



## PRESS RELEASE



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### **Governments Partner to Expand Toronto-Area Services for Women and Children Fleeing Abuse**

**TORONTO, Ontario, October 27, 2005** — Ernestine's Women's Shelter today unveiled plans for a new 32-bed facility for victims of domestic abuse. The new wheelchair-accessible shelter will open in 2006, providing a safe place for an additional 50 women and their children annually.

The \$4.9 million project to expand services at Ernestine's received more than \$3.2 million from the Ontario government, \$566,000 from the Government of Canada's Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative administered by the City of Toronto, \$550,000 from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) Shelter Enhancement Program, as well as an interest-free proposal development loan of \$100,000. Several local partners also contributed funding.

"Ernestine's Women's Shelter is so vitally important to ensure that at-risk women and their children have access to an emergency shelter and the services to help them succeed," said the Honourable Roy Cullen, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and MP for Etobicoke North, on behalf of the Honourable Joe Fontana, Minister of Labour and Housing. "The construction of this shelter is an example of how federal strategies dealing with family violence and homelessness are helping those most in need at the community level."

"These kinds of partnerships are integral in fighting violence against women at the community level," said Sandra Pupatello, Ontario Minister of Community and Social Services. "I'm particularly pleased that this important community resource will now be accessible to women with disabilities. Our commitment to Ernestine's is just one part of our plan to help women and children get the support they need and build stronger, safer communities for everyone."

"I'm sad to say that domestic violence is still a very real problem in our society," said Councillor Suzan Hall, Ward 1 Etobicoke North. "We still need facilities like Ernestine's Women's Shelter to help victims of abuse find a safe home and a new start. The City of Toronto is pleased to have been a partner in the development and construction of this new shelter."

Since 1983, Ernestine's Women's Shelter has provided short-term crisis intervention as well as long-term support that has helped more than 3,000 women and their children leave abusive situations and find a new beginning. In 2004, 77 women and 42 children received shelter at Ernestine's, and 210 women and children received support through the shelter's outreach programs. In spite of providing this and other help to women and families escaping domestic violence, an average of 12 women a week were turned away from Ernestine's last year due to lack of space.

"Every day, women and children are trapped in violent situations because there is nowhere for them to turn. With the building of our new shelter and an additional 10 much-needed beds, Ernestine's is one step closer to its goal of not having to turn away any woman in her hour of need, due to lack of space," said Carol Latchford, Program Manager at Ernestine's Women's Shelter.

Ernestine's unveiled their new shelter plans in the lead up to Wife Assault Prevention Month in Ontario. For over 20 years, November has been the month in which people across Ontario are urged to consider issues of domestic violence and what individuals and communities can do to prevent abuse before it happens.

The McGuinty government's four-year Domestic Violence Action Plan enhances existing domestic violence programs and services and implements 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.

The Government of Canada launched the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) in December 1999 to support communities' efforts to help at-risk Canadians out of homelessness. As part of the NHI, the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative component, administered by partnering municipalities, is continuing to make a difference by encouraging the development of flexible, community-driven solutions to help alleviate homelessness and support those who are at risk of homelessness.

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.

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[www.homelessness.gc.ca](http://www.homelessness.gc.ca)

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[www.ernestines.ca](http://www.ernestines.ca)