

For Immediate Release
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NEW ERNESTINE'S WOMEN'S SHELTER OPENS DOORS FOR MORE WOMEN AND CHILDREN FLEEING ABUSE

Shelter features more beds, expanded services

TORONTO – Ernestine's Women's Shelter today officially opened a new 32-bed facility for women and children fleeing violence. The new shelter will provide a safe haven for an additional 50 women and their children each year and offers a variety of accessibility features.

The new facility also allows Ernestine's to increase its outreach and counseling services, as well as to expand older children's services and food delivery programs.

The \$4.9 million project to expand and improve services at Ernestine's received more than \$3.2 million from the Ontario government. The federal government contributed \$566,000 from the Government of Canada's Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative, administered by the City of Toronto, and \$550,000 through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) Shelter Enhancement Program. In addition, CMHC provided an interest-free proposal development loan of \$100,000, of which \$35,000 is forgivable and \$45,164 was provided through Natural Resources Canada's Office of Energy Efficiency to support increased energy efficiency levels of the building. Several local partners also contributed funding.

"Canada's New Government is proud to help provide safe and supportive housing to vulnerable women and children in Toronto," said the Honourable Monte Solberg, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development. "This funding is helping Ernestine's Women's Shelter give women and their families hope, dignity and a path to a safer, better and stronger future."

"We're on the side of vulnerable women, and we understand that providing a safe place for victims of domestic violence to rebuild their lives is vital," said Madeleine Meilleur, Ontario Minister of Community and Social Services. "That's why we launched a four-year, \$82 million Domestic Violence Action Plan to strengthen Ontario's shelter system to serve more women and children who need protection from abuse."

"Each day women are victims of violence", said Mayor David Miller, City of Toronto. "Ernestine's Women's Shelter is important to this city because facilities like it can help turn lives around. The City of Toronto is proud to be a partner in the development and construction of this new building."

Since 1983, Ernestine's Women's Shelter has provided short-term crisis intervention and long-term support that has helped more than 3,000 women and their children leave abusive situations and find a new beginning. In 2005, 89 women and 50 children received shelter at Ernestine's, and more than 300 women and children received support through the shelter's outreach programs.

“This new building is an investment in the lives of women and children for years to come,” said Sharlene Tygesen, director of community and staff relations at Ernestine’s. “We are pleased to celebrate International Women’s Day with the ability to help more women and children in need. This building marks a commitment to ending that violence, and breaking the barriers that women and children face in finding safety.”

The McGuinty government’s four-year Domestic Violence Action Plan builds on existing domestic violence programs and services and includes new initiatives. The plan places strong emphasis on early intervention and prevention to help reduce domestic violence and provides better community supports for abused women and their children.

Canada’s New Government recently announced that the National Homelessness Initiative, scheduled to end in March 2007, will be replaced by an improved strategy, the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) on April 1, 2007.

The new HPS will provide \$269.6 million over two years to help communities across Canada combat homelessness more effectively. The strategy focuses on a housing-first approach to homelessness, recognizing that housing stability is essential to self-sufficiency and full participation in Canadian society. With its clear goals of improved partnerships, enhanced sustainability and tangible results, the new Strategy will provide concrete, meaningful and lasting results for Canadians in need.

CMHC’s Shelter Enhancement Program offers financial assistance for the repair, rehabilitation and improvement of existing shelters for victims of family violence, as well as the acquisition or construction of new shelters and second stage housing where needed. CMHC’s Proposal Development Funding provides repayable interest-free loans to facilitate the development of affordable housing.

Toronto is Canada’s largest city and sixth largest government, and home to a diverse population of more than 2.6 million people. It is the economic engine of Canada and one of the greenest and most creative cities in North America. In the past three years Toronto has won more than 50 awards for quality and innovation in delivering public services. Toronto’s government is dedicated to prosperity, opportunity and liveability for all its residents.

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