



May 6, 2021

Seetha Kumaresh  
Manager, Universities Unit  
Ministry of Colleges and Universities  
16th Floor, 315 Front Street West  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 0B8

Dear Seetha,

The Association of Ontario Midwives Indigenous Midwifery (AOM IM) Department and the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives (NACM) are writing today to express our grave concern at hearing of plans being made for changes to the Ontario Midwifery Education Program (MEP) without the consultation of Indigenous midwives. The closure of Laurentian University's Midwifery Education Program (LU MEP) will result in reduced access to midwifery education for Indigenous students. The MEP consortium has a goal of increasing access to Indigenous students, therefore, any plans for the future of the consortium must include meaningful consultation with Indigenous midwives. Members of the Ontario Midwifery Strategy Council (OMSC) agree that, as representatives of Indigenous midwives in the province and nationally, the AOM IM Department and NACM should be involved in planning around the future of the Ontario MEP.

Access to midwifery education in northern Ontario is a priority for Indigenous communities wishing to restore and reclaim Indigenous midwifery services and birth as close to home as possible.

As leaders in Indigenous midwifery, we see the dire need in our communities for access to both Indigenous midwifery and Indigenous midwifery education. Our current education priority is to increase the pathways to safe and culturally relevant midwifery education for Indigenous students, including education options that allow students to stay close to home in rural and Northern communities. In previous OMSC meetings, the AOM IM department has brought forward the need for further discussions with you regarding Indigenous Midwifery Education (IME) in Ontario, a need that has gone unanswered.

We are inspired by the interest in growing Indigenous midwifery programs across the province and are aware of an increasing number of applications to have midwives working in Indigenous communities across Ontario. However, we are also acutely aware of the limited human resourcing capacity for communities to hire Indigenous midwives. Increasing the number of Indigenous midwives in the province, and across the country, is our priority to ensure access to sexual and reproductive health care for Indigenous communities. There is a desperate need for more Indigenous midwives and we know from our engagement with communities that successful education programs live in community or close to home.

We are becoming aware of other universities that are interested in bringing the LU MEP to other areas of the province that may not be accessible to Indigenous students. We ask that any planning of the future of the Ontario MEP include consultation with the AOM IM department and NACM.

We are looking forward to hearing from you in the near future. Indigenous midwives are critical for the future of healthy communities for Indigenous people across our nations.

Kind Regards,



Ellen Blais, BSc. BHSc. (Midwifery) AM  
Director, Indigenous Midwifery  
Association of Ontario Midwives



Claire Dion Fletcher, RM and Brenda Epoo, RM  
Co-Chairs  
National Aboriginal Council of Midwives



Cc: Ivonne Mellozzi, Director (Acting), Postsecondary Accountabilities Branch, Ministry of Colleges and Universities

Liz Darling, Director / Assistant Dean, McMaster Midwifery Education Program

Karline Wilson-Mitchell, Director, Ryerson Midwifery Education Program

Juana Berinstein, Interim Executive Director, Association of Ontario Midwives

Kim Campbell, Chair, Canadian Association of Midwifery Education