



Fontbonne Ministries  
SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH, TORONTO

**City of Toronto Budget Committee  
Public Consultation January 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

**Written deputation submitted by:**

AnnMarie Marcolin RN BScN MHSc, Director Community Programs & Partnerships Fontbonne Ministries  
Jacqueline McKernan BA (Hons), Manager Mustard Seed Fontbonne Ministries  
Ben Vozzolo MSc., MBA, Executive Director Fontbonne Ministries

**Re: Declaration of support for the following two budget motions:**

1. Increasing the budget for city-funded drop-ins by \$500,000; and
2. Funding the purchase of incontinence and menstrual supplies (adult diapers, menstrual pads and tampons) for the drop-in sector.

Fontbonne Ministries is a non-profit faith-based organization that has provided over 20 years of dedicated service for diverse persons and communities living in vulnerable conditions. Mustard Seed, located in South Riverdale, east Toronto, is one of three Fontbonne Ministries program sites, and provides drop-in services. Our participants include people of all demographics: adults, seniors, youth, men, women, trans people, newcomers, indigenous persons, those living with disabilities, traumas, and many more challenges including physical, mental, emotional and financial barriers.

The services we provide are essential to help ensure those most marginalized in our society have dignified access to basic needs for survival including food, seasonal protective clothing and hygiene products, and a safe space to rest, recharge and connect.

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 we have seen the increase in demand for meals from 70 per week to 300, which has remained consistent 18 months later. Access to our seasonal personal supplies in 2021 saw 2352 visitors accessing 3336 items. Numbers and early projections for our 2022 operational year are showing a 44% increase in participants requiring support with these basic essentials and a 209% increase in provision of hygiene supplies, which includes a variety of incontinence products.

It is a mortifying experience to witness fecal and urinary incontinence of participants when we're unable to provide the hygiene supplies that they need. As a drop-in that is not City funded we rely substantially on donations for these very expensive yet necessary products, otherwise it's a luxury item that we cannot afford to purchase. Yet if you ask our participants, these are not luxury items, but rather essential products and imperative to their self-dignity.

We have also been pivotal during the pandemic by increasing access to vaccines, mobile testing sites and pertinent Covid-19 information. Partnering with Toronto Public Health and Inner-City Health Associates since May 2021 to date, Mustard Seed has offered 7 pop up vaccine clinics, for all three doses. One of our participants told us after he got his 2<sup>nd</sup> vaccine dose, "I'm getting my shot because I know you. I'm not waiting in line at Jimmy Simpson, I don't trust them, but I trust you". As many of our participants are living rough and do not have a fixed home address, Mustard

Seed's phone number and address were given as 'safe places' where their vaccination proof could be sent and they could have it printed.

Drop-in centers are the invisible glue that holds a very precarious social service system together for those most vulnerable who otherwise would fall through the cracks. Those who use drop-ins are often street-involved sleeping rough, in shelters and respites – when and if the space is available – or else living in precarious, unsustainable, and unhealthy housing situations. Most experience social isolation and face barriers to being able to participate in society.

Being able to come to drop-ins to connect with friends and those who care, to access essential community, health, and employment services, and to participate in recreational, cultural, and wellness programming in a safe environment, allows every person the right to live with dignity as a valued member of their community.

We know by seeing the rise in encampments, increased refugees coming to the city and precariously employed gig workers that the demand for drop-in services continues to grow. This has been exacerbated by 24 months of a deadly pandemic that has strained the drop-in sector beyond its capacity. This pressure is now married with an inflation rate of 4.7 per cent, its highest point since 2003. This unsustainable cost of living is forcing the working poor to seek the essential services of the drop-in sector, especially access to food.

The multitude of these crises make it even more important to ensure people who are most at risk of harm can continue to rely on the drop-in sector to meet their basic survival needs. Without this support people are left with the unthinkable, including going hungry in a wealthy urban city centre like Toronto.

The breadth of vital human service provided by drop-ins is vast, including provision of food, clothing, hygiene products, and access to safe space, washrooms, showers, laundry, health, psycho social supports, employment information and resources, and referrals to the right services at the right time. This herculean feat has been achieved with very little funding, but the sustainability of the existing system with its limited resources is being challenged as we enter the third year of the pandemic.

Drop ins are a critical part of our social service system that needs to be properly funded and resourced. We are asking the City to approve the following two motions:

1. To increase the budget of city-funded drop-ins by \$500,000 put forward by Councillor Josh Matlow; and
2. To fund the purchase of incontinence and menstrual supplies (adult diapers, menstrual pads and tampons) for all drop-ins, both city-funded and non-city-funded.

We thank the Budget Committee for the opportunity to share our experiences and input on these important issues.

*AnnMarie Marcolin*

AnnMarie Marcolin, Director Community Programs & Partnerships Fontbonne Ministries

*Jacqueline McKernan*

Jacqueline McKernan, Manager Mustard Seed Fontbonne Ministries



Ben Vozzolo, Executive Director Fontbonne Ministries

Administrative Offices/Mustard Seed/Fontbonne Place: 791 Queen Street East Toronto ON M4M 1H6

Studio on the Hill: 967 O'Connor Drive Toronto ON M4B 2T1

Village Mosaic: 2794 Lake Shore Boulevard West Toronto ON M8V 1H5

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

Charitable Registration Number: 86408 4090 RR0001