***Regional Conference on Migration (RCM)***

***Migration Health Workshop***

***Concept Paper***

The diversity and complexity of migrant flows is placing new demands on the delivery of health services. The health impact of migration on individuals and communities is felt from schools to hospitals, and is a critical component factor in refugee settlement, immigrant integration, public safety and economic outcomes.

The concept of migration health continues to evolve—from its original focus on cross-border checks and quarantines to prevent disease transmission, to a broader consideration of the well-being of migrants—demanding research and innovation to keep up with increased mobility and emerging situations.

Health matters at all stages and all modalities of migration, in ways that often reach beyond border management: issues like reproductive and mental health (particularly in irregular and forced migration), child development, nutrition, and environmental determinants of health, now add to the list of immigration policy considerations. At the same time, we must continue working to address cross-border disease threats such as *Ebola, SARS, HIV,* or *Tuberculosis*.

Disease prevention and long term well-being start long before travelling, and depend on public health programs and infrastructure deep inside sending and receiving countries. And now, with the global range of transportation and the immediate nature of telecommunications, a rare or localized situation can quickly become global news, turn travellers into perceived threats and even bring to a stop the cross-border movement of people.

The RCM held its first Seminar on Migration and Health ten years ago, co-sponsored by Canada and Mexico, and held in Guatemala City in October 2004. A wide range of issues were covered, including the latest information from all participating governments and international organizations, such as lessons learned from the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) crisis some ten years ago.

New findings, policy innovations and important lessons are being learned across the region. It is important to ensure mutual understanding of each country’s policies, and explore potential benefits of different approaches to deal with migration health issues. This is why Canada would like to propose a two-day workshop, which would allow RCM countries and observers to exchange information on policies, programs and best practices.

The agenda would be shaped in consultation with all expected participants, with the support of the RCM Technical Secretariat, but in general terms it would provide an overview of global and individual countries’ policy priorities, discussion of research findings and programs, and lessons learned from recent developments—such as advances in detection and management of tuberculosis, and the rapid response mechanisms for international health risks such as Ebola. In broad terms, the two-day program could cover the following issues:

* Overview of key issues (pre-migration screening, health services, outbreak response, integration and determinants of health)
* Research and information (existing, gaps, proposals and priority areas)
* Approaches to health screening and border management (pre-embarking, ports of entry, in-country, existing challenges and best practices)
* Health services for migrants (best practices, challenges and recent developments)
* Epidemiology (overviews, advances and challenges, possibilities)
* Education and development (conditions, behaviours, nutrition and reproductive health)
* Emergency response mechanisms (existing and proposed, recent experiences and lessons learned)
* Future considerations

The workshop would be held in mid-2015 and gather policy and program specialists responsible for migration health issues from government agencies, the RCM civil society network, RCM observers and other international organizations (IOM, ICRC, WHO/PAHO). Canada would welcome co-sponsorship, particularly for hosting the event in a central location that facilitates participation by all member countries.