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

**British Columbia**– A pilot project to prepare internationally-educated midwives for work in Canada aims to address critical health care shortages in British Columbia, the Prairie provinces and the Northwest Territories.

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.

“We don’t have enough registered midwives in BC to meet the demand for midwifery services,” says BC College of Midwives Registrar Jane Kilthei. “Internationally-educated midwives have skills we need. With the right orientation to Canada’s midwifery model and health care system, they can help us fill that gap.”

The MMBP is a 7-month pilot project of the **Canadian Midwifery Regulators Consortium (CMRC)**, offered in collaboration with the **University of British Columbia** in Vancouver and **Mt. Royal College** in Calgary.

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

“Midwifery practice varies greatly from one country to another. We found that the midwives most likely to succeed in an assessment-based process were coming from countries like Britain or New Zealand, where midwifery culture and practice most closely resembles Canada’s,” says Kilthei.

MMBP participants will work in community midwifery practices under the supervision of Canadian midwives – giving them the opportunity to experience and adjust to differences in practice here.

“Some may have worked in a system where the health care provider is the authority and women having babies expect to be told what to do,” says Kilthei. “That’s a big change from the Canadian model where pregnant women expect to be active participants in decisionmaking.”

Before their placements, participants will be oriented to Canadian midwifery and receive individually-tailored clinical skills upgrading at the **University of British Columbia’s** midwifery lab. They 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. Calgary’s **Mt. Royal College** will offer access to pre-intensive courses to orientate candidates to Canadian health care and to upgrade English language fluency.

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

Midwifery is a growing profession that aims to provide care for up to 85% of women who have low-risk pregnancies. Designated a priority profession in BC to support the entry of international workers, about half of the province’s 160 registered midwives have been educated outside of Canada. These include midwives from a dozen countries around the world, along with Canadians who trained internationally to avoid long waiting lists for midwifery education programs at home.

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