

CANADIAN COUNCIL OF NATURAL MOTHERS
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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia
March 28, 2011

Dear Committee Secretary:

We would like to commend the Senate of the Government of Australia for being the first in the British Commonwealth of Nations, and in the West, to investigate the real effects of adoption on the mothers, fathers and children who suffered loss in adoption. In our view, in this effort you are representing a highly evolved, altruistic and ethical society by valuing the opinions of those who have experienced adoption from a position of loss, not gain.

We believe that our countries share elements of a common history and culture. From our many contacts in Australia, and from scholarly works, we are aware that adoption practices in our two countries have been similar from the beginning, and most definitely post-World War II. Therefore, we anticipate that in sharing our thoughts and conclusions, the vast majority of Australian mothers, fathers and adopted people will have experienced similar events and situations, and most likely come to the same conclusions.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity of sharing the experiences of Canadian mothers and fathers who surrendered children to adoption through the coercive practices of governments and those enabled by government. The attached list comes from CCNM members and documents the experiences of single mothers, natural fathers and their children lost to adoption in Canada, and in some cases in other countries, such as the United States of America and Great Britain, for those members who lost their children in those countries. It is not an exhaustive list, but indicates the areas which need examination if a full accounting of the costs of adoption to natural families is to occur.

Please accept our submission: *Areas for Consideration of the Inquiry into the Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices.*

Sincerely,

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Areas for Consideration of the Inquiry into the Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices

Forms of Coercion

- Separation of young pregnant women from family, friends, and partners in maternity and wage homes so that all of their support networks are unavailable or dissolved
- Withholding of information on methods of public and employment support
- Withholding of information on alternatives to adoption
- Withholding of information on lifelong psychological effects of adoption on child, mother and father
- Withholding of information on governmental processes and procedures, appeals to decisions and alternative procedures
- Telling young pregnant women that they were unfit to be mothers, without proof and without just cause
- Telling young mothers that they would get over it, that they were neurotic for getting pregnant pursuant to Freudian or other psychological theories
- Eroding the self-concept, self-esteem and self-confidence of mothers, making them vulnerable to coercion and compliant in the face of unethical, unfair practices by social work staff, hospital staff, lawyers, adoption facilitators and their own families
- Glorifying adoption and potential adoptive parents as being 'in the best interests' of our babies, deserving our babies, without proof.
- Presenting adoption as 'best for the baby' when in reality adoption is 'not equal to' but 'less than' a natural mother raising her own baby. Adoption was supposed to be a solution of last resort when all avenues of helping a natural mother to succeed in raising her own child had been exhausted. It is not how adoption was portrayed to mothers in the past.
- Pressuring young mothers to "sign the papers", often relentlessly, in the best interests of fulfilling quotas or supporting potential adoptive parents
- Offering adoption as a permanent solution to a temporary problem. The inadequacies of age, education, financial (in)stability and marital status were elevated to the level of insurmountable circumstances that were not

considered in light of their temporality compared to the permanency of adoption

- Telling mothers that adoption was a better option than abortion because, in the end, she could re-unite with her adopted child, but she could not unite with a child who was aborted
- Telling mothers that they would have a future relationship with their children, thereby creating a false reality surrounding reunion and the lived experience of the child in the meantime.

Inadequate Medical Care

- Treating mothers and their infants designated for adoption with differently, with different procedures, during pregnancy, in hospitals during the birthing process and after the birth had occurred
- Medical staff providing inadequate information to single mothers
- Hospital staff refusing to allow mothers to see, hold or feed their babies
- Hospital staff refusing to allow mothers to breastfeed their babies
- Treating single mothers with negligent or cruel, verbal and sometimes physical abuse by medical staff before birth, during the birthing process, and care after the birth of their children
- Deliberate shaming of unmarried mothers by hospital staff
- Providing drugs to single and married mothers differently during and after the birthing process and the purposes of these differences. For example, DSA and sodium pentothal were used on occasion to “calm” an upset mother.
- Refusing to make available medical and social work records for examination by mothers and later, their children
- Failing to establish a system for transfer of necessary and significant medical information from natural to adoptive families, from adoptive families to natural families, and to adopted adults.

Breach of duty

- Disregarding the legal and human rights of the mother who, up to the age of 21, was a legal minor herself in many cases. Many of these mothers were nonetheless self-supporting and self-maintaining. Single mothers of this age were frequently treated differently than married mothers of the same age.
- Disregarding the human rights of the mother as a mother to her child in the complete absence of any history or evidence of child abuse
- Disregarding the human rights of the child to be raised by his or her family
- Disregard of the human rights of the child to know and maintain his or her ancestry, religious, ethnic or racial origin
- Disregarding the human rights of the father
- Failing to distinguish the best interests of the child from those of the grandparents or other adults, such as prospective adoptive parents

- Failing to require independent legal counsel for the mother and/or father of the child
- Failing to apprise mothers of their legal rights beyond the legal documents used to complete the legal aspects of adoption as created by those involved in adoption facilitation
- Failing to provide independent advisor or counsellor aware of the ramifications for mother and baby of being separated
- Refusing to provide adequate time to make an informed decision because of the effects of trauma, drugs, post delivery hormones, stigmatisation, isolation, and having been demeaned and not having been acknowledged as mothers to their babies
- Allowing the emotional and psychological punishment of young women for 'having sex' regardless of their involvement in a long term relationship, rape, incest, non-consensual, forced, coerced, or common-law relationship, etc.
- Failing to understand the full brunt of the trauma caused to young women, that it is soul-destroying being pregnant and living with the above knowing that the end result was losing our babies to adoption
- Depriving young mothers of the normal celebrations and preparation for our babies being born into the world and our role as mothers
- Shaming and blaming young women for being pregnant, without moral compass or authority.

Complicity of Societal Institutions—Churches, Social Agencies, Legal, Police, Psychology

- Making invalid assumptions, perpetuating social attitudes and mores of the times which denigrated single mothers and natural fathers and assigning lesser status and importance to their children
- Assigning blame and shame to mothers and their children, and the resulting ability to profit from running maternity homes
- Professionalizing social workers as agents in separating mothers and children, and the professionalization of attitudes, rather than research, into causes and effects of separation of mothers and children
- Establishing an industry that supported the separation of mothers and children, including the rise of profiteering adoption agencies, lawyers and other adoption brokers
- Allowing and enabling the demand for foreign adoptions to obtain infants and children for adoption from foreign countries, regardless of the impact on the foreign mothers.
- Systematically neglecting to provide encouragement and education for mothers to care for and raise their children as was provided for married mothers

Governmental Neglect

- Failing to be transparent to clients of governmental agencies or care organizations, particularly if those agencies profited from adoption promotion
- Failing to be accountable for lapses, disregarding or flouting what little legal recourse there may have been for mothers—to wit, mothers were often unaware of time limits to set aside the consent for adoption, outcomes for adoption are not tracked or acknowledged as less than optimum, and lies about mothers were passed along to their children as truth
- Breaching duties embedded in policies and practices of the times and allowing breaches of duty to single mothers without recourse or appeal by mothers
- Failing to observe or follow breach of duty or contraventions of governmental policies or practices by governmental employees or those working to implement adoptions and to deploy disciplinary practices
- Failing to consult natural mothers, natural fathers and people adopted during the creation of legislation and regulations deeply affecting them
- Failing to observe, compile and assemble statistical information on which to base decisions; e.g., number of adoptions, sequelae to adoptions such as percentage of adoption disruptions or outcomes of adoption, percentage of previously adopted children in foster care and domestic or foreign origin of those children
- Providing only closed adoptions to most mothers, a form of adoption created to enable adopters to create their adoptive families with the babies of natural mothers, and enable governments to avoid all transparency, and hence, accountability for the long-term outcomes of adoption
- Denying the humanity of both natural mother and child without consideration for the sacred bond between them and the belonging that together they share with all other natural mothers in our society
- Denying mothers knowledge of, contact with and accountability for what was to and did become of their sons and daughters through adoption
- Failing to ensure and account for the practices of those facilitating adoption, those creating adoption practice, process, laws, and those adopting
- Ignoring the protection of natural mother and child
- Preventing mothers from being able to ascertain whether or not their sons and daughters were living the promised 'better life' through adoption.
- Defining, without the benefit of real science, the experiences of those who suffer the losses of adoption, thereby preventing mothers from coming forward for decades to challenge the oppression, marginalization, and dehumanization of losing their babies to adoption
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Human Rights Abuses of both Mothers and Children

- Denying mothers' the rights to name their children

- In those instances where mothers were allowed to name their children, the given and family names of the children were changed to create the legal myth of “as if born to” the adoptive family.
- Falsification of birth documents and records, in particular the falsification of the statement of live birth that was replaced by the legal lie of the child having different parents, and sometimes different places of birth and even different birth dates.
- Preventing mothers, by laws and regulations, from ever finding out the fate of their lost children, thereby condemning mothers of babies lost to adoption to a state of permanent unresolved grief.

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