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FIT TO BE TRIED – PETITE PLUS FASHIONS

Montreal, Quebec – April 15, 2003 - There was a time, when seeing the words plus and petite in the same sentence was rare, and to have them uttered in the same breath as in *petite plus* was well, unheard of. Those days are long gone as Laura Plus, a division of national women's retailer Laura Canada Inc., continues to raise the bar where fashion, fit and customer service are concerned for the plus size customer.

“All of our Laura Plus stores now offer a comprehensive department of petite plus fashions, specifically proportioned for women 5’4” and under in plus sizes 14-24,” says Anne Parry, Merchandise Manager for Laura Plus. “Our assortment includes modern edge career suiting, eveningwear, dresses, great separates and weekend options with coats being added to the mix this coming fall.” For the petite plus customer this is all welcome news. In addition to a superior fit and ultimately few post-purchase alterations, it also means having a fashion destination that can fulfill all of her lifestyle needs.

Laura Plus (formerly known as Laura II) has been part of the Canadian fashion scene since 1995 and Parry has been there since its inception. Providing the plus size customer with the same level of fashion and quality found in regular sizes has always been the Laura Plus mandate. That's meant working hand in hand with suppliers, often developing exclusive custom product for the Laura Plus stores. That's especially been the case with the petite plus collections.

“When we launched Laura Plus, our stores offered a full assortment of plus size fashions in sizes 14 – 24 proportioned for women taller than 5’5”. Our mix also included a single style of petite plus pants. There wasn't much more than that offered in the marketplace for the petite plus customer,” says Parry. Based on customer response and feedback, that single pant has grown into an entire department for the Laura Plus chain. “In reality, the average woman is not 5’6”, she's more in the 5’4” range. This realization prompted us to develop a more complete and extensive offering for the petite plus customer,” adds Parry.

Working with such quality brands as Louben, D'Oraz, Jones New York, Proportion Petite, Algo, Lori Ann and Onyx Nite, among others, Laura Plus has developed brand and private label product specifically proportioned to fit the petite plus customer. For example when it comes to suit jackets, in addition to shorter sleeve and overall jacket length, button placement is adjusted to ensure that the spacing and placement of buttons is more correct to the petite silhouette. That helps eliminate gaping both at the bust and the waist. Other adjustments include the raising of bust darts, pockets and arm holes as well as adjusting waist placement and seams all to ensure a flattering fit.

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When it comes to trousers, the rise of the petite plus pant is shorter (that means no more droopy seats!), the overall length is shorter, and the entire leg gets modified from pocket to knee and thigh placement. Petite plus skirts, blouses and dresses also go through the same rigorous fit adjustments so that garments fall into place with the natural curves of the body.

Training store staff has also been a key priority and the staff at Laura Plus can quickly identify those customers that would be best suited in petite plus garments. In addition to suggesting the petite plus fit to women 5'4" and under, store staff also pay close attention to how garments sit on their client's body as pieces are tried on. For example if the darts are not falling in the right spot, if the waist is sitting too low on the body or if the rise of the pant is too long, a petite proportioned garment might be the answer.

"Interestingly, someone may have petite proportions in some areas of their body and not in others," states Parry. That might be the case if you are taller than 5'4" and always find that you are having to shorten skirt and pant lengths by several inches. A petite plus pant or skirt in this instance might be the perfect option for you. The same holds true with the upper torso – some women despite their height may be short-waisted. In this case, a petite proportioned jacket or blouse could provide the right fit both through the body and through the sleeve length. "And having the right fit means added comfort, a more flattering silhouette, greater use of the pieces you're buying, not to mention a great feeling because when you look great, you feel great," adds Parry. "There's also real comfort knowing that there is a shopping destination out there where you can walk into a suit and have it fit."

Laura Plus is a division of Laura Canada Inc., a national women's retailer with over 140 locations across Canada. Laura Canada operates under the banners of Laura, Laura Petites, Laura Plus and Melanie Lyne. There are currently 34 Laura Plus locations across Canada.

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Contact: Genny Iannucci
Public Relations Manager, Laura Canada Inc.
Tel: 1 (877) 256-6149 Ext. 228. Fax: (905) 272-8301
E-mail: genny.iannucci@laura.ca