and time.
Results and Evaluation	The planning group must evaluate its results. Is it achieving the outcomes it has delineated?

These process-related elements are repeated in the following list of guiding principles for successful multi-sector collaborations (Source: <http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/documents/cmho-pos-multi-sector-collaboration-2014.pdf>).

1. A **common vision and voice** across sectors focuses on improving positive experiences and outcomes
2. **Sustained leadership** is demonstrated through the use of best practices in collaboration, engagement, decision-making, knowledge exchange, communication and resource distribution
3. **Relationship building** is rooted in the concerted efforts of organizations and agencies to build genuine, trusting and long-lasting relationships, with shared missions and priorities
4. **Collective responsibility** for processes, structures, decision-making, outcomes and for providing optimal access and services
5. **Authority and decision making** are clear, consistent and transparent
6. A **shared care approach**, supported by recognized specialist expertise is acknowledged
7. **Proactive, planned and purposeful actions** take place at the individual, local and system levels
8. **Effective communication**, transparency and accountability support credible and trusting partnerships and contribute to successful planning and delivery of services
9. **Linguistically and culturally sensitive, inclusive and respectful collaboration** acknowledges the potential for gaps in service coverage for vulnerable populations and promotes multi-sector collaboration that values the views and unique needs of stakeholders and partners
10. **Common and integrated data** is used to inform planning, processes and decision making
11. **Goals, expected outcomes and processes are evaluated**, monitored and communicated

In both of these lists, you see that communication is named as one of the items that helps to create successful service integration.

Moving from Concept to Practice

The **Oxford Workforce Development Partnership** was initiated in 2010. It is a community driven partnership that was developed based on the needs of/feedback from employers. What local service providers discovered was that all of them were being told by employers that employers were having difficulty accessing labour. The attraction and retention of skilled labour became the **common agenda** for the group, bringing them all to a shared table.

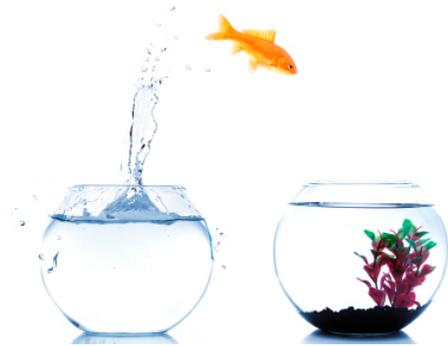
The partnership has a “Collaborative Agreement and Statement of Commitment” which outlines the group’s goals, guiding principles, and the partnering organization’s commitments. This document is signed by the organization.



How are you using communication as a tool to deliberately help increase the impact of your collaborative efforts?

Effective Communication Strategies

The quality of transitions between sectors is central to integrated service for clients. Due to this, communication strategies at the interface between two sectors (transition points for clients) require system and structural support. Organizations need to be accountable for these transitions, and what will help with this are: clear policies, well-defined roles and responsibilities for key personnel, standardized procedures, interactive communication protocols, and adequate technical and human resources in place to provide support.



Tip

Use interactive communication at client transition points versus one way communication (i.e. faxing a referral form). This allows for discussion to occur amongst the service providers and client.

Research has shown that **interactive communication** is the most effective at these transition points. Interactive communication is two-way, purposeful interaction, whether face-to-face or telephone, or joint video-conferencing involving the client and service providers (Source: <http://www.phcris.org.au/publications/researchroundup/issues/27.php>).



How are you communicating with service providers when you are referring a client to them?

Tip

Agreements with service providers about how you will work with each other, including how you will communicate with each other, are key.

In addition to interactive communication, research shows that there is benefit to ***communicating using multiple strategies***. For example: emailing the service provider, using a discharge plan, using agreed formats and arrangements to get information to the service provider, providing copies of information to the client. Some of these strategies rely on system-wide agreements to make them work.

Moving from Concept to Practice

In Oxford County, Community Employment Service (CES) agencies have Ontario Works (OW) caseworkers located in each of their sites. The OW caseworker refers all clients looking for employment to an Employment and Career Consultant. Being in the same building ensures the client has a “warm transfer” between services.

Beyond the face-to-face communication that comes with being located in the same building, the two organizations use an OW-CES Referral Form. This referral form requires the OW client to register with the CES office and develop an action plan with an Employment and Career Consultant in order to find employment. It is monitored by both OW and CES to support the client, as appropriate. See Attachment A for a copy of the Referral Form.

Best Practices to Assist with Effective Communication

There are a number of best practices that can assist with increasing the effectiveness of communication amongst organizations (Source: A Best Practice Guide for Successful Multi-Agency Centres, QUILL, 2013

<http://www.lsc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Webinar%20%20Best%20Practice%20Guide%20for%20Multi-Agency%20centres%20and%20appendices.pdf>). These are included on the following page:

Best Practices

<p>Create a formal partnership agreement amongst all agencies that describes the common vision of the group. A sample memorandum of understanding can be found on page 66 of the documents found at http://www.cssp.org/community/constituents-co-invested-in-change/community-decision-making/Making-a-Difference-in-Your-Neighborhood-A-Handbook-for-Using-Community-Decision-Making-to-Improve-the-Lives-of-Children-Youth-and-Families.pdf</p>
<p>Create common principles of partnership and have everyone sign off. Examples could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies will work in partnership without self-interest or competition • Agencies will avoid duplication in services • Agencies will partner in marketing services so the community has clarity on who does what
<p>Develop confidentiality and release of information forms</p>
<p>Develop client profiles. A standard 'who is our client' can help with referrals and provide a greater understanding of who each agency serves</p>
<p>Hold information sharing days where staff can be oriented to the different agencies</p>
<p>Give staff from different agencies time together to foster mutual understanding and informed dialogue. This can be through inter-agency training, presentations, agency tours or 'shadow' visits</p>
<p>Have a calendar that lists all agencies' information (workshops, special events, courses start dates, etc.) displayed in a common area of the agency and on websites</p>
<p>Create transparent lines of communication through the development of communication protocols</p>
<p>Encourage face-to-face meetings and a mix of formal and informal modes of communication</p>
<p>Ensure that all agency staff understand all terms or acronyms from within agencies and provide definitions of the most common terms. Create a common language</p>
<p>Consider an inter-agency case management approach for when clients are accessing more than one agency at a time. Such is the case at the Work BC (www.workbc.ca) program where clients potentially needing case management services are identified at reception during their initial visit, or while accessing the self-serve resource area, and are offered formal needs assessments to determine their employment needs and readiness and confirm the need for case management. In this case management model, supports that are needed are clearly identified as well as who will provide them</p>
<p>Develop a checklist of all agencies involved with the same client</p>
<p>Implement common assessment and referral protocols</p>



Are we doing anything that could or should be considered a best practice?

Tips for Internal/Vertical Communication

When working with other organizations on service integration, communicating within your own organization is also important. Tips for internal/vertical communication include (Source: Talking the Walk: A Communication Manual for Partnership Practitioners, https://business.un.org/documents/resources/talking_the_walk.pdf):

Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify good practice from the partnerships and disseminate widely• Regularly disseminate information and stories about the partnership and partnership activities• Identify, articulate and disseminate targeted lessons from the partnership to senior and operational staff
Engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invite more people from the organization to partnership meetings• Include more people in working groups and tasks• Give more people roles to speak, act or champion on behalf of the partnership• Provide volunteering opportunities for groups of staff at all levels• Engage wider groups of people as advisors, etc.
Acknowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acknowledge, value and reward individuals' contributions• Create social interaction opportunities• Organize large scale, original events and activities to celebrate and publicize achievements• Ask others for recognition that endorses the partnership
Transform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build a greater organizational capacity for partnering• Arrange visit to projects• Arrange personnel exchanges between partner organizations• Help to internalize new ways of operating learnt through the partnership within the organization



How am I communicating the work I am doing with other service providers/ organizations to the rest of my organization? What can I be doing to make this communication more effective?

Tips for External/Horizontal Communication

Tips for effective communication when working with other service providers/organizations collectively include (Source: Talking the Walk: A Communication Manual for Partnership Practitioners, https://business.un.org/documents/resources/talking_the_walk.pdf):

Clarify	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clear about each communication objective • Make sure partners adhere to a common party line • Consider the budget implications and allocate resources to communications • Base communication strategy on a needs assessment
Design and Implement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance rigour with creativity • Tell good stories (e.g. how obstacles were turned into opportunities) • Be creative and draw on those who communicate well • Measure impact and effectiveness
Evolve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure your communication activities evolve during the life of the partnership • Give opportunities for feedback on communication products, and change as necessary • Think of layers of communication over time and at different levels
Be Principled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be honest and authentic in whatever you put into the public domain • Recognize the importance of communication in building genuine trust and transparency between partners and on behalf of the partnership • Link communication efforts to stakeholders' right to information

Tips

Be aware of your partners' preferred avenues for communicating and use them (i.e. face to face conversations, email, office phone, cell phone, text, etc.)

Stay open to continued suggestions and conversations about communication.



Do all partners we are working with feel that they have an adequate amount of information? Are we communicating in the right ways?

Effective Communication in Practice: Oxford Workforce Development Partnership

The Oxford Workforce Development Partnership is unique in that it is not a formal organization. It is a partnership of multiple organizations that operates based on a philosophy of working together versus having a formalized organizational structure. This partnership has become a vehicle for organizations to work collaboratively, and to provide a one stop approach by all organizations to employers and clients. This is service integration in action!

Communication is critical to the success of this partnership. For the first six months, the group met and talked about what each agency was doing. They celebrated the good work happening in the community, and identified things they wanted to work on. They developed a Strategic Plan and then picked an action item that had impact for all of the partners at the table (i.e. immigration portal). This allowed for all of them to share in the first success of the partnership.

The partnership has developed a number of tools to assist with communication amongst service providers, clients, and employers. Some of these tools include:

- Recruitment tools - All programs and services are integrated directly into the www.WorkinOxford.ca platform. This website includes a Virtual Job Fair tool to provide employers with timely access to skill recruitment
- Formal referral protocols for service delivery organizations and peripheral organizations, resulting in warm referrals to any or all appropriate services
- The provision of itinerate services in County libraries to address transportation challenges in rural communities
- Use of a virtual format with real time support via a Virtual Counsellor tool. This approach is further complimented utilizing texting on cell phones between counsellors and clients to allow interaction without significant economic challenges to the job seeker
- Full service integration in the area of employment, with multiple service providers are co-located or within very close proximity to provide ease of access and flow of information. Co-located organizations within our sites include: Ontario Works, Literacy, Gateway to Learning, Settlement Services, Employment Solutions, Fanshawe Essential Skills, Community Options for Justice, and Domestic Abuse Services Oxford
- Ontario Works is situated in all Employment Ontario sites (formal agreement between the two organizations)

Communication extends beyond the circle of the partnership, with a broader commitment to working in the whole community in an integrated and holistic way. The work of the partnership is being integrated into the broader work in the community, working on such initiatives as Future Oxford, and the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, and integrating the work of the partnership with other planning tables (Social Planning Council, Future Oxford, Partnership, and United Way). These groups are working closely together to ensure that their efforts are having maximum impact in the community. Communication is facilitated amongst these groups through co-location and monthly meetings.

Tools to Assist with Effective Communication

There are a number of tools that can help to assist with effective communication between and within organizations. Some of these have been mentioned in this guide. More formal agreements such as a partnership agreement or a memorandum of understanding, and tools such as referral protocols and forms can assist. See below for a list of sample agreements, protocols, and forms.

Sample Agreements/MOUs

Sample Partnering Agreement (p. 47)

<http://thepartneringinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Partnering-Toolbook-en-20113.pdf>

Sample Memorandum of Understanding (p. 66)

<http://www.cssp.org/community/constituents-co-invested-in-change/community-decision-making/Making-a-Difference-in-Your-Neighborhood-A-Handbook-for-Using-Community-Decision-Making-to-Improve-the-Lives-of-Children-Youth-and-Families.pdf>

MOU Template for Partnerships

<http://www.tools4dev.org/resources/memorandum-of-understanding-mou-template/>

Sample Referral Protocols/Forms

Oxford County Community Employment Service (CES)/Ontario Works (OW) Referral Form

See Attachment A

Employment Ontario Services Durham, Referral Protocol

<http://literacynetwork.ca/pdf/transitions/Durham%20Referral%20Protocol%202013.docx>

Community Partner Referral Form (Peterborough)

<http://literacynetwork.ca/pdf/transitions/community%20referral%20tool%20peterborough.docx>

Referral Protocol Process (Northwestern Employment Ontario Service Delivery Partners)

<http://literacynetwork.ca/pdf/transitions/nwo%20referral%20protocol%20process.docx>

Common Referral Form (Northwestern Employment Ontario Service Delivery Partners)

<http://literacynetwork.ca/pdf/transitions/nwo%20common%20referral%20form.docx>

Inter-Agency Client Referral Form (Mid-North Network)

<http://literacynetwork.ca/pdf/transitions/mid%20north%20network%20referral%20form%20012.docx>

Referral Toolkit (Waterloo/Wellington)

<http://literacynetwork.ca/pdf/transitions/waterloo-Wellington%20Referral%20Toolkit.docx.pdf>

Common Referral Form for Ontario Works, ES and LBS providers (Sudbury)

http://literacynetwork.ca/pdf/transitions/sudbury%20E%20-REFERRAL%20to%20EWT_Sept%202011.docx

Referral Protocol Policy (Tillsonburg Multi-Service Centre)

<http://literacynetwork.ca/pdf/transitions/MS%20referral%20protocol.doc>

Electronic Referral for Services Form (Simcoe County)

<http://literacynetwork.ca/pdf/transitions/Simcoe%20Electronic%20Referral%20for%20Services%20Form.pdf>

Referral Card (Gateway Centre for Learning)

<http://literacynetwork.ca/pdf/transitions/Gateway%20Referral%20Card.pdf>

Attachment A: Ontario Works/CES Referral Form

Date: _____

Community
Employment Services
40 Metcalfe Street
Woodstock, ON

Multi-Service Centre
96 Tillson Avenue
Tillsonburg, ON

Women's Employment
Resource Centre
424 Dundas Street
Woodstock, ON

This purpose of this letter is to introduce _____

who is required to register with Employment Ontario and maintain regular appointments with an Employment Consultant until employment is found.

CES Activity Recommendation

- Resume
- Career Exploration
- Job Search Assistance
- Workshops

This form must be returned to your caseworker by -----

Ontario Works Caseworker -----

Contact Information -----

Employment & Career Consultant -----

Contact Information -----

CES Action Plan

Failure to return this form by the specified date may result in suspension, reduction or termination of Ontario Works assistance.

Produced by:



3 – 647 Wilton Grove Rd., London, ON N6N 1N7

Tel: 519.672.3499 ext. 103

Fax: 519.672.9089

www.localemploymentplanning.ca

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