



CHOICES

Spring 2005 Newsletter

Issue 5

*Every child deserves
a permanent and loving family*

CHOICES
Adoption &
Counselling Services

*Working locally and
globally for children to have
permanent loving families*

For more on Bill C-246, see
"Tax Credit Bill"

www.adoption.ca/news/041020tax.htm

A summary of the adoption
tax credit is at
"Supplementary Information"
www.fin.gc.ca/budget05/bp/bpa8ae.htm#IncomeTax

The wording to amend the
Income Tax Act is at "Annex
8 - Tax Measures"
www.fin.gc.ca/budget05/bp/bpa8be.htm#NoticeITA

Adoption Expense Tax Credit

The federal government today introduced the very measure which opposition party members have sought for years. The 2005 Budget includes a tax credit based on up to \$10,000 in adoption expenses and worth up to \$1,600.

The "Adoption Expense Tax Credit", says the Budget Document, is "a non-refundable tax credit to recognize specified adoption expenses, up to a maximum of \$10,000. This measure will be effective as of the 2005 taxation year, and is estimated to reduce federal revenues by \$5 million per year." The aim is "to give adoptive parents tax relief for "exceptional costs" which are unique to adoption, including adoption agency and legal fees".

The way that Finance Minister Ralph Goodale will "recognize" your adoption expenses is by giving you a credit for 16% of your expenses. That means the most you could save on your 2005 income tax is \$1,600 per adoption finalized in 2005. (Since the credit comes into effect in 2005, it doesn't apply to adoptions finalized in 2004 or earlier.)

The federal tax credit of up to \$1,600 pales in comparison to the one in Québec. Québec's Adoption Tax Credit allows adopters to deduct 30% of adoption expenses. Since maximum expenses allowed are \$20,000, Quebecers can save up to \$6,000 on their provincial income tax. Even more generous is the United States, where you get a tax credit of up to US\$10,390 for adoption expenses (about Can\$12,500).

M.P. Jay Hill, who worked hard trying to get an adoption expenses bill passed, said he is "thrilled federal Liberals gave in after a four-year battle". His Bill C-246 seeks a federal tax deduction of up to \$10,000 for adoption expenses. (A tax deduction lets you deduct expenses from your income, whereas a tax credit is subtracted from the income tax you owe.)

Mr. Hill, Official Opposition House Leader and Conservative M.P. for Prince George-Peace River, said in a statement today, "For four years I have been fighting this battle to have the Canadian tax system reflect the tremendous contribution to society made by adoptive parents and adoption in general. To see the overall provisions of C-246 written into the budget is one of the most rewarding moments I have ever experienced as a Member of Parliament. I've always said it didn't matter whether it was my bill or some form of government legislation that got the job done. All that matters is that the incredible financial burden that adoptive parents willingly accept to give a child a family and a home has been lightened."

Here are details of the federal adoption tax credit.

The credit

Adoptive parents may claim up to \$10,000 in eligible expenses for any particular adoption. (The amount will be indexed after 2005.) It's a 16% non-refundable credit. When calculating your tax payable, you get to deduct 16% of up to \$10,000 in expenses during the "adoption period". That's a maximum saving of \$1,600. The adoption period starts when you open an adoption file with your provincial or territorial ministry responsible for adoption, or with a licensed adoption agency. It ends at finalization. "Non-refundable" means that if the credit takes you past the point of owing zero taxes, you wouldn't be refunded any excess. (And if the government owed you a tax refund, then the adoption tax credit wouldn't be worth anything to you.) The credit may be split between two adoptive parents, but combined expenses can't exceed \$10,000.

Eligible expenses

- * Fees paid to an adoption agency licensed by a provincial or territorial government.
- * Court costs; legal and administrative expenses.
- * Reasonable travel and living expenses for child and adoptive parents.
- * Document translation fees.
- * Mandatory fees paid to a foreign institution.
- * Any other reasonable expenses required by a provincial or territorial government or an adoption agency licensed by a provincial or territorial government.

Adoptions which qualify

The tax credit takes effect in the 2005 taxation year. The year in which the adoption order is issued is the year in which you can claim expenses. So for an adoption finalized in 2005, you can claim for expenses dating back to when you opened an adoption file with a government or private adoption agency, even if they were before 2005. An adoption finalized in 2004 or earlier wouldn't qualify, and you couldn't claim for any expenses.

You must submit proof of an adoption in the form of a Canadian or foreign adoption order, or otherwise show you've met all the legal requirements of the jurisdiction you live in.

EVENTS

Waiting Parent Support Group

For couples waiting to adopt, CHOICES is offering a Waiting Parents' Support Group on the second Thursday of every other month at CHOICES office in Victoria, BC. For more information contact our office.

American Adoption Congress

proudly presents The 27th Annual Adoption Conference "Don't Gamble with

Truth in Adoption"

Recognizing the complex relationships between adoptees, birthparents, and adoptive parents. Please join us for four days of exciting, educational, and informative speakers and their well-developed presentations.

July 6 - 10, 2005

The Palace Station Hotel

Las Vegas, Nevada

Website:

americanadoptioncongress.org

Please contact the Adoptive Parents Association for a list of events and orientation sessions in your community www.bcadoption.com

You may wish to peruse the website parentsupportbc.ca This support network promotes healthy relationships, supporting parenting, families and communities

For women interested in joining a local infertility support group, please contact by email: infertilitysupport@shaw.ca

Intercountry Information Session in Nanaimo

CHOICES Adoption and Counselling Services will be holding an Information Session in Nanaimo, BC

Speakers will be addressing a range of services offered by CHOICES. Yulin Deng of Family Outreach International, will discuss the process of adopting from China.

Families who have adopted domestically, from China, Russia, and the United States will also share their stories.

Date: Saturday April 9, 2005

Time: 2:00pm

Location: 1233 Kiwanis Crescent in the Kiwanis complex behind Nanaimo Regional Hospital.

Intercountry Program Update

CHOICES continues to offer international adoption placement from the following countries: China, Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Armenia, The Philippines, United States, Haiti, Ethiopia, Brazil, St. Vincent, India, Pakistan, and Nepal. If you have been waiting on our domestic registry and would like to consider other options, please contact our office and speak to a social worker about the various international programs.

Russia Program Update

Our Russia In-House Facilitation Program is actively preparing dossiers and working with coordinators in regions across Russia. We are mostly working in the Vladivostok area, but are excited to now also be conducting adoptions out of the Perm region, an area closer to Moscow. The main difference between these two regions is how proposals are handled: in Vladivostok, the information about the child is provided to the parents prior to travel, whereas in Perm, parents receive the information on their first trip to Russia. Some families with dossiers currently registered in Vladivostok may be interested in transferring regions. If you would like more information about Perm, or about our Russia Program in general, please contact CHOICES and ask for Rachel Warren.

We are pleased to introduce our new Practicum Students:

Sheryl Shermak

I live on Hornby Island and in Victoria.

I am a self-educated naturalist, owner of three retriever dogs, Arthritis Society volunteer, and an enthusiast of world storytelling traditions.

I am on a path of lifelong learning and I am just completing my second undergraduate degree. As part of my latest degree I have become a practicum student with CHOICES; with my personal intent to expand my field of practical, social work knowledge. I am a reunited, adoptee but I knew so little about adoption practice.

Upon completing my current degree I look forward to graduate training that will allow me to become a specialist in death studies and bereavement counselling. My career interests come from dealing with the loss of several close loved ones since I was a child.

Jessica Alptun

I am from Malmo, the south part of Sweden and study Social Work at the University of Lund. I love to work with people and that is the main reason that I chose to study Social Work. In the future I would like to work with children or youths with special needs. My interest about adoptions started many years ago when I planned to work at an orphanage in Romania. Now I think that by working at an adoption agency, I can help more.

In Sweden, I work in a circus school in the evenings. I am a trainer for children between the ages of 4-16. I am an air acrobatic and train the children to walk the tight rope, do the trapeze and do tricks on fabric. In my spare time I like to work out.

I am doing my practicum/internship here in Victoria BC because I love to travel and see parts of the world, I really like Canada and I think it is good to have the opportunity to compare the Swedish ways to the Canadian ways.

Birth Mother's Support Group continues to have successful sessions. Feedback and support offered through this group has been invaluable to these courageous women.

To inquire further, contact any MCFD office or phone 1.877 ADOPT 07

"I would like to thank Cheryl Haywood for being a flexible, clear, knowledgeable, creative, responsible and pleasant social worker who is a dream to work with when placing a child"
Adoptive Parent

Congratulations to all the families that have recently begun the amazing journey of parenthood!!!

Older Children Need Families Too!

We encourage families to consider adopting an older child, either through one of our international programs, or locally through the Ministry for Children and Family Development. There are currently over 22,000 children in foster care who are waiting for families right here in Canada, and many more older children waiting overseas. If you would like more information regarding your options for an older child adoption and the benefits and rewards associated with older child adoption, please contact our office.

British Columbia's Waiting Children Profiles

These profiles feature children in the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development who are available for adoption.

Mike

Birth date: October 1990 Race: Caucasian

Mike is an amusing, playful and dramatic young man who enjoys riding his bike, using the computer, and swimming. He has a pronounced interest in the weather: watching weather reports, discussing weather conditions and studying all aspects of the weather. In fact, Mike has become quite the weather expert!

He is honest, sensitive and shy, and is learning how to build and maintain friendships. Mike is comfortable playing with younger children and relates well to and enjoys attention from adults. He has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Mike has had therapeutic support to manage his own personal boundaries and respect the personal boundaries of others. He continues to learn socially appropriate behaviours and to build skills toward independence.

Mike attends school full time, has an adapted academic program and receives additional support from school staff. He loves to read books, magazines and newspapers, and of course –learning more about the weather! Mike really likes pets, particularly cats and dogs, and would like a forever family that has or is willing to get pets. Mike would benefit from a family that has an understanding of developmental delays and that would be willing to maintain contact with his birth siblings. A home with other children in the family would be fine, particularly if the children are close in age to, or older than Mike.

Trixie

Birth date: February 1998 Race: Caucasian

Trixie is described as endearing and delightful. She loves playing with other children, and is friendly and affectionate towards adults. Trixie especially enjoys infants, as she often approaches baby strollers to "meet and greet" the babies. This is definite evidence of her charming and curious nature!

Trixie attends school on a full time basis where she has one on one support throughout the day. She also receives assistance for her fine motor skill development and for her language development. Trixie is diagnosed with an intellectual disability, and functions below her age level, resulting in limited vocabulary and cognitive skills. Like many other children, Trixie does have temper tantrums sometimes, but nothing that a little re-direction can't fix.

Trixie really likes reading books, and especially likes music. If music is playing, she enjoys singing along. In addition, Trixie likes to watch children's programs on the television.

This sweet girl would do best in a home that can provide consistency, structure and supervision. An understanding and patience for Trixie's unique needs would be essential. Trixie may want to stay in contact with members of her birth family and her current foster family, so a family that would support openness is important also.

CHOICES would like to thank Taya Ranschaert for her great work as volunteer with us.

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we welcome your comments

Mary Ellen's Surprise!

Mary Ellen, a single mom, adopted a five month old infant from Nepal. Maya is her name. Mary Ellen's trip to Nepal was indeed an experience of a lifetime. Upon arrival, she was greeted by her facilitator who works with families adopting from Nepal. Mary Ellen stayed at a hotel where the staff were wonderful and very accommodating. Their services went above and beyond her expectations.

Mary Ellen found the people of Nepal to be very warm and laid back. The majority of the population is extremely poor. Mary Ellen found the local Nepalese community to be supportive of her adoption of a Nepalese child. English is not widely spoken, although taxi drivers and many hotel staff can communicate in English.

Mary Ellen was told that Nepalese families who chose adoption feel more comfortable placing their children with Canadian parents. Like Maya, most of the children that are placed for adoption are generally healthy. Nepalese children that Mary Ellen encountered were equally all very happy, and content despite their poor social conditions. Most adoptive parents are not prepared for the poverty they witness in Nepal.

Mary Ellen thinks of Maya's birth family every day. Through her church and friends, she is trying to raise sufficient funds to send Maya's siblings to school. Twenty dollars per month is sufficient to send a child to private school in Nepal. Keeping in touch is difficult as the birth family does not have an address or access to a computer. However, Mary Ellen continues to make efforts to stay in touch with them and provide updates on Maya's development.

Mary Ellen was prepared for the love that she felt for Maya, but she was not prepared for the emotions that she felt for Maya's birth family. Mary Ellen was surprised to realize that when you adopt a child, you adopt a family.

Adopted kids catch up - in time, studies show

BRENDA BRANSWELL The Montreal Gazette -

February 25, 2005

Many children adopted abroad initially play a bit of developmental catch-up. But Montreal pediatrician Jean-Francois Chicoine says he believes most of them, by age 6, will have motor and cognitive skills that approach the average level for their age.

That isn't a casual observation. Chicoine has been tracking the development of about 140 children who have been seen numerous times in their young lives. They will be evaluated again this spring when they reach 6 or 7 years old.

Another long-term study by researchers on the West Coast shows positive adoption experiences can make a difference to even those children who suffered the deprivation of prolonged stays in institutions.

Chicoine said the results of tests carried out at Ste. Justine Hospital's international health clinic and the Laboratoire d'etude du nourrisson at the Universite du Quebec a Montreal are so interesting the researchers have decided to re-evaluate the same group of kids when they are 6 or 7 years old.

All the children, regardless of country of origin or condition at birth, initially functioned slightly under the average for children their age, he said. This shows "they function below (the average) in terms of motor and cognitive skills and that they need structure from their parents and adapted services to help them improve - and not just love."

The children in the study are divided into three groups: eastern European - mostly Russian - Chinese, and Asian, which includes South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam.

The recovery curve, however, isn't the same for the eastern European children, who have more medical problems, Chicoine said.

At Simon Fraser University, Lucy LeMare, a professor of early child development and education, has evaluated the progress of children adopted in Romania at 11 months, 4½ and 10½ years old. The study has found children under 4 months old when they were adopted from Romania function as well as Canadian-born children raised in their birth homes.

Not so for the Romanian children who spent longer in institutions before they were adopted: "As a group, (they) are doing significantly less well in all domains assessed - intellectual, peer relationships, family relationships, you name it," LeMare said. (There is a huge variability within the group, with some kids "doing just fine.")

However, she said, the impact of their ordeal is easing with time, with the children functioning better at age 10½. "What that indicates is that there are factors that have occurred since they've been adopted that are making a (positive) difference as well."

LeMare said the vast majority of adoptive parents have found it to be a rewarding experience despite the challenges: about 80 per cent "would do it over again in a heartbeat," she said.