



## PRESS RELEASE



*Canadian Mortgage News - National Archive 2005*

### **Women's Community House Opens New Shelter**

**LONDON, Ontario, January 21, 2005** — The Women's Community House opened a unique new shelter today. The 27-bed residential facility offers residents three self-contained areas that enable women and their children to live more independently, as opposed to the bedrooms traditionally found in shelters.

The federal commitment of \$225,000 to the shelter was made through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP). The program assists in repairing, rehabilitating, and improving existing shelters for women and children, youth or men who are victims of family violence, and in acquiring or building new shelters and second-stage housing where needed.

"The construction of Women's Community House's new shelter demonstrates the Government of Canada's commitment to address housing and support needs for abused women and their children," said London-Fanshawe Member of Parliament Pat O'Brien, on behalf of the Honourable Joe Fontana, Minister of Labour and Housing. "This project is a prime example that federal support, in dealing with family violence, helps give those most in need an opportunity to build a better and safer life for themselves and their families."

The Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) provided \$2 million in capital funding for this project, and provides more than \$2 million in annual operating funds to Women's Community House.

"Women and their children have the right to live their lives free from fear and violence in their homes," said Khalil Ramal, MPP for London-Fanshawe. "The Ontario government funds organizations such as the Women's Community House to help women break the cycle of violence and establish independent lives free of abuse."

The City of London committed \$100,000 in capital funding over the next four years. In addition, more than \$135,000 has been raised via community donations to help realize the vision of the new shelter.

"The City of London is confident the innovative new Women's Community House will provide increased hope and support to many vulnerable women and children in our community," says Mayor Anne Marie DeCicco. "While our society continues to address the complex challenges of domestic violence and abuse, the City is pleased to do its part to provide interim comfort and care to those most affected by these social issues."

Women's Community House has been providing shelter and support to abused women and their children since 1978. With the opening of this new shelter for abused women and their children in London, Women's Community House will operate two shelters, and one second-stage housing location. Funding for the construction of the second shelter came from the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, the City of London, and the Women's Community House.

"We are thrilled that we will soon be able to meet the needs of more abused women and their children," says Kate Wiggins, Executive Director of Women's Community House. "Through a consultative process with women and the community, we have built a beautiful shelter that will help us to better respond to women's needs as they move toward a

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life free from violence. I am sure that this new shelter, which brings our total number of shelter beds to 67, will be a welcome resource to abused women in east London and Thames Centre."

The new facility will allow abused women and their children access to a safe, supportive and secure environment where they can regain their strength and independence, connect with other women and the community, and begin to move toward a life free from violence.

Women's Community House is open 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, and provides emergency shelter, counseling and support, second stage housing, a 24-hour Abused Women's Helpline, and transitional outreach services.

CMHC is Canada's national housing agency with a mandate to help Canadians gain access to safe, quality and affordable housing. CMHC supports the Canadian housing industry and improves the living conditions of Canadians through mortgage loan insurance and securitization, assisted housing, research and information transfer and the promotion of Canadian housing exports.

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Left to Right - Pat O'Brien; M.P. London-Fanshawe, Bernie MacDonald; Ward 3 Councillor, City of London, Khali Ramal; M.P.P. London-Fanshawe, Kate Wiggins; Executive Director, Women's Community House.