

THE ADOPTION CRISIS

We need action — not just awareness



As an adoptee with parents who have been supporting kids in the foster care system for over 20 years, I know firsthand that raising awareness for adoption is imperative, but it's also only the first step in finding a solution to the crisis that currently exists. If we really want to see a shift in the number of kids in care, we need to consider other options as well.

As we see an influx of stats and heartwarming stories of adoption flooding the media in recognition of Adoption Awareness Month, I'm left to wonder how effective the campaign is in actually finding homes for the thousands of children who are currently in care — especially the older kids and the ones who are quickly aging out of foster care.

During a keynote speech a few years back, then-Governor General emphasized our need to address the adoption crisis head-on.

"We are failing our children," David Johnston said. "It is a sad fact, and one that we cannot ignore. Every year, thousands of children go without a permanent home, and every year their risk factors multiply."

There are currently over 30,000 children in the foster care system in Canada who are waiting for forever homes,



There are currently over 30,000 children in the foster care system in Canada who are waiting for forever homes, most of which are older than 6 years old. GETTY IMAGES

most of which are older than 6 years old.

While we see imagery of cherub-faced toddlers and sweetly-swaddled babies matched with the message of adoption, the reality is, it's the older kids who make up most of that number, and who need our help the most.

Unfortunately, it'll take more than a heart-warming campaign about spreading the word to convince potential parents to adopt a teenager.

It takes a special kind of person to commit to providing care and support for older children. Fostering and adoption are not a fit for everyone.

The government's panacea for the existing foster care crisis is to push adoption, which is ideal, but not always an option.

Forever care should be considered as an alternate solution, where the government still provides resources, services and support for kids in

care — especially those soon to age out, ensuring that they have the long-term support system that they need to thrive as they transition into their adult lives. Care shouldn't forcibly end the moment a child turns 18.

We need to provide more support for programs like Fostering Change, an initiative designed to improve policy, practice and community connections for young people transitioning from foster care to adulthood.

As we continue to raise awareness for adoption this month, consider taking action too.

Volunteer, donate, educate yourselves, and help spread the word about the lesser-known issues of adoption.

Awareness is only the first step. We need to take action if we want to change the lives of those children in care who need our help the most.

Comments:
bitsofbee@yahoo.ca