



Press Release

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From the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health
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Improving Maternity and Newborn Care for All Women in Canada

Canadian women must have access to midwifery services irrespective of where they live or who they are

Many Canadian women are still without access to regulated and funded midwifery care, even though more than a decade has passed since midwifery regulation was achieved in Ontario. In an effort to learn from the experiences of the regulated provinces and to ensure that midwifery services are made available to more women, the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health and the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence will host *The Midwifery Way: A National Forum Reflecting on the State of Midwifery Regulation in Canada*, on July 22 and 23, 2004, at Dalhousie University.

Midwives are not regulated in any Atlantic province, in Saskatchewan, Nunavut and in the Yukon. Regulation is pending in the Northwest Territories and pregnant women do have access to this service in British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and Alberta. In Alberta, however, midwifery care is not funded under the provincial health care system. The *Midwifery Way* is intended to harness the renewed energy that has been generated around midwifery, evident in the recent decision by the Nova Scotia Department of Health to establish the Primary Maternity Care Working Group, which will find ways to incorporate midwifery into Nova Scotia's primary maternity care system.

"The evidence is in, it is time to stop debating the value of midwifery for pregnant women and their children and indeed their family and communities. Midwives are the only care-givers that focus on birth as a healthy physiological process" says Dr. Christine Saulnier, Senior Research Officer at the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health. "It is my hope that this forum will lead to many other events to help strengthen the midwifery movement and moreover to develop strategies to improve maternity and newborn care in Canada."

At a time when Canadian women are facing a maternity care crisis, it is vital that these primary care providers are integrated into the Canadian health care system from coast to coast. "Midwives are the only maternity care provider group whose numbers are growing rather than declining." At the same time, Gisela Becker, Registered Midwife and President of the Midwives Association of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut pointed out, "It is also vital that midwives engage in collaborative partnerships with other health professionals, while maintaining their distinct autonomous practice model."

There are, however, many obstacles in the way of building a truly inclusive model of midwifery practice - one where services are provided by and to women who have been under-represented or under serviced by the health care system. This forum promises to be

a dynamic and engaging event that brings together scholars, activists, consumers, other health care practitioners and representatives from various government departments to address these and many other issues.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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