

For Immediate Release: Adoption Community Campaigns for a New Type of Parental Leave in Canada: Attachment Leave

Toronto, February 4, 2019

There is a misconception that adoptive children have found their happy ending, when placed in a family, but in fact the transition period is usually a difficult time for them, as they adjust to their new parents, siblings, schools, neighbourhoods, and lives. The move into a forever home may come after multiple moves in foster care and losses of significant adults and loved ones—even for very young children. Most children adopted in Canada are over the age of six at the time of placement and many have a history of trauma or serious loss. Having their new parent or caregiver(s) at home longer, in the critical first year, gives them time to form attachments and begin processing their grief and loss. Yet, Canada's parental benefits system allocates a longer paid leave to biological parents (50 weeks) over adoptive parents and kin and customary caregivers (35 weeks). Now the adoption community is campaigning for a new type of paid parental leave: [attachment leave](#).


Adopt4Life—Ontario's Adoptive Parent Association, and Western University, in partnership with the Adoption Council of Canada, are [spearheading a national campaign for 15 weeks paid attachment leave](#) for adoptive parents and kinship and customary caregivers (the last being members of a child's Indigenous community who will raise the child according to the customs of that community). They are taking their case to Ottawa again in April 2019 to build on the momentum of their November, 2018 meetings on Parliament Hill. The #TimetoAttach team will present compelling arguments from research conducted at Western about the need for paid attachment leave.

In June 2018, the #TimetoAttach team ran [the largest ever survey of its kind in Canada on parental leave and attachment](#). 974 adoptive parents and kin and customary caregivers responded and confirmed the urgent need for change to Canadian employment legislation.

- **72%** agreed with the statement: "The parental leave benefit system did not provide enough time for my adopted child(ren) to adjust to a new family."
- **1 in 2** reported having a child with complex or special needs, and **1 in 3** had a mental health diagnosis; such parents or caregivers need time to learn about and adapt to their child's unique needs, and meet with specialists for diagnoses and treatments and with school administrators to advocate for their child and request accommodations.



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- Almost **half** of the children were reported to have experienced “significant sadness” during their transition into their new family.
- Just over 20% of parents or caregivers said that the current parental leave benefits system prevented them from adopting a child with complex or special needs

Throughout February and March, Canadians with lived experience of adoption and permanency arrangements are sharing their stories from the trenches, in blog posts, to make a compelling and often heart-wrenching case for why their families need more #timetoattach. The campaign will culminate with a second visit to Parliament Hill, by the Time to Attach team, to share these testimonies and the team’s research with our elected representatives and to push for legislative change. The blogs can be found at: <http://www.adopt4life.com/time-to-attach-stories/>.

Representatives from the Time to Attach team—who are also adoptive parents—will be available for media interviews, including: Julie Despaties, Executive Director, Adopt4Life; Carolyn McLeod PhD, Lead Researcher, Time to Attach Team, Western University; and Cathy Murphy, Executive Director, Adoption Council Canada. To arrange interviews or for further information, please contact:

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About Adopt4Life—Ontario’s Adoptive Parent Association

Adopt4Life is a community of people with lived experience of adoption, including adoptive parents and kinship and customary caregivers. Our mission is to strengthen and empower families to achieve permanency for children, so that they can reach their full potential. We believe that all adoptive parents and kin and customary caregivers have a right to advocacy, support and guidance throughout their lifelong journey.

Website: www.adopt4life.com.

For more about the #TimeToAttach campaign: timetoattach.com



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Excerpts from the #TimeToAttach blogs

“He could not remember how many homes he had lived in. He could not remember the names of all his past caregivers. He’d never finished a full academic year in one school.”

—[J, a Canadian parent who adopted five times from foster care](#)

“We boarded a shuttle to the airport in Seoul, and it was as if our son understood what was happening: He was leaving his homeland with two strangers and would likely not return for a very long time. He became inconsolable.”

—[A Canadian parent, who adopted internationally](#)

“We tested our new parents to see if they really loved us, to see what it would take for them to send us away, like the others had.”

—[Clare a 17-year-old child, adopted \(for the second time\) at age 10, with her three younger siblings](#)

“My daughter was five and a half years old when she was placed with me. This was her fifth home. Her entire life had been marked by loss and instability.”

—[A Canadian single mother, who adopted a child with complex needs](#)

“We looked different; we smelled different; we spoke very little Mandarin. And we took our daughter away from the orphanage to a hotel where everything was different, very soon after we all met. I can’t imagine how scary it was for her.”

—[Katherine Mortimer, who adopted a 1-year-old from China](#)

“In the first months of our adoption, it felt like the exhaustion was setting into my very soul.”

—[A Canadian parent, who adopted a sibling group of three from foster care](#)



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