

 **Doctors**
Nova Scotia

2021
ANNUAL
GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY, JUNE 12, 2021

ANNUAL REPORT

TO COUNCIL 2020-21



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Leadership Message



Dr. Robyn MacQuarrie



Nancy MacCready-Williams



Dr. André Bernard

It's been more than a year of practising medicine in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and Nova Scotian physicians have continued to provide exceptional care to their patients. The physician community worked hard to adapt to rapidly changing conditions in 2020 and, in early 2021, they enthusiastically answered the call to open vaccine clinics in communities across the province.

Doctors Nova Scotia (DNS) has continued to focus on keeping physicians well and supporting them in their work. Nurturing a strong, stable physician workforce continues to be the association's priority, and we are pleased to report that DNS continues to make progress on all the key recommendations made in the *Road Map to a Stable Physician Workforce* report. Implementing the funding packages negotiated as part of the most recent Master Agreement and Clinical/Academic Funding Program contracts has been an important part of that work.

Advocating for appropriate material support for physicians facing COVID-19 was another focus of the association's work this year, and in late March 2021, the provincial government agreed to extend the improved synchronous virtual care fee codes. The codes – originally instituted to support physicians providing virtual care during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic – will now be available until March 31, 2022.

Meanwhile, DNS has been collaborating with the Canadian Medical Association and the provincial

medical associations in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland on a study about virtual care and compensation in the Atlantic region. The Virtual Care Compensation Review outlines recommendations and best practices for virtual care compensation models to ensure physicians are fairly compensated and that future synchronous and asynchronous virtual care services are sustainable.

Ensuring physicians had a timely, reliable source of information about infection rates and vaccination updates was another priority for DNS. The association continued its bi-weekly COVID-19 e-newsletters and maintained the online information hub. As vaccination plans expanded to include more vaccines and larger swathes of the general public, DNS took the lead on working with physicians to organize community-based vaccination clinics. It also provided trustworthy information about the vaccines and resources for dealing with vaccine hesitancy among patients, including two popular webinars.

Doctors Nova Scotia also continued to work hard to support physicians outside of their practices, providing a variety of resources for physicians who found themselves struggling with the burden of practising medicine during the pandemic. The Professional Support Program continued to help physicians manage the stress of the pandemic, including sponsoring physician-led Balint groups to help physicians cope with the early stages of burnout. ➤



Connecting with peers is a valuable way of learning, growing and coping as a physician, and in March, DNS launched the Doctors Lounge, a new, online member discussion forum. Now in the pilot phase, the forum offers physicians a private online space to make personal and professional connections and discuss all manner of topics related to practising medicine in Nova Scotia. With more and more medical interactions and record-keeping happening online, DNS published the *E-health Privacy and Security Guide* in December 2020 to help physicians ensure their and their patients' personal and health information is adequately protected.

Although it may feel like COVID-19 has overtaken everything, the association also continued its work in planning and delivering programming that had nothing to do with the novel coronavirus but everything to do with helping physicians practise at the peak of their abilities. In addition, the association conducted an extensive member consultation process to lay the foundations for the development of the association's next strategic plan, which will be launching in June at the DNS annual conference.

Work also continued on the "Restoring the Joy in the Practice of Medicine" framework, the new plan that outlines the future of comprehensive family medicine in Nova Scotia. The Physician Leadership Development Program launched its third session in March 2021, with the fourth set to begin in October. Finally, Board members and employees delved into learning about equity, diversity and inclusion and how to best bring those practices into their work.

A strong and vibrant physician workforce is critical to a high-functioning health-care system, and we will continue to work to support physicians in all aspects of their practice. Read more about our recent work in the following pages.

Dr. Robyn MacQuarrie
President

Nancy MacCreedy-Williams
CEO

Dr. André Bernard
Chair

Doctors Nova Scotia

2020-21 Board of Directors

Eighteen physicians, one medical resident and one medical student serve as Doctors Nova Scotia's Board of Directors. The Board provides the association with its overall strategic direction. The Board is a diverse representation of general practitioners and specialists practising throughout the province. The majority of Board members are elected through a member-wide election; three members are appointed to help ensure optimal member representation.

EXECUTIVE

Dr. Robyn MacQuarrie, *President*

Dr. Gary Ernest, *Past-president*

Dr. Heather Johnson, *President-elect*

Dr. André Bernard, *Chair of the Board*

Dr. Mike Wadden, *Audit Committee chair*

FAMILY PHYSICIANS IN HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Dr. Gehad Gobran

Dr. Cindy Marshall

FAMILY PHYSICIANS OUTSIDE HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Dr. Colette Sauveur (*regional representative*)

Dr. Stephanie Langley (*regional representative*)

Dr. Amanda MacDonald

Dr. Mike Wadden

SPECIALISTS IN HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Dr. Tammy Keough-Ryan

Dr. Kelly Dakin-Hache

Dr. James Clarke (*regional representative*)

Dr. Shelly McNeil

SPECIALISTS OUTSIDE HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Dr. Todd Stoddart

Dr. Islam Eissa

SECTION FORUM CHAIR

Dr. Mary Gorman

MARITIME RESIDENT DOCTORS REPRESENTATIVE

Dr. Elias (Leo) Fares

DALHOUSIE MEDICAL STUDENT SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVE

Bright Huo

CANADIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE

Dr. Gerard MacDonald

Financial Report (Sept. 1, 2019 to Aug. 31, 2020)



Dr. Michael Wadden

Audit Committee chair

THE AUDIT COMMITTEE OVERSEES the accuracy of Doctors Nova Scotia's financial statements by reviewing the effectiveness of accounting policies, internal controls and risk management practices.

The financial statements were audited by KPMG and no errors or omissions were reported. The Aug. 31, 2020 year-end financial statements were approved by the Audit Committee and the Board of Directors. The statements are prepared in accordance with generally accepted Canadian accounting principles.

The unrestricted operating fund has a balance of \$2,787,797 (\$2,366,993 at Aug. 31, 2019). The operating fund reported a surplus of \$313,650 against a budgeted deficit of \$474,280 for a positive variance of \$787,930. This positive budget variance was made up of the following components:

- \$130,000 revenue – unexpected, one-time COVID-19 relief funding from CMA
- \$200,700 revenue – additional staff recovery from DHW due to lower expenses from COVID-19 lockdown
- \$182,700 expenses – lower operating costs from cancelled travel, conferences, etc. due to COVID-19 rules
- \$93,700 expenses – conservative spending
- \$22,800 expenses – June 2020 AGM rescheduled to next fiscal year (Oct. 2020)

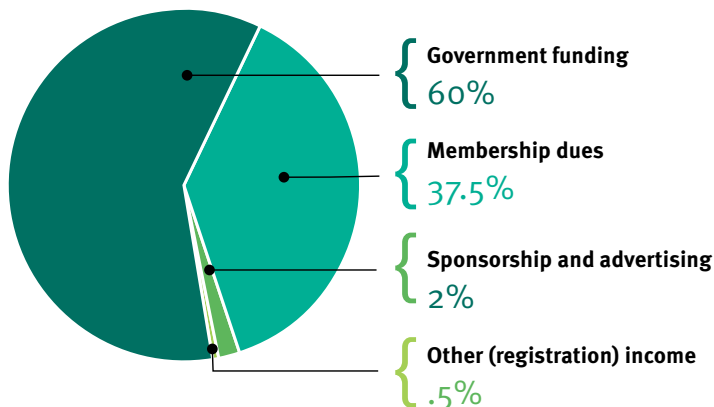
• \$152,600 investments – unrealized gains from market value adjustments exceeded budget
The association invested \$127,000 in capital assets (\$215,625 in 2019). This included capital maintenance on the building, scheduled computer hardware and software upgrades, furniture and fixture replacements and ongoing work toward an ERP system replacement.

In accordance with the current Master Agreement with the Department of Health and Wellness, Doctors Nova Scotia received \$6.824 million in funding toward the cost of member benefits (recruitment and retention) programs (\$6.57 million in 2019). This funding was distributed to the various benefit programs as follows:

- \$3,939,749 – health and dental (65% of total plan costs; 35% paid by plan members)
- \$1,293,500 – parental leave
- \$93,327 – professional support
- \$1,198,000 – targeted projects
- \$300,000 – benefits administration

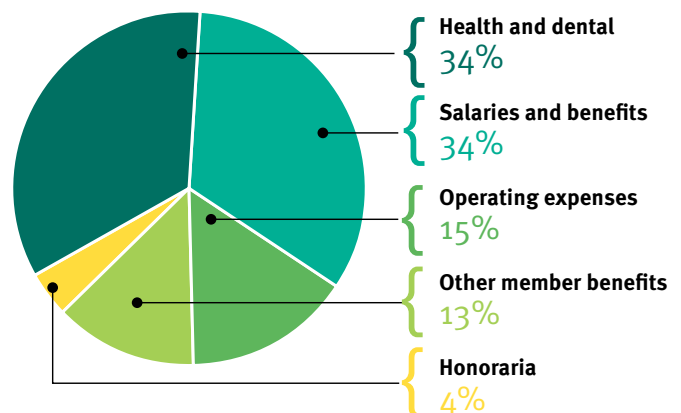
Overall, the association has a healthy balance sheet and continues to perform well against targets set annually.

Summary of Funding



Government funding	\$6,824,576
Membership dues	\$4,309,568
Other (registration) income	\$59,804
Sponsor & advertising	\$205,074

Summary of Expenses



Health & dental	\$3,939,749
Salaries & benefits	\$3,853,333
Operating expenses	\$1,754,656
Other member benefits*	\$1,501,146
Honoraria	\$458,608

*The "other member benefits" category includes parental leave, EMR, Business of Medicine, bursaries and CME.



2020–21 **Achievements**

Doctors Nova Scotia highlights the dedication of physicians from across Nova Scotia who have shown leadership and resolve in the midst of a global pandemic. Here are some achievements of the last year.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Doctors Nova Scotia (DNS) has been working to understand its role in system change to make health care more inclusive and address the racism, misogyny, exclusion and bullying experienced by patients and physicians in Nova Scotia. With a focus on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the association's new strategic plan, DNS is exploring how to amplify the voices of marginalized people. The association has formed an EDI working group and is developing a framework for its work, which includes continuing to provide educational opportunities for DNS staff, the Board and members. In addition, DNS is exploring opportunities for education on Indigenous health, including via the work of the new Section of Indigenous Health. The new Section of Clinical Assistants will focus on the concerns and issues facing international medical graduates in the province.

RESTORING THE JOY IN THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE

Doctors Nova Scotia has approved the "Restoring the Joy in the Practice of Medicine" framework, which outlines the future of comprehensive family medicine in Nova Scotia. With physician wellness at its core, the plan aims to help physicians strengthen their individual resilience and wellness, connect with colleagues and organizations, and engage with system partners – all meant to help physicians become more effective leaders in the health-care system.



COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

As COVID-19 vaccines began rolling out across Nova Scotia, DNS was enlisted to organize physician clinics to administer the AstraZeneca vaccine. Physicians at 12 sites across the province mobilized to give the vaccine in a tight timeline. Doctors Nova Scotia staff, including members of the Physician Advisory Team, coordinated the effort and helped ensure the clinics had the technology and equipment required. The association also provided physicians with trustworthy information about the vaccines and resources for dealing with vaccine hesitancy among patients, including hosting two popular webinars.

INCOME STABILITY FOR FEE-FOR-SERVICE PHYSICIANS

Nova Scotia's physicians rose to the challenge of COVID-19, transforming their practices into virtual centres and deploying to other services to ensure patients received the best care possible. To ensure physicians had a secure compensation base during this unprecedented time, the income stability program compensated fee-for-service physicians who committed to be available for redeployment during the pandemic.



SUPPORT FOR VIRTUAL CARE

During the pandemic, family physicians and specialists alike pivoted their practices to provide virtual care as a complement to in-person care. Virtual care helped physicians innovate their practices and services, and provide care more efficiently, boosting access to care for many of their patients. The provincial government has agreed to extend the improved synchronous virtual care fee codes until March 31, 2022.

E-HEALTH SECURITY GUIDE

With more physicians using electronic medical records and more health-care services moving online, DNS published the *E-health Privacy and Security Guide* in December 2020 to help physicians protect their and their patients' personal and health information. The guide outlines federal and provincial privacy laws, and the safeguards needed to prevent and respond to privacy breaches and cyberattacks.

TAKE IT ONLINE

Due to the pandemic, DNS has pivoted all its meetings and events to be virtual, including staff and Board meetings, the annual conference, AGM, awards ceremony, numerous COVID-19 related webinars and the Physician Leadership Development Program. This change allowed DNS to continue working for and with members while respecting public health guidelines.

MEDIA COVERAGE

While news stories were dominated by COVID-19, journalists relied on DNS to provide the voice of physicians in their stories. Over the past year, DNS staff have managed 194 media requests, connecting physician spokespeople, subject matter experts and DNS staff with journalists from local, national and international media outlets. In addition, staff provided background information and provided context for opinion articles. The association's work with the media continues to position physicians as trusted leaders during a very challenging time.

GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY OUTREACH

As the pandemic derailed in-person events and dinners – things many communities rely on to boost physician recruitment – DNS hosted virtual cooking classes as a new way to bring together residents, students and preceptors. Doctors Nova Scotia worked with local community organizations to arrange the events, including NowLunenburg County, Yarmouth Chamber of Commerce, Healthy Pictou County and Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce. The cooking nights supported the economy, with local chefs creating menus using local ingredients and matching recipes with local beverages. Participants prepared the meal under the direction of the chef, and got to enjoy the food with their family, friends and colleagues.



DR. ROBERT STRANG COMMUNITY HERO AWARD

In December 2020, DNS successfully bid on a Christmas tree decorated with neckties donated by Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Robert Strang for the Festival of Trees, a fundraiser that benefits the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia. With the goal of doing something special with the neckties to inspire Nova Scotians, DNS partnered with Nova Scotia Health and IWK Health to launch the Dr. Robert Strang Community Hero Award. Twenty award winners will be selected from across the province, recognizing Nova Scotians who have inspired others, helped people cope or raised spirits during the pandemic. Winners will receive a framed necktie signed by Dr. Strang.

STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: Connect the profession

Commitment	Actions
Connecting physicians with each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided ongoing support and connection to Medical Staff Associations (MSAs). Ensured MSAs were connected to each other, monitored their needs and responded as appropriate. DNS physician advisors played a leading role in supporting MSAs as needed. • Actively participated in Nova Scotia Health's Recruitment and Retention Working Group, with a specific focus on learning about and enhancing a mentorship program designed to support physicians transitioning in and out of practice. • Initiated new mentorship program to support International Medical Graduates (IMGs) on defined licences through the Practice Ready Assessment Program. Supporting the mentorship of other physician cohorts, such as physician leaders, new-to-practice physicians and new-to-province physicians is slated for next year. • Launched a pilot of the Doctors Lounge, a new online member discussion forum, and developed an evaluation framework to make recommendations for the future of the platform.
Connecting physicians with DNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Started the development of a new welcome package for new DNS members. • Launched a COVID-19 Webinar Series that saw thousands of physicians join to learn about the latest information related to COVID-19 and supports for physicians as they continued to provide care throughout the pandemic. • Continued to build and enhance relationships with physicians in each zone through the Physician Advisory Team. • Increased outreach of the Professional Support Program (PSP) with upstream interventions, access to the CMA Wellness Support Line, and more PSP counsellors. • Provided virtual dinners for varying cohorts of physician members, including learners, IMGs, residents and many others across the province.
Connecting physicians with the system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to support the onboarding of new physicians to the province in collaboration with Nova Scotia Health and their recruitment team. • Leveraged funding from the Canadian Medical Association to support the development of a project plan to guide the creation of a Medical Learners Leadership Program. • Implemented Physician Leadership Institute events and launched Cohort 3 of the Physician Leadership Development Program. • Developed a new physician wellness strategy called Restoring the Joy in the Practice of Medicine. Engaged health system partners in the development of the framework and began to action its recommendations, including the development of a mentorship program, enhanced supports for DNS's Professional Support Program and more. • Ongoing development of an implementation plan for the Memorandum of Understanding in the Master Agreement that commits the health-care system to engage DNS and its members on decisions that affect physicians.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: Advocate for the profession

Commitment	Actions
<p>Help make positive changes in population health and health-care policy through collaboration with government, Nova Scotia Health and IWK Health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began the development of a position on the future of family medicine. • Supported the Section of Family Doctors Council with new grants program that supports family doctors implementing programs/initiatives to support health and wellness promotion in their community. • Continued to advocate for changing practice models in response to community needs and physicians' interests. • Secretariat for the Health System Physician Coordination Council, together with partners, finalized the development of a pathway to support IMGs on a defined licence. • Together with Nova Scotia Health (NSH) and the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW), moved virtual care solutions and supporting policies forward in Nova Scotia. • Through involvement in provincial One Person, One Record (OPOR) committee(s), continued to ensure physician engagement is prioritized throughout the OPOR initiative. • Co-chair for Choosing Wisely Nova Scotia. • Worked with NSH and DHW in assessing the privacy and security of EMR add-on software tools. • Worked through NSH's Recruitment & Retention Advisory Committee Working Group to ensure health system partners, specifically the NSH, understood the role and value of DNS in physician recruitment. • Worked closely with DHW on the province's COVID-19 Immunization Program, identifying opportunities for physician leadership and involvement in the program to ensure best access to the vaccine for all Nova Scotians. • Supported the charitable arm of DNS, the Healthy Tomorrow Foundation, in launching a new provincial social marketing campaign designed to encourage middle-aged women in Nova Scotia to interrupt sedentary behaviour and take steps toward a healthier life by implementing short bouts of unstructured movement into their daily life. • Supported collaboration between physicians and other providers given changing scopes of practice (pharmacy, physician assistants, etc.). • Supported four prototype clinics and 12 community clinics to ensure they could successfully administer COVID-19 vaccine to Nova Scotians, within the guidelines established by Public Health and the DHW.
<p>Government relations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on building relationships with health system stakeholders with specific attention on government and physician services. • Started the development of a provincial election strategy.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: Advocate for the profession cont.

Commitment	Actions
Pursue fair compensation for physicians by negotiating provincial and local agreements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to implement the contracts negotiated in 2019, with a focus on moving forward with the development of a blended capitation payment model, a new APP contracting framework, an improved billing audit process, and activating the MOU reaffirming DNS's role as sole bargaining agent for physicians in Nova Scotia. Continued advocacy for fair compensation to support physicians during the pandemic, including income stability and isolation payment as required, and integrating virtual care into medical practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Worked collaboratively with the Atlantic Provincial and Territorial Medical Associations to contract Deloitte to provide a report on best practices for virtual care physician compensation for the region.
Advocate for members' economic interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing work to develop and implement the blended capitation payment model and APP contracting framework. Reinvigorated key contract governance bodies, including the MAMG Working Groups. Worked with the Office of Regulatory Affairs to develop a workplan to pilot a project to reduce unnecessary physician administrative burden, which includes short-term actions, pilot project and foundational work that will continue in the coming years. Continued to support members in fee applications and billing audits, including work to improve the billing audit process and institute the "first audit is educational only" provision from the 2019 Master Agreement. Worked with John Carter to review the current audit process and make recommendations for improvement. Finalized and launched new teaching stipend to support physician preceptors.
Enhance the reputation of physicians and of DNS as their professional association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed and implemented public relations and digital marketing strategy to enhance trust and confidence in Nova Scotia's doctors. Measured effectiveness. Developed and implemented strategic media relations plan that resulted in more than 100 media interviews featuring the DNS President and physician subject matter experts and leaders speaking out on a range of issues including physician recruitment and retention, COVID-19, patient access, systemic racism in health care, virtual care, wait times, mental health, influenza, vaping and more. Launched marketing campaign to reinforce Public Health's messaging around COVID-19 to keep Nova Scotians "the blazes home." Campaign focused on physicians thanking their patients (through video and social media content) for their compliance and support in effort to keep everyone safe and healthy. Launched social media campaign for Doctors Day. The theme was "Your Care is Our Calling" and featured a video with physicians describing why they're proud to care for their patients. DNS collected hundreds of "messages of hope" from Nova Scotians to their doctor and shared those directly with physicians through a targeted email campaign. Launched a media advertising campaign to support the digital campaign (billboards and transit ads). Established the Dr. Robert Strang Community Hero Award to recognize the unsung heroes in the community who are helping to keep Nova Scotians happy and healthy during the pandemic.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: Serve the profession

Commitment	Actions
Provide practice supports to help physicians with the business side of practising medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported physicians through various issues and conflicts impacting their ability to practise effectively, including support with contract matters, help navigating system processes and securing decisions, support with billing and audit appeals, support with retirement planning and the orientation of new physicians. • Provided enhanced e-health, privacy and security support to physicians through DNS's E-health Committee, strategic e-health support and an e-health advisor. • Published a new guide to help community-based physicians comply with personal health information laws. The <i>E-health Privacy and Security Guide</i> helps physicians understand privacy legislation and prevent/respond to privacy breaches and cyberattacks in their practices. It also includes the latest recommendations for electronic medical records and integrated solution options. • Developed a new Business of Medicine strategy which included the launch of a new virtual billing education seminar and new tools to support physicians with opening a practice. • Developed a new Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework to ensure DNS considers EDI in its governance framework and the work of association, including supports, advocacy and opportunities for greater connection. Staff, Board of Directors and other committees and sections have received education, which will continue into the future. Education opportunities have also been offered to the broader membership and will continue. Work has begun on developing an EDI strategy that takes an in-depth look at the Board and organizational structure of DNS and creates an action plan that supports understanding and clarity of roles, as well as change and growth. Using the information gathered, a comprehensive roadmap will be developed with recommendations to guide this work.

OPERATIONAL

Commitment	Actions
Ensure financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing work to modernize DNS's enterprise resource systems, including its membership database, finance and accounting systems and their integration with each other and the website.
Information systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitioned office staff to work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on ensuring minimal interruption to member service. • Completed the records management security initiative, which involved scanning and storing all archived files to ensure enhanced privacy and security of DNS records.
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed and implemented member communications and engagement strategy. • Developed and implemented COVID-19 Member Communications Plan including: Regular (daily/twice-weekly) COVID-19 updates, COVID-19 information hub on www.doctorsNS.com, a webinar series, public/member awareness and education campaigns, toolkit development and FAQs, one-pagers, quick resource guides, etc.
Strategic planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a new strategic plan for Doctors Nova Scotia.

In Memoriam (May 3, 2020 – March 19, 2021)

Dr. Tarunendu Ghose (92)

on May 3, in Halifax

Dr. Donald Haigh (74)

on May 17, in Halifax

**Dr. Carlton Lamont MacMillan
(86)**

on June 20, in Mahone Bay, N.S.

Dr. Dennis Klassen (54)

on June 29, in Halifax

Dr. Harmannus G. Walker (83)

on July 3, in Glace Bay, N.S.

Dr. Dora A. Stinson (81)

on July 25, in Halifax

Dr. Dale P. McMahon (75)

on July 31, in Ottawa, Ont.

Dr. Caroline P. Scott (93)

on Sept. 21, in Halifax

Dr. Thomas W. Shaw (88)

on Oct. 8, in Wolfville, N.S.

Dr. Jana Wieder (71)

on Oct. 9, 2020, in Colchester County, N.S.

Dr. Barry R. Wheeler (89)

on Oct. 11, in Truro, N.S.

Dr. Hassan Sayadi (62)

on Nov. 3, 2020, in Sydney, N.S.

Dr. Granville H. Nickerson (98)

on Nov. 22, 2020, in Toronto, Ont

Dr. Pamela M. Brown (88)

on Dec. 16, 2020, in Halifax, N.S.

Dr. Douglas A. Watt (63)

on Jan. 15, 2021, in Sydney, N.S.

Dr. John M. Gray (94)

on Feb. 16, 2021, in Herring Cove, N.S.

Dr. David A. Murphy (88)

on Feb. 24, 2021, in Halifax

Dr. Brian J. M. O'Brien (76)

on March 2, 2021, in Glace Bay, N.S.

Dr. David A. Gass (75)

on March 19, 2021, in Halifax

