

For Immediate Release
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ONTARIO FULFILLS ITS COMMITMENT TO DELIVER NEW ADOPTION INFORMATION LAWS

Legislation Balances The Right To Know With The Right To Protect Privacy

TORONTO – Ontario is delivering a new, more open adoption information disclosure system that will make it easier for adult adoptees and birth parents to learn about their past, Minister of Community and Social Services Madeleine Meilleur announced today.

“This new information disclosure system makes it easier for adoptees and birth parents to get the information they have been looking for, while also protecting the privacy of those who do not wish to be contacted,” said Meilleur. “We made a promise and today I am proud to say we are delivering on that commitment.”

On September 17, 2007, the Ontario government will be implementing the last phase of Bill 183, the Adoption Information Disclosure Act, 2005. At that time, adult adoptees and birth parents, whose adoptions were finalized in Ontario, will be able to apply for information in adoption orders and original birth records.

“We are excited to see Ontario take a leadership role by allowing adoptees and birth parents to access their adoption records,” said Professor Michael Grand, a member of the coordinating committee of the Coalition for Open Adoption Records (COAR). “The new legislation is based on the best research and practices surrounding information exchange.”

Implementation of the new legislation builds on the privacy protections that have been in place since January 31, 2007. Since that time, adult adoptees and birth parents have been able to:

- Place a “no contact” notice on their file if they do not want to be contacted.
- Register a notice specifying a “contact preference” on how they prefer to be contacted.
- Apply to the Child and Family Services Review Board for an order to prevent disclosure of identifying information if there are concerns regarding sexual harm or significant physical/emotional harm.

Adult adoptees have also been able to register a “waiver of protection” that will allow the Ontario Registrar General to release information to a birth parent even though the adopted person was a victim of abuse.

“The new legislation will give adult adoptees and birth parents the ability to find the information they have been looking for,” said Karen Lynn, president of the Canadian Council of Natural Mothers and a member of the COAR coordinating committee. “It treats adult adoptees and birth parents with the respect they deserve.”

This is just one more example of how, working together, Ontarians have achieved results in strengthening Ontario by strengthening Ontario's families. Other results include:

- Launching a new public awareness website on accessibility called AccessON.ca, which challenges attitudes and encourages all Ontarians to learn about barriers to accessibility;
- Providing nearly \$19 million for rent banks to assist vulnerable low-income tenants who are experiencing a short-term financial crisis so they can stay in their homes.
- Implementing a new Ontario Child Benefit to help nearly 1.3 million children in low-income families.

“Finally, adult adoptees in Ontario will have the same opportunities as everyone else,” said Wendy Rowney, president of Adoption Search and Kinship and a member of the COAR coordinating committee. “The opportunity to get their original birth records and the opportunity to learn about their past.”

“We’re moving Ontario’s adoption information laws into the 21st century,” said Meilleur. “Adoptees and birth parents will finally be able to learn more about their past and their identity.”

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