



Dr. Robert Haché, President and Vice-Chancellor  
Laurentian University  
935 Ramsey Lake Rd  
Sudbury, ON P3E 2C6

April 16, 2021

### **Letter regarding future of Midwifery Education Program at Laurentian University**

Dear Dr. Haché,

We are writing to express our grave concern for the future of the Midwifery Education Program at Laurentian University. As a tri-cultural and bilingual institution, Laurentian plays a critical role in supporting Francophone and Indigenous education and attracted the largest number of Indigenous midwifery students in Ontario. Laurentian has been a site for academic excellence in midwifery. The Laurentian Midwifery Education program made education accessible to a whole host of Indigenous students who otherwise would not have become midwives and had an admissions process that prioritized Indigenous students. The closure of this program marks the end of bilingual midwifery education in Canada and essentially closes the door to Franco-Ontarians seeking midwifery education.

Laurentian University is one of three sites providing midwifery education in Ontario. The new registrants from Laurentian represent one-third of the incoming registrants in our province. This closure threatens to reduce the new cohort of midwifery – who will care for tens of thousands of families in Ontario – by one-third. The demand for midwifery across the province is great; recent statistics show that approximately 27%<sup>i</sup> of families who choose midwifery care are unable to access it – and far more so in the North. Furthermore, Laurentian midwifery graduates play an essential role in providing midwifery care to diverse communities across the province, as they gain a hands-on knowledge of the needs of rural and remote communities through their placements.

This closure is not acceptable. On March 8, 2021 the [Standing Committee on Official Languages presented a motion](#) recommending that the government fulfill its obligations to support educational institutions across the country that are providing official-language instruction and enhancing the vitality of official-language minority communities.

As the president of the university, you have a responsibility to your academic community of students and faculty. These cuts and the lack of transparency surrounding them have caused abrupt and jarring consequences for all involved in the Midwifery Education Program at Laurentian. The loss of knowledgeable, dedicated faculty and staff is tragic. The futures of midwifery students in clinical placements, weeks away from graduation, are suddenly precarious. Pregnant people are abruptly losing important members of their care team. There are options. We are asking you to call on the federal and provincial governments to speak out and step up to save Laurentian University.

Midwifery became a regulated profession in 1991. Laurentian University has played a key role in that regulation since the beginning, when the midwifery program was established in 1993. We ask that you recognize the serious and far-reaching consequences for Northern, Francophone, and Indigenous communities; reconsider the decisions made regarding the staff and students in the Midwifery Education Program; reverse the closure of the Program; and stand with the profession the Ontario government has invested in, to the benefit of your institution. Families in Ontario need midwives.

Sincerely,



Jasmin Tecson, RM, BHSc  
President



Ellen Blais, AM, BHSc  
Director, Indigenous Midwifery



Juana Berinstein  
Interim Executive Director

Association of Ontario Midwives

CC:

Celine Lariviere, Dean of Faculty of Health, Laurentian University  
Serge Demers, Registrar, Laurentian University  
Marie Josee Berger, VP Academic/Provost, Laurentian University  
Silvie Allard, Assistant to the President, Laurentian University  
Ross Romano, Minister of Colleges and Universities  
Carolyn Mulroney, Minister of Francophone Affairs  
Christine Elliott, Minister of Health  
Patty Hadju, Minister of Health  
Paul Lefebvre, MP Sudbury (Lib)  
Jamie West, MP Sudbury (NDP)  
Marc Serre, MP Nickel Belt (Lib)  
France Gelin, MPP Nickel Belt (NDP)  
Charlie Angus, MPP Timmins-James Bay (NDP)

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/tipping-point-midwives-1.4166003>