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

Saskatchewan – 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.

“We are aware the Regional Health Authorities have been finding it challenging to fill vacant positions in the province with qualified midwives,” says Ray Joubert, **Chair of the Saskatchewan College of Midwives Transitional Council**. “Yet we know there are internationally-educated midwives who could provide great care once they have successfully completed a program like the MMBP.”

The 7-month bridging pilot - 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 opportunity to bridge gaps in their skills through innovative online tools, community placements and hands-on instruction.

“The MMBP will help provide those individuals with an easier transition to registration and practice in Saskatchewan while ensuring standards of practice are maintained,” says Joubert.

Processes to assess the skills of internationally-educated midwives for registration have operated successfully in Western Canada since 1999, but barriers for some applicants 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 Joubert. “And to give them a solid understanding of the model and context of practice here in Saskatchewan.”

“Participants will have the opportunity to upgrade skills in a safe and supportive setting, and gain actual clinical experience with practising Saskatchewan 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. 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 19th** through an online application available at www.midwiferybridging.ca.

Midwifery is a growing profession that aims to provide care to Canadian women with low risk pregnancies. Saskatchewan proclaimed midwifery an independent, regulated health care service in the spring of 2008. The province has been recruiting midwives who are graduates of a Canadian university midwifery education program, or internationally-trained midwives who have successfully completed the processes to assess their skills for registration in Saskatchewan. Two of Saskatchewan’s three registered midwives have been educated outside of Canada.

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