

The Children's Bridge Annual General Meeting – November 10/07

*In attendance at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club in Gatineau, Que.:* Rick Kenny, Gail Carruthers, Lianne Thompson, Young Lee, Paul Thompson, Loyde Henriques, Arnold Park, Lianne Thompson, Calum Massarella, Martha Maslen, Kate Maslen, Krista Shibata, Carlos Martins, Cathy Murphy, Krista Nicholl, Bonnie MacGregor, Brian MacGregor, Anick Maranda, J.F. Lefier, Olwyn Walter, Rosemary Thompson, Matthew Kunica, Andrew Bilsky, Shelley Page, Andre Maynard, Cynthia McLellan, Jennifer Rodman (m)

*By teleconference:* Liz Morrison, Richard Norman, Nick Paonessa

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The meeting was called to order at 2 p.m.

1) Introductions and Welcome

Rick introduced himself and the members of the board, indicating that he is the out-going Board President and introduced in-coming Board President Young Lee.

2) Review and acceptance of the minutes of Nov. 11/06

Moved by Lianne, seconded by Calum.

The motion was carried unanimously.

3) Election Report – Governance Committee

Richard provided a brief overview of the election of the two new officers – four positions were posted in all. There were two returning officers and two new officers proposed for election/acclamation, specifically: Gail, Loyde, Carlos, and Krista.

Rick proposed a motion that the committee elect the nominees by acclamation – seconded by Calum.

The motion was carried unanimously.

The total slate of directors now stands at 10. Rick explained that the total board membership has increased as a result of impending turnover and the need to maintain a degree of board wisdom. 3-4 members will be elected each year.

4) Treasurer's Report

Audit statements were circulated. Loyde explained that the newer growth programs have not produced as much revenue as anticipated, Vietnam being the primary concern.

There have been encouraging results in terms of post-adoption support programs. The agency has a commitment to providing these services regardless of surplus or

deficit, and in fact the goal is for this program to be self-sufficient, however this year turned a slight profit.

Loyde presented a motion to accept the audit statement of – seconded by Paul Thompson.

The motion was carried unanimously.

Loyde presented a motion to appoint next year's auditors as Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton, seconded by Lianne Thompson.

The motion was carried unanimously.

#### 5) Executive Director's Report

Martha highlighted the fact that the face of international adoption is moving out of Asia and into Africa. This speaks to the ability of the Asian countries' ability to look after their children, which is very satisfying. The Children's Bridge is therefore positioning itself to make this move. The Asian programs may not close, but will certainly decline. At this time China is declining by about 30%/year. Domestic adoptions are declining as well, the province of Ontario is anticipating that about 200 private adoptions will be finalized this year.

There is also an impact on adoption training with the mandate from the province regarding PRIDE training for all potential adoptive parents. This means that CB will be forced to abandon its very successful AdopTalk series in favour of PRIDE. The overall picture means that there will be longer waits, higher costs, different places to adopt from and more government requirements.

Martha further commented that there is hope on the horizon for those families in queue for Vietnam. Tan Ngo is on the ground at this time and it is hopeful for those families.

Martha confirmed her impending retirement and that this will be her last AGM.

Question from the floor regarding Vietnam;

**Q:** What exactly is the issue with Vietnam?

**A:** There was an understanding of how Vietnam was going to operate and this in fact did not happen, we had to re-learn the program, there was no one on the ground that was effective, and this cost CB a lot of time and money. The hope is to conclude the adoptions of the families currently waiting.

Rick presented a gift to Martha in recognition of her time with CB on behalf of the staff and the Board. He acknowledged her tremendous role in “Making Families Happen”.

#### 6) Strategic Planning Update

Gail confirmed that the format is now complete and that the three main priorities are;

- Program Development – the slowdown of China requires the ramping up of other programs, most immediately Ethiopia and South Africa,
- Succession Planning – this has been put to the forefront given Martha’s impending retirement, and
- Governance – there is a great opportunity to take on governance issues in conjunction with the appointment of a new E.D.

Rick cautioned that the strategic plan is not published to the website because the document is quite large and not conducive to email, however a brief summary can be made available to the membership, and those that wish to read the entire document can contact the CB office.

At this time the members of the Children’s Bridge Foundation Board left the meeting.

#### 7) Board President’s Report

Rick highlighted the one true constant in the adoption world, specifically change. He made reference to the rapid changes in China, the difficulties in Vietnam, and how to keep things in perspective and keeping agency viable. He referenced the unfortunate need to increase fees as necessary and appealed to the members and staff of the organization to continue to support the Board. He welcomed participation by way of input, suggestions, volunteering, etc. as we try to navigate these waters for the organization. Our mission will always be to bring families together and through the Foundation to better the lives of children who remain in the countries that we serve.

Rick turned the meeting over to Young as the in-coming Board President. Young shared that he and his wife adopted boy from S. Korea who is now 3 ½, and they are awaiting notice of their return for their next child. Young talked about the need to anticipate the issues of the children within our families. This is a year of transition, and we need to ensure that the staff and membership are well taken care of through this process. This is an opportunity for the Bridge to morph itself beyond making families into more emphasis on supporting families as the children grow older.

Comment from the floor; There is the need for greater post-adoption support as our children move into their teenage years. There was general acknowledgement that issues get more difficult rather than easier as children age.

Question from the floor;

**Q:** Is post-adoption support a growth potential? Could this be a standard source of meaningful revenue for the Bridge?

**A:** We need to examine cohorts of kids (i.e. ages, programs) and anticipate what the needs are going to be. Programs have tended to be geared towards parents and their learning curve, but the Bridge does have programs for kids up to latency age (12). Cathy's team is attempting to augment this to address teen issues. A problem that the team is facing is filling the seats when seminars or programs are announced. Perhaps we have looked to more established agencies in the States for their experiences – Holt in particular – i.e. exploring summer culture camps. The Hague Convention reflects that the local regulatory body is responsible for post-adoption support (The Ministry of Children and Youth). Does this open a door to apply for funding?

Cathy Murphy advised the group that the Holt Board is comprised of adoptive parents, adult adoptees and birth parents based on the adoption triad. These people can come from streams other than international adoption. She presented this as something that the board may wish to consider in the future.

8) Other Questions from the membership. There were none.

9) Other Business

Young thanked those who attended in person or by phone, and moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Andre Maynard.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10.

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Director

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Director