MIDWIFERY COUNCIL OF NEW BRUNSWICK

Presentation to the
Standing Committee
on Public Accounts
Sept. 6, 2023

OVERVIEW

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WHAT WE DO

The Midwifery Council of New Brunswick (Council), legislated in 2010 by the *Midwifery Act* and *Midwifery Regulations*, is the governing and regulatory body that oversees the registration and practice of midwifery in the province.

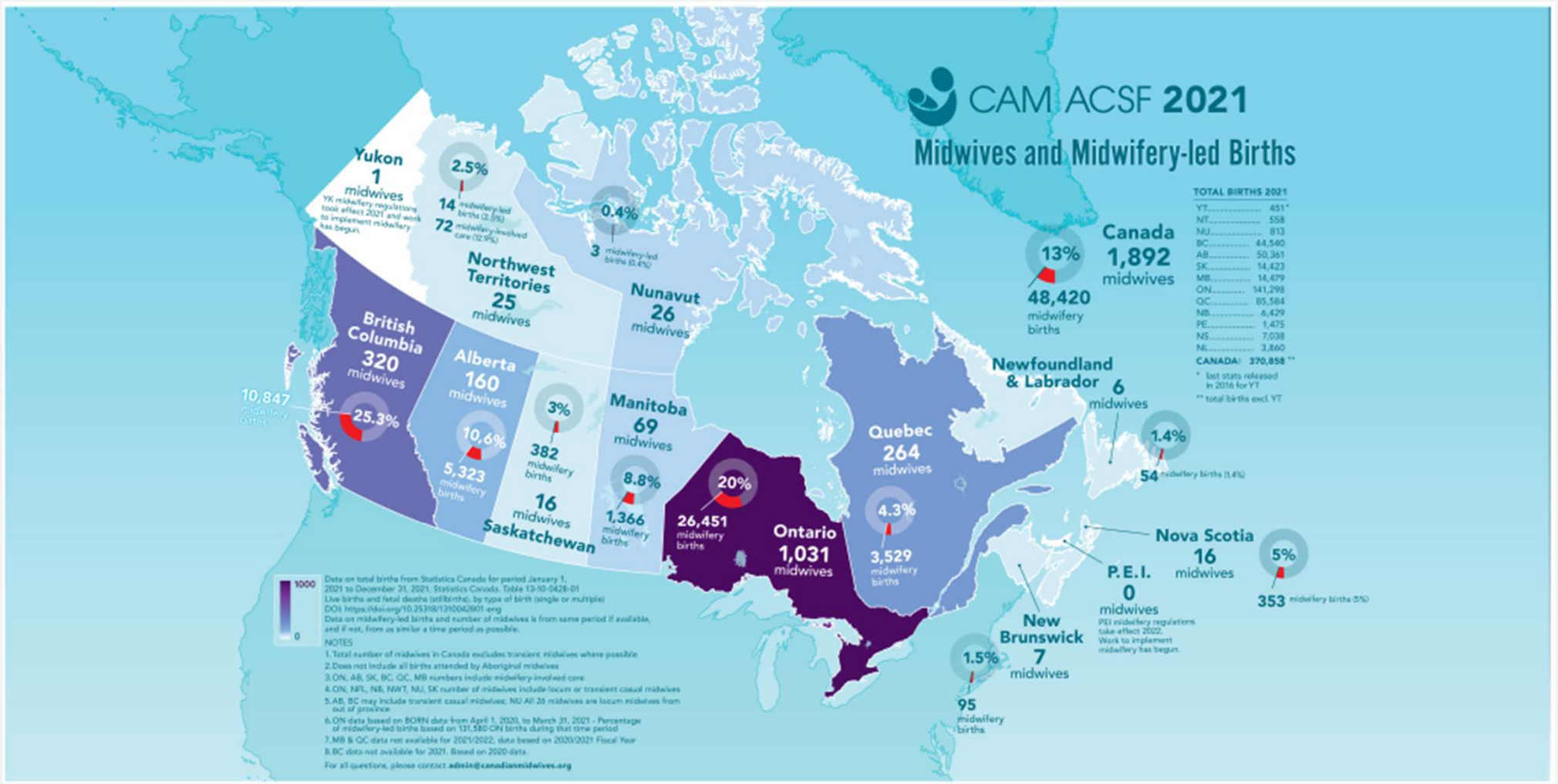
The Council protects the public by setting policies and standards of professional practice. The Council registers qualified, competent midwives to deliver safe, ethical, and effective care to pregnant clients and their families.

The Council is comprised of 7 interdisciplinary members who are appointed by Government and one staff who serves as both Executive Director and Registrar.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 6,156 births per year in the province.
- 16% of all births occur in individuals over the age of 35 in NB.
- People seeking out midwifery care are often educated and have planned pregnancies.
- NB population has grown due to interprovincial migration and immigration: more than 155,000 women of childbearing age.

Perinatal NB, 2021, Stats Canada



Canadian Association of Midwives 2021

NEED

- Nationally, 13% of births are either led or assisted by midwives. In some provinces, that number is as high as 25%.
- Between 2017 and 2022, there were 402 families in midwifery care in the Fredericton area and 318 midwifery assisted births. Of those who received care, 99% were satisfied or very satisfied with midwifery care.
- In 2022, about 100 clients were taken into care with the Fredericton midwives, yet approximately 250 people were turned away.
- 4 midwives can care for 140 clients/year, so 20 midwives could care for 700 clients/year and 40 midwives could care for 1400 clients/year.

Canadian Association of Midwives 2021, NB Dept of Health, CBC News

NEED FOR INDIGENOUS MIDWIFERY

Council supports the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and in particular the Calls to Action relating to health and to the Canadian health care system.

The Council engages with the National Council of Indigenous Midwives (NCIM).

The Council recognizes the significant health inequities that exist between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous peoples.

We support midwifery in Indigenous communities as part of the province's role to assist in reconciliation.

Integrating midwives and providing culturally safe care is an evidence based and significant approach that improves health for birthing families.

Midwifery crosses all cultures and continents, as birth is a normal part of the life cycle.

CHALLENGES

- Only 4 full-time midwife positions in Fredericton.
- Fredericton Midwifery Centre can't meet the demand – consistently turning families away.
- Limited catchment area with only one location. Requests received from across the province for midwifery care.
- Limited ability to recruit midwives as student midwives are not included in the *Midwifery Act.*
- Lack of understanding and awareness of what midwives do.

OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPACTS

Fully integrated midwifery care in New Brunswick means lessening the burden on our health care system and contribute to building a healthy population. A fully functional and expanded midwife practice in New Brunswick would:

- Decrease wait times in emergency rooms for pregnant or post-partum mothers
- Provide comprehensive and cooperative care for low-risk pregnancies
- Enhance collaboration with other health care practitioners for better outcomes for families
- Ease the burden of specialists to meet other urgent patient needs
- Decrease wait times for specialists and primary care
- Provide greater access to primary care in rural areas
- Allow for family physicians to meet the demands for general care of their patients
- Create cost efficiencies for the health care system

MOVING FORWARD

- After nearly six years as a “pilot” MCNB seeks a commitment for a fully established midwifery practice in New Brunswick.
- Once there is a commitment to establishing a midwifery practice beyond a “pilot”, legislative amendments will be required to ensure its success, including provisions for students and consistency with other Canadian jurisdictions.
- With a commitment to province-wide midwifery implementation, New Brunswick can actively recruit and retain these key health care professionals and enhance care for New Brunswickers.