

Government Delivers Agreement with BC's Registered Midwives

The Midwives Association of BC (MABC) has reached a five-year agreement with the Ministry of Health that will help grow and sustain the midwifery profession, enhance midwifery services and increase access to maternity care throughout the province, especially in rural communities.

BC's registered midwives ratified the agreement on November 27, 2014, with 93 percent voting in favour. The strong endorsement of the agreement came after months of comprehensive negotiations and the decision last July by MABC's members to withdraw clinical education services at UBC.

Key features of the agreement include:

- A 5.5 per cent increase to the value of the agreement over its term, from April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2019.
- An enhanced Rural Midwifery Locum Program to support the sustainability and viability of rural and remote midwifery practices.
- A renewed Rural Start up Program to support the planning and integration of new rural and remote midwifery practices.
- Continuing Medical Education and Full Scope Skills Upgrading for midwives.
- Ongoing funding for the MABC's Emergency Skills Program.
- Home Birth Supplies Program that will support Regional Health Authorities to provide these supplies and medications.
- Funding (from outside of the agreement) for midwives providing Clinical Education Services at UBC.
- Modernization of the midwifery payment model is required to address changes in practice and in provider needs since the model was first implemented in 1998. The Ministry of Health will develop:
 - New fee items and alternative payments to advance collaborative care with other health professionals, including: collaborative care coverage in rural and remote communities and surgical assist for caesarean births.
 - New fee items to support an expanded scope of practice for midwives.
- Two new committees will be established with the Ministry of Health to support the full integration of midwifery into the province's health care system through more collaborative planning and policy development, including:
 - A Rural Practice Committee – to identify communities in need of midwifery services and to recruit midwives to provide those services.
 - A Fee Advisory Committee – to identify and recommend new fee items that reflect current midwifery care and support collaborative care with other health professions.

Achieving a New Vision for Midwifery and Maternity Care in British Columbia

In January 2014 the MABC released, “A New Vision for Midwifery and Maternity Care in British Columbia,” which identified BC’s maternity care gap, and made two overarching policy recommendations to the BC Ministry of Health, including integrating midwifery into BC’s health care system and supporting midwives to assist in the delivery of 35 per cent of the births in BC by 2020.

The MABC is pleased this new agreement will go a long way towards bridging BC’s maternity care gap and improving access to quality maternity care. It is also a recognition of the important role that midwives play as primary health care professionals in BC’s maternity care system.

Midwifery in British Columbia

- A significant body of scientific research demonstrates that midwives improve health outcomes for women and newborns.
- In 2013/14, registered midwives attended nearly 8,600 births or about 18 per cent of the total number of births in B.C.—up 1,240 births from 2012/13.
- In 2013/14, midwives attended about 35 births each on average.
- 17 per cent – number of midwife-assisted births that are planned home births.
- 42 per cent – fewer caesareans in midwife-assisted births than the provincial average.
- 18 hours – average reduction in hospital stay duration after a midwife-assisted birth.
- Registered midwives are highly trained, educated and regulated professionals who are experts in low-risk pregnancy, birth and post natal care.
- Midwives practice in clinics, hospitals and homes and provide 24-hour service. Midwifery services are fully covered by the Province’s Medical Services Plan.
- Midwives offer a full range of maternity care services, including: prenatal laboratory tests, genetic screening and diagnosis options, ultrasound imaging, procedures and medications, and access to a full range of comfort and pain-relief options for labour.
- Midwives are registered with and regulated by the College of Midwives of British Columbia (CMBC) according to the BC Health Professions Act.
- The UBC midwifery degree program is a four-year undergraduate degree program established in 2002. It was expanded in 2012 to double the number of seats in the program from 10 to 20.

The MABC extends its appreciation to the thousands of British Columbians who supported our members’ contract negotiations and the important work they do in promoting healthy babies, healthy women and healthy families.

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For further information:

Ashley Buck
NATIONAL Public Relations
Tel: 778-875-1346