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

**Winnipeg, MB** – 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.

“There is an ongoing shortage of midwives in our province, yet we know that there are internationally-educated midwives who could provide great care,” says **College of Midwives of Manitoba Registrar** Janice Erickson, “The MMBP will help provide those individuals with an easier transition to registration and practice in Manitoba”

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

Processes to assess the skills of internationally-educated midwives for registration have operated successfully since 1999 in the West, but barriers for some remain. A 2006 CMRC study showed that support was needed to help upgrade certain clinical skills, English language fluency and knowledge of Canadian health care practices.

“The MMBP has been designed to address the most common gaps we see in the training of internationally-educated midwives,” says Erickson. “And to give them a solid understanding of the model and context of practice here in Manitoba.”

“Participants will have the opportunity to upgrade skills in a safe and supportive setting, as well as gain actual clinical experience with practising Manitoban midwives.”

**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 manage virtual clients through **Virtual Midwifery Practice** – an innovative online tool piloted in Canada through the MMBP.

Up to four weeks of course work will take place on-site at UBC, the remainder to be delivered at-a-distance or in the candidate’s home province. Candidates with extensive midwifery education and experience may apply to take an accelerated path.

MMBP participants will also work in community clinics, hospitals and home settings under the supervision of Manitoban midwives – giving them the opportunity to experience and adjust to differences in Canadian practice. Successful participants will be eligible to apply to register in Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories.

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 start fall 2008 and intensives through UBC begin March 2009.

Midwifery is a growing profession that aims to provide care for up to 85% of Canadian women with low-risk pregnancies. Manitoba proclaimed midwifery an independent, regulated health care service in 2000. The province’s education program is only recently established, so over half of its 35 practising midwives have been educated outside of Canada – including midwives from more than half a dozen countries around the world and Canadians who train internationally.

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