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New Transitional Housing Builds a Future for Refugees

TORONTO — World Refugee Day was the backdrop for the official opening of 52 new transitional apartments for refugee claimants today.

Officials from the Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario and the City of Toronto, guests, tenants and community supporters celebrated the opening of Sojourn House, which will provide housing and support services to recently arrived refugee claimants.

This \$11.7 million project received \$2.4 million from the Government of Canada's Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), as well as \$45,000 from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Proposal Development Funding, and 26 rent supplements from the Government of Ontario's Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program. SCPI and the Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program are administered by the City of Toronto, which also provided over \$512,000 in financial incentives and a \$482,000 loan through the Capital Revolving Fund.

Attending today's ceremony were Beverly Bowman, Director, Pan-Toronto Employment Programs and Services, on behalf of the Government of Canada; Brad Duguid, MPP Scarborough-Centre and Parliamentary Assistant to John Gerretsen, Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Councillor Pam McConnell, Ward 28, on behalf of Mayor David Miller and Debbie Hill-Corrigan, Executive Director, Sojourn House.

"Canada's new government is committed to providing new residents of this country with the services they need to thrive and prosper in the community," said the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development. "It is very important that organizations like Sojourn House continue to help vulnerable individuals find a place to call home."

"This project represents more than bricks and mortar; it represents a chance for a new start in life for the people who will call Sojourn House home," said Duguid. "The McGuinty government is on the side of the most vulnerable – we're happy to work with the City of Toronto and community organizations to provide housing opportunities for people who are new to our country."

"Sojourn House will be the springboard to allow newcomers to build better lives in Toronto," Councillor McConnell said. "This safe and supportive home will allow them to fully participate in their community."

"Sojourn House is a unique and special place to assist refugees in their settlement, many of whom have experienced extreme trauma in their lives," said Debbie Hill-Corrigan. "Our

vision of the shelter and supportive housing includes full settlement services with high level counseling supports. This is likely the first of its kind anywhere - truly a model that we can be proud of and promote to other cities and countries.”

Sojourn House is the largest shelter in Toronto and is dedicated to providing housing and support services to recently arrived refugee claimants. Since 1989, thousands of refugee claimants from more than 75 countries have made Sojourn House their first “home” in Canada.

The Government of Canada launched the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) in December 1999 to support communities’ efforts to help the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless. As part of the NHI, the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative program 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.

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