

Canada welcomes more Haitian orphans

Haitian children more vulnerable than ever to trafficking

By CINDY CHAN
Epoch Times Staff

OTTAWA—Late Wednesday night, adoptive parents in Canada welcomed a fourth flight of children from earthquake-ravaged Haiti.

"We are working to put as many children as possible on the flights, given the logistical difficulties in Haiti," Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) said in a statement update on the government's expedited adoption of Haitian children, dubbed "Operation Stork."

The latest flight brought 31 children aged 6 months to 16 years. They were from the approximately 217 children approved by the Haitian government to come to Canada who were already in the adoption process when the massive 7.0-magnitude earthquake devastated Haiti on Jan. 12.

The new group joined the 148 adoptees from previous flights already united with their Canadian adoptive families.

Operation Stork is expected to taper off after the remaining cases clear provincial and territorial requirements to be brought to Canada.

After facilitating all adoptions in process since before the earthquake, the Haitian government has said it will only approve orphaned children to leave the country whose cases it has investigated and deemed as legitimate adoptions.

On Tuesday, CIC also released a notice advising Canadians not to travel to Haiti or its neighbour-



Haitian orphans at the Foyer de la Patience des Enfants orphanage, Jan. 31, 2010, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Child-smuggling was a problem in Haiti even before the earthquake, with thousands of children disappearing every year. MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES

ing Dominican Republic to try to bring children back to Canada without proper legal authority—even children who are relatives.

CIC cites "reports that children are being abducted and/or sold in Haiti. People have also tried to obtain Canadian visas for minor children by using fraudulent documents."

Authorities in Haiti and worldwide are concerned about child trafficking, as are aid organiza-

tions with long experience working in the Western Hemisphere's most impoverished nation.

During the foreign ministers' conference on Haiti held in Montreal on Jan. 25, Care, Oxfam, UNICEF, and Plan Canada were among 18 Canadian NGOs that urged prioritized assistance to unaccompanied children and other vulnerable groups and called for a moratorium on new international adoptions.

Last week, 10 American Baptist missionaries were arrested for "kidnapping" as they tried to transport a busload of 33 children out of Haiti into the Dominican Republic where they have an orphanage. It emerged that many of the children were not actually orphans.

Carleen McGuinty, child protection policy adviser at World Vision Canada, said that even before the disaster, "children were living in

poverty, being trafficked, being used as domestic slaves in other families' homes. They were already in a very desperate situation."

The quake exacerbated their vulnerability. "You have children who have been separated from their family, children who have been injured, at risk of being trafficked again, at risk of being adopted without knowing whether their parents were still alive or not," Ms. McGuinty said.

UNICEF's 2005 statistic showed that 55 percent of Haiti's population lived below the international poverty line of US\$1.25 per day.

The organization estimated that in 2007, there were 380,000 orphans under the age of 17 in Haiti where over 4.2 million of the population of 9.6 million were under 18. Children living in orphanages included those left there by their parents as a result of extreme poverty.

UNICEF estimates that as many as 2,000 children per year are trafficked to neighbouring Dominican Republic, often with their parents' consent.

Next to providing for their basic needs such as food, water, shelter, and medical assistance, World Vision's priority is to help separated and orphaned children trace and reunite with their immediate or extended family members, said Ms. McGuinty.

The relief organization just opened three camps in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince, what it calls "child-friendly spaces," which consist of large tents where children can receive care and support for their physical and emotional needs, including dealing with grief and loss.

"They've seen things that no child should see, so they need a place where they can get back to normal, where they can play soccer, draw, talk to other children, and where they're safe," Ms. McGuinty said.

UNICEF reported that it has carried out an assessment of children in 60 orphanages in Port-au-Prince and mobile teams are trying to identify the children on the streets who may be orphaned or just separated from their family.

UNICEF advised that although many people are willing to adopt Haitian orphans, experience shows that what the children need most right now is physical and emotional support where they are.

Mobilicity coming this spring

By MATTHEW LITTLE
Epoch Times Staff

TORONTO—Dave Wireless, one of the new entrants anticipated to shake up Canada's cellular phone market, at least in several major cities, announced its official brand name and launch in Toronto on Tuesday.

Starting in spring, Dave will begin service in Toronto under the name Mobilicity, a combination of "mobile" and "simplicity" that also alludes to the company's urban focus.

In an interview Wednesday, company president Dave Dobbin wouldn't

budge on giving any details on pricing or the company's broader marketing efforts, but did say that Mobilicity would have simpler pricing and packages than other cell phone providers.

"We don't want to signal to the marketplace too far in advance," he said in explaining why the company was staying tight-lipped about pricing and plans. Any details released could prompt competitors to try to pre-empt them, he added.

But Mobilicity has announced they will have no contracts and no credit checks. Plans will be unlimited, in-

cluding data.

"We think we will have a higher quality product," said Dobbin.

While other new carriers have run into some limitations with their handsets, Dobbin says Mobilicity has a 3G AWS frequency that can carry any T-Mobile phone in use in the United States. Since plans will involve customers buying their phone up front, that means any unlocked phone that works on T-Mobile will work in Canada.

The company has yet to announce handsets beyond saying they will have popular smart phones and handsets from well-known brands. However, Apple's iPhone and coming iPad are not yet manufactured in Mobilicity's frequency.

We think we will have a higher quality product.'

— Dave Dobbin

But the company can support Google's Nexus One, which Bell, Telus, and Roger cannot, said Dobbin.

When pressed for details about when Mobilicity will launch in Toronto, Dobbin would only say that they will launch when they are ready.

"It is important that when you launch that everything is right and everything is ready, because you only get one chance to make a first impression."

After Toronto, the company will launch in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary and Ottawa later this year.

Mobilicity could be the second of the new entrants to officially launch service. Wind Mobile, which will become the country's fourth national provider, has already launched in the Greater Toronto Area and Calgary with unlimited plans starting at \$15 to other Wind subscribers or \$35 for province wide calling from Calgary or the GTA.

Public Mobile, the third new entrant, has announced only one plan. For \$40 the company says it will offer unlimited local talk and text. No launch date has been announced though the company has said it will be up and running in early 2010.



WILDERNESS HEALING: Free courses offering wilderness trips in the Rocky Mountains are designed to help veterans adjust to civilian life and recover from the impact of military service. JEFF HAYNES/AFP/Getty Images

Wilderness program aims to help young veterans

By HELENA ZHU
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A veteran who served in Afghanistan hopes wilderness trips in the Rocky Mountains will help veterans adjust to civilian life and recover from the impact of military service.

Starting in June, free, week-long courses will be available to small groups of veterans who may be encountering challenges as a result of their experiences in the army.

Marc D'Astous, 29, who served as an infantryman in Afghanistan, helped develop the program along with another young veteran. The courses use the challenges of the outdoors to help veterans reintegrate into the community.

D'Astous said that when he returned home from Afghanistan to Canmore, Alberta, hiking in the mountains with another veteran helped him adapt to the stark switch from a war zone to civvy street.

"I've always gone to the mountains when I needed a break or when I needed to recharge my batteries, kind of strip away all the excess and just look at what's really going on inside," he told CBC

News.

"We come out the other end of a war, or service, or peacekeeping duty and it takes a while to digest what you've gone through. Having an opportunity to reconnect in a wilderness setting sometimes opens up a lot of that dialogue and makes you realize you're not the only one."

The program is designed to help participants build a supportive community with other veterans and facilitate discussion. Participants would be able to ice-climb, ski-tour, backpack, canoe or dog sled while enjoying the camaraderie of fellow veterans.

The program, which is funded by the Royal Canadian Legion, will be run by Outward Bound instructors. A wilderness centre near Canmore, Outward Bound was initially founded to help young British soldiers build the inner resources necessary to survive the rigours of war.

Although various existing mental health programs and agencies provide professional assistance for those who seek help, many veterans do not avail of them, according to the legion. The wilderness program will help bridge that gap.

Julian Norris, director of Out-

ward Bound in western Canada, told the Calgary Sun that spending time together in the Rockies can help veterans heal.

"Every Canadian military veteran knows of a comrade who still carries the burden of their experiences and their service. Those scars are often not visible," Norris said.

"Part of this adventure is a chance to connect deeply with other veterans, to begin talking about things that you may never talk about in your day-to-day life, with people who understand, who care, and have been through a similar journey and perhaps show you a way forward."

He said the program also provides an opportunity for veterans to connect with the landscape and feel like they really have returned home.

"They fought for this landscape, this place. Coming back to this place, it's home, it's part of the journey," he said.

Follow-up programs include training for veterans to become outdoor guides and referrals to support services. The wilderness program, which is also available to reservists, will eventually include disabled veterans.



Edmonton police Staff Sergeant Ken Hykawy arrives for a demonstration of security procedures at the Winter Olympics figure skating venue in Vancouver on February 1. Bud Mercer, the head of security for the Olympics, said on Wednesday that he is not aware of any specific terror threat to the Games, which should allow him to stay within the \$900 million security budget. REUTERS/CHRIS HELGREN/FILES