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New Pilot Project to Address Shortage of Midwives in Western and Northern Canada

Calgary, AB – A pilot project to prepare internationally-educated midwives for work in Canada aims to help address critical health care shortages in western and northern Canada.

Applications close midnight October 19th for the **Multi-jurisdictional Midwifery Bridging Project (MMBP)** – a program funded by the **Western and Northern Health Human Resources Planning Forum** to help midwives with foreign credentials qualify to practise in Canada.

“The MMBP is being introduced to help increase the number of midwives in western Canada by assisting those who have trained internationally. They are a great resource that is going untapped in times of health care provider shortages,” says Diane Rach, Chair of the **Alberta Midwifery Health Disciplines Committee (AMHDC)**.

The 7-month program — a project of the **Canadian Midwifery Regulators Consortium (CMRC)** offered in collaboration with **Mt. Royal College** and the **University of British Columbia** – will give 24 candidates the chance to bridge gaps in their skills through innovative online tools, community placements and hands-on instruction.

In Western Canada, processes to assess the skills of internationally-educated midwives for registration have operated successfully since 1999, but barriers for some international candidates remain. A 2006 CMRC study showed that these candidates need support to upgrade their clinical skills, English language fluency and knowledge of Canadian health care practices.

“The MMBP will provide support to address key gaps in experience and training that some internationally-educated midwives need to pass our provincial registration exams,” says Rach.

Calgary's **Mt. Royal College** is offering candidates access to English language upgrading, computer training and an orientation to Canadian health care course. At the **University of British Columbia's** midwifery lab, participants will train with UBC's birth simulator doll Noelle and provide care to virtual clients through **Virtual Midwifery Practice** – an innovative online tool piloted in Canada through the MMBP.

MMBP candidates will work in community midwifery practices under the supervision of Canadian midwives – giving them the opportunity to experience and adjust to differences in Canadian practice. The bridging program is open to applicants who want to register for work in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories and British Columbia.

Interested applicants must apply by **midnight October 19th** through an online application available at www.midwiferybridging.ca. Pre-intensives offered by Mt. Royal College start in fall 2008 and UBC intensives begin March 2009. Candidates with midwifery education and extensive experience may apply to take an **accelerated path** through the program.

Midwifery is a growing profession in Canada that aims to provide care for up to 85% of women who have low-risk pregnancies. Legislation was passed in Alberta in 1994, with the first midwives registered in 1998. The province has no education program, so approximately two-thirds of Alberta's midwives are Canadians educated outside of Canada, or citizens of other countries. It's the only regulated province that does not publicly fund midwifery care.

Midwifery is also regulated in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and the Northwest Territories. Legislation has been passed and is awaiting implementation in Nova Scotia and most recently, Nunavut.

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