



Statement on Closure of Laurentian University School of Midwifery April 13, 2021

The midwifery community is saddened and concerned at the recent news that the entire faculty at the Laurentian University School of Midwifery received termination letters effective April 30 through May 15, 2021 because of Laurentian University's insolvency and restructuring. There are over 100 midwifery students whose university education and career plans have been put in jeopardy.

As National midwifery associations we stand by our colleagues, students, and all those affected by this distressing situation. Laurentian is one of three University Midwifery Education Programs (MEP) in Ontario and one of seven in Canada. Laurentian School of Midwifery is dedicated to serving equity underserved populations. They provide a welcome space for Indigenous, francophone and northern students and specialize in educating students for northern and rural midwifery care. Laurentian offers the only bilingual MEP in the country and is the only program that educates French speaking students who are non-residents of Quebec. The closure of the Laurentian MEP jeopardizes the supply of northern-focused midwives and will have a long term and devastating impact on northern health services and healthcare outcomes.

"As an Indigenous person, LU was the first MEP to openly invite Indigenous students. Just the fact that this was part of their mandate made me feel safer about applying, that I might be surrounded by other Indigenous students, more relevant to my reality as a person and thus more secure to apply and throughout my education." Nathalie Pambrun

Laurentian has grown many of Canada's midwifery leaders, including: Nathalie Pambrun, past co-chair of the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives and the first Métis President of the Canadian Association of Midwives; Jessica Bailey, Past President of the Midwives Association of Saskatchewan and Provincial Midwifery Manager Saskatchewan; Heather Heinrichs, Métis midwife who is President of the Midwives Association of North West Territories and a NACM core leader; and Melissa Langlais, Past President of the New Brunswick Association of Midwives.

The Laurentian School of Midwifery is funded by a special envelope from the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities and the Ministry of Health. It is unjustifiable to cite "low enrollment" to cut a fully subscribed program with a government-imposed cap on enrollment. The program offers essential health human resource provider education that meets urgent and growing primary maternity care needs to equity underserved populations in the north. Laurentian midwifery students are left uncertain of their educational pathway, and the sexual and reproductive health care of Northern and rural communities has been put at risk.

Our experience with the pandemic has highlighted the critical role of public health care, and the importance of skilled health professionals to support childbearing families. Midwives play a vital role in the provision of equitable, accessible, culturally safe, and high-quality healthcare when and where people need it the most. Closing education programs, like the Laurentian MEP, at a time when these services are needed more than ever is completely unacceptable.

In solidarity with the faculty, staff, and students, we condemn the closure of Laurentian University's School of Midwifery and join the call for an immediate reinstatement of this provincially funded program. We call for the strength, capacity, and specialization of Laurentian's faculty and students to be recognized and a meaningful stewardship plan be developed immediately.

April 13, 2021

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