

## Press Release

For Immediate Release

March 19/03

# New Affordable Apartments

## *Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto Respond to Critical Needs*

**Toronto** -- The Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto (CSJ) joyfully announce the official opening of *Fontbonne Place*, their new affordable apartment building for women. Opening ceremonies begin at 11:00 am on March 19/03 at 791 Queen St. East.

“In our tradition of responding to the most urgent needs, we have created some affordable housing. *Fontbonne Place* combines a home for those without secure housing with a location where outreach programs and community building flourish,” said Sr. Margaret Myatt, General Superior of the CSJ.

The Sisters owned the building at 791 Queen Street that was previously the site of St. Michael’s Broadview Community Health Clinic. They learned that housing was a key need and single women between the ages of 40-60 were very vulnerable --many were either homeless, under housed, in danger of losing housing, or living in an untenable situation. They decided to convert the space into an affordable housing building.

Renovations involved adding two stories to the building. Today, *Fontbonne Place* is unique, in that it combines housing and community-building programs. The two top stories hold 18 one-bedroom units, complete with kitchens, living and dining areas and storage space.

The remaining 40% of the total space is used for community purposes. *Fontbonne Ministries* runs two ministries from *Fontbonne Place*: *Mustard Seed* and *In Good Company*. *Mustard Seed* describes a basket of outreach programs that encourage the development of life skills, creativity, care for the environment and spiritual growth in a welcoming and sacred space. *In Good Company* offers a friendly visiting ministry with a difference - emotional and spiritual support and friendship.

*Fontbonne Ministries* also operates the *Women's Drop-in Centre* on Shuter Street. External agencies also benefit from Fontbonne's space e.g. the Toronto Catholic District School board offers "English as a Second Language" classes on site. Here is how a new resident of *Fontbonne Place* expresses the impact on her life of having a stable home:

"I have slept every night for almost six whole weeks. The stress in my life and its various causes wouldn't and didn't allow me to sleep more than every second or third night in almost two years now. It is amazing what faith made manifest can do and has done through the Community of the Sisters of St. Joseph."

The building is named after Sister Delphine Fontbonne, the first Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph, who arrived in Toronto with three other Sisters in 1851 to respond to the critical needs of the day. (See Backgrounder #2)

With Sister Delphine's arrival began the adventure of the Sisters of St. Joseph and their service in Canada and beyond. Sisters of St. Joseph started schools, hospitals and outreach ministries in five other cities in Ontario. Foreign missions benefited from their work, like the present one in Haiti. In Toronto, the Sisters founded the House of Providence, which today is Providence Centre, operated schools at all levels, and opened hospitals like St. Michael's Hospital and St. Joseph's Health Centre. (See Backgrounder #1)

Today as always, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto continue their long tradition of responding to unmet needs. They seek to nurture community with those in need, especially with the homeless, the alienated, the poor and women at risk. Their other ministries include *Nazareth House*, a transition house for vulnerable women and their children and a wide range of other ministries.

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