

For Immediate Release
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ONTARIO MOVES FORWARD TO OPEN ADOPTION RECORDS

*New Legislation Would Provide Greater Openness In The Future,
Protect Privacy For Past Adoptions*

TORONTO – The Ontario government has introduced new legislation that will, if passed, help enshrine openness in future adoption records while providing a disclosure veto for people involved with past adoptions, Minister of Community and Social Services Madeleine Meilleur announced today.

“We strongly believe that people should be able to learn about their own personal history,” said Meilleur. “The legislation, if passed, will make open adoption records a cornerstone of Ontario’s adoption laws. At the same time, it would safeguard the privacy of those involved in past adoptions.”

The new legislation would, if passed, allow adult adoptees and birth parents, whose adoptions were registered in Ontario, to:

- Apply for copies of their adoption orders and birth registrations
- Place a disclosure veto on their file if their adoption order is made in Ontario before September 1, 2008.

In addition, anyone who chooses to place a disclosure veto on their file would be asked to voluntarily provide their medical history so that birth relatives may be able to obtain personal health information.

Adult adoptees and birth parents may continue to place a no-contact notice on their file if they do not want to be contacted. They may also register a notice specifying a contact preference on how they prefer to be contacted.

Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner Dr. Ann Cavoukian today applauded the government for including a privacy-protective disclosure veto in the new bill. “This disclosure veto will preserve the privacy of a number of deeply concerned birth parents and adoptees, while still allowing the vast majority of birth parents and adoptees to obtain the information they are seeking.” The Commissioner is deeply grateful to the Government for making these important changes, allowing the Bill to strike the right balance.

The legislation is consistent with the recent Ontario Superior Court of Justice decision of September 19, 2007 and the views of Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Wendy Rowney, president of Adoptions Search and Kinship and a member of the coordinating committee for the Coalition for Open Adoption Records, stresses the importance of this legislation for adult adoptees: "Finally, the vast majority of adult adoptees in Ontario will have access to a historically accurate birth certificate."

"We believe that it is in everyone's best interest to move quickly with these changes," said Meilleur. "We are committed to helping adoptees and birth parents get as much information as possible – important information about their past."

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