



Media Statement

25 August 2016

## **Leading Midwifery Expert to Address NZ Midwives at Biennial Conference**

Less than a fortnight after New Zealand midwives began mediation with the Ministry of Health to progress their struggle for gender pay equity, midwifery conference delegates will hear of a similar battle currently underway in Canada.

More than 600 midwives will attend the New Zealand College of Midwives conference in Auckland where the key note speaker is Professor Vicki Van Wagner, recognised as one of the founders of the regulated profession in Ontario.

Ontario midwives recently returned to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario in an attempt to resolve its long-running claim against the Ontario government alleging gender discrimination over pay.

Midwifery leaders in New Zealand and Canada say that the positive impact of the actions they are taking will not only affect midwives but also women in general.

“Midwives are among the thousands of Ontario women stuck in the gender wage gap, earning far less than their male counterparts in comparable professions,” says Professor Van Wagner.

“It is sad, but not surprising that women in New Zealand are being discriminated against in the same way. New Zealand’s midwifery-led maternity care system is admired the world over and it would be a tragedy if it were to be eroded because midwives could no longer stay in the profession.”

Karen Guilliland, Chief Executive of the New Zealand College of Midwives says the College claim against the New Zealand government is not just about our members.

“Our profession is particularly vulnerable because it is almost exclusively female but there are many examples in other professions and workforces where women are still being discriminated against when it comes to pay. We are delighted to welcome Vicki Van Wagner to New Zealand and to have her support at such a crucial time in our battle for equal pay for work of equal value.”

**Note:** As far as the recent NZ/MoH mediation is concerned, the parties are still in mediation and that process remains confidential. The process between the parties will be reviewed on November 4. The court proceedings remain adjourned and there will be no further comment at this stage.

**Contact:** Maria Scott, 03 372 9744 or 021 329 405 or Ali Jones on 0272473112 to arrange an interview with Professor Van Wagner.

More about The New Zealand College of Midwives’ pay claim and maternity care in New Zealand at [HERE](#) and more on the College conference can be found [HERE](#)

## **About Professor Vicki Van Wagner**

Vicki Van Wagner works as a midwife and educator in Toronto, Ontario and in Nunavik, Quebec. She is recognised as one of the founders of the regulated profession in Ontario. She was the first Director of the Ryerson University Midwifery Education Program where she is currently an Associate Professor.

Vicki is the first midwife member of the Provincial Council on Maternal and Newborn Health. She was co-chair of the Ontario Maternity Care Expert Panel 2004-2006 and a member of the Ontario Maternal and Newborn Advisory Committee 2009-2015. She earned her master's and doctoral degrees at York University in Toronto. Her PhD explored unexpected effects of evidence-based practice in maternity care.

Her research publications have focused on midwifery outcomes, midwifery in remote northern and aboriginal communities and on clinical education.

In 2014 Vicki was honoured to have been one of two recipients of the first Lifetime Achievement Awards from the Association of Ontario Midwives.