

Future of Adoption

The world of adoption is changing quickly. There continue to be abandoned children in numerous countries, and, infertility seems to be increasing. Will parents and children continue to find each other as they have in the past? For many reasons, the face of adoption in Canada is changing and doors are closing for adoptive parents. What role can Sunrise play in shaping the future of adoption in Canada?

What are the factors that are closing doors for adopting parents?

Increased Support for Birth Mothers

In Canada, the number of newborn babies placed in local adoptions has decreased dramatically, falling to five percent of the former totals over the past thirty years. The reasons for this include increased financial support for young mothers, greater acceptability of single parenthood, and peer pressure on teenage moms to keep their babies. Many other countries are experiencing similar changes in social programs and societal norms. As a result, fewer babies are available for adoption in other countries.

Increased Worldwide Demand

Increasingly parents throughout the world are considering **adoption**. This increased demand is causing some countries to close their doors to international **adoption**. Countries have longer and longer waiting lists. While the **adoption** doors may remain open, it will only be for a few because of the small number of children available. With very few exceptions, gone are the days of "**adoption** programs" with specific countries. We seem to be heading towards **adoption** gridlock where the number of parents wanting to adopt exceeds the children eligible

to be adopted.

International Treaties

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Hague Convention on International **Adoption** are changing the landscape of inter-country **adoptions**. The complex procedures of these international agreements are intended to provide protection for the child, birth parents and adopting parents from corrupt practices. The combined result of these international treaties is that the placing country must first try to find a home for the child in their own country. The first option for the child is to be re-integrated with family, or placed with extended family. Local **adoption** is the next option. Out-of-country **adoption** is to be considered a last resort. In almost every country that has implemented the Hague Convention, the result has been a reduction or elimination of inter-country **adoption**.

Closures by the Government

The Directors of **Adoption** for the provincial governments are in frequent communication with counterparts in other provinces and with the federal authorities. As a result of these discussions, the provinces have stopped allowing **adoptions** from countries where ethical problems have arisen in **adoptions**.

Closures by Agencies

In order to protect adopting parents and to attempt to provide them with a safe and predictable experience, some licensed agencies have closed programs from certain countries. This is a

result of concerns about ethical practices in some cases, and in others it is due to worries about the health of children.

What is the Future of Adoption in Canada?

The inescapable conclusion is that if parents want to adopt, their horizons may have to broaden. Waiting periods will lengthen, the children adopted will be older, and the children may have special needs and challenges. As a result, some prospective adopting parents will look into **adoption**, see the options and decide not to pursue it (as sometimes happens already). Others will adopt locally, or from small, but overwhelmed programs. Many parents, however, may have to go through doors that haven't been frequently used up to now.

Adoption is already a hard road for many people, and it takes courage to be an adopting parent. There will be a greater need for both pre-**adoption** and post-**adoption** support for Canadian adopting parents. The governments of most provinces have made it clear that they will only provide that support for parents adopting Canada's waiting children in foster care. The licensed **adoption** agencies, the Adoptive Families Association and the Society of Special Needs Adoptive Parents will need to do more work in the next decade to provide this support.

Every day 35,000 children under the age of five die of health-related reasons. In the face of this awful statistic, why is the world increasingly shutting down **adoption**? (See What About the World's Orphans? .)

Over the past 10 years, Sunrise has visited orphanages throughout the world. The children we

meet in the orphanages are desperate to have a family of their own. We are looking for parents to adopt these children. While opportunities for children of many countries to find families are currently decreasing, they are not completely gone. There are two rays of hope left. Firstly, we can try to help countries support their children to be adopted in their own country, or even stay in their original families. When that is not possible, we can help to provide a loving and safe home for one of the world's homeless children.

This is the future of **adoption**. We need families who want to step up to the plate and help us to accomplish both of these goals. It is a huge task, but together we can make a real difference in the lives of children and families. We can also create a true win/win solution. Children can have a safe and loving place to grow up in a family, and parents can experience the joy of family life by **adoption**.