

# Proceedings

170th Annual General Meeting  
Saturday, June 8, 2024  
Delta Hotels, Dartmouth/Zoom



## MISSION STATEMENT

To maintain the integrity and honour of the medical profession, to represent all members equitably, and to promote high quality health care and disease prevention in Nova Scotia.



# AGM 2024 proceedings



The 170th Doctors Nova Scotia (DNS) Annual General Meeting (AGM) began with the introduction of Dr. Heather Johnson, Chair of the Board; Dr. Colin Audain, President; Dr. Gehad Gobran, President-Elect and Nancy MacCready-Williams, CEO, Doctors Nova Scotia.

The Chair introduced the special guests from the other provincial and territorial medical associations and the Canadian Medical Association (CMA):

- Dr. Paula Keating, President, New Brunswick Medical Society
- Ms. Katrina Fillmore, CEO, Yukon Medical Association
- Dr. Joss Reimer, President, CMA
- Dr. Jeff Blackmer, Chief Medical Officer and Executive VP, Global Health, CMA

## 1. Call to Order

### 1.1 Opening of the Annual Meeting

The chair called the meeting to order and declared the 170th AGM in session. She started the meeting by acknowledging the land that we all live and work on, Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral, unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. The term "unceded" is important because it indicates that the Mi'kmaq did not give up their rights to their land or resources despite colonization.

At DNS, we honour and respect the Indigenous people of this land. Doctors Nova Scotia Doctors Nova Scotia also recognizes that it has much more to learn and do to embrace the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The chair acknowledged that African Nova Scotian history goes back over 400 years to the earliest years of Nova Scotia, starting in 1605 with the founding of Port Royal.

Doctors Nova Scotia is committed to working with the Indigenous and African Nova Scotian leaders, the medical community, physicians, and system partners to disrupt systemic racism and decolonize the health-care system to improve the health-care experiences of Indigenous people and African Nova Scotians in Nova Scotia

### 1.2 Review Conduct of Meetings

The Chair reviewed the conduct and rules of order for the meeting. While every effort is made to ensure a smooth meeting, participants were asked for patience if any technical issues we experienced during the meeting.

### 1.3 Appoint Dr. Heather Johnson as Chair

The outgoing Board Chair, Dr. André Bernard, was unable to attend the AGM in person due to illness. He joined the meeting virtually to present a motion that Dr. Heather Johnson, incoming Board Chair, be appointed to preside over the AGM on his behalf.

The following motion was moved by Dr. Nabha Shetty and seconded by Dr. Mike Fleming:

#### **Resolution – Board Chair**

*BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Doctors Nova Scotia Annual General Meeting appoints incoming Board Chair, Dr. Heather Johnson, to preside over the 170th Annual General Meeting. CARRIED*

The Chair put the resolution to a vote, and declared it carried.

### 1.4 Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

The following motion was moved by Dr. Gary Ernest and seconded by Dr. Luke Richardson:

#### **Resolution – Agenda**

*BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Doctors Nova Scotia Annual General Meeting approves the agenda for the June 8, 2024, meeting. CARRIED*

The Chair put the resolution to a vote, and declared it carried.

## 2. Proceedings of June 10, 2023 Annual General Meeting

A copy of the proceedings from the 2023 AGM were included in the registration package that was distributed to delegates in advance of the meeting. There were no questions or comments on the record of those proceedings.

### 3. Moment of Silence in Memory of Deceased Members

The chair read the names of those members who have passed away since the 2023 AGM: Drs. Bryan Quinn, John Fredrick O'Connor, Hesham Lakosha, Krystian Szczesny, George Sapp, Raymond LeBlanc, Denis Falvey, Philip Bagnell, James Oxner, K. Michael Schmidt, Rajender Parkash, Magdalena, Walentynowicz, Robert MacWhirter, John Atia, Simon Brooks, Edward Ross, Allan Wilkie, Leonard O'Neil, Roland Saxon, Brian Ferguson, Yasmine David, Navin Patel, Terry Rohland, Gregory Roy, Keith Walling, Edward Rafuse, Michael Evans, Alistair Munro, Sean Davis, Christian Belcourt, Rose Johnson, Curtis Steele, Carl Abbott, Thomas Hydorn, Rolf-Dieter Neu, Philip Jardine and Daniel Alex Gillis.

A moment of silence was observed in memory of the association's deceased members.

### 4. Approval of Annual Report

A copy of the 2023–24 Annual Report was included with the registration package that was distributed to delegates before the meeting. There were no questions or comments regarding the content of that report.

The following resolution was moved by Dr. Gehad Gobran and seconded by Dr. Kelly Dakin Hache:

#### **Resolution – Annual Report**

*BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Doctors Nova Scotia Annual General Meeting accept all narrative portions of the 2023–24 Annual Report. CARRIED*

The Chair put the resolution to a vote, and declared it carried.

### 5. Canadian Medical Association Address

Dr. Joss Reimer, President of the Canadian Medical Association (CMA), addressed the delegation. She began by acknowledging the land that we are gathered on, Mi'kma'ki, is the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.

She thanked the delegation for the opportunity to join the AGM and speak on the issues that are top of mind in Nova Scotia.

Dr. Reimer indicated that the health system is in crisis across the country. This is evident in the wait times for the emergency rooms, for procedures, and for even the most basic primary care. Physicians are also experiencing record high levels of burnout, with many feeling that they have no choice but to leave practice, or are barely hanging on under the pressure.

She explained that one of the main reasons she got involved with the CMA was to lend support to building a system where everyone, physicians and patients alike, are fully supported. The CMA is working with physicians across the country and a range of partner organizations to improve the state of health, the health system and the health workforce at the national level.

Although there is still much work to be done, it is encouraging to see progress being made. Last year, the federal government delivered the biggest investment in health care in two decades. Every province and territory signed bilateral agreements with Ottawa to unlock new funding and tackle shared health challenges.

The challenges are many, but so are the opportunities. These include reducing physicians' administrative burden and supporting wellness, an area that Doctors Nova Scotia (DNS) has been very successful in.

The CMA is also focused on improving physician mobility with a pan-Canadian licensure model. Eastern Canada has been leading the way on this front with the implementation of the Atlantic Physician Registry in 2023.

Dr. Reimer noted that the CMA is also working to:

- expand team-based primary care to better support doctors and patients;
- develop a national health human resources

- strategy to more effectively recruit and retain physicians and other health workers; and
- improve the sharing of health data for clinical, policy-making and other purposes – among other examples.

The CMA is also on a journey to advance reconciliation in Canada's health system. As part of this journey, the CMA has committed to a public apology, as the national voice of physicians, for the medical harms that have been done and that continue to be done, to First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples. These harms include the devastating impacts of Indian hospitals and forced medical experimentation on Indigenous Peoples, as well as systemic racism, neglect and abuse that is still taking place today. The apology will be delivered at a special ceremony in September.

In closing, Dr. Reimer emphasized that we must all work together to restore trust in the health system and build a healthier, safer and more equitable future for everyone in Canada. As a collective force, our impact can be that much greater.

Dr. Reimer affirmed the CMA's continued commitment to working DNS. She thanked Dr. Audain, outgoing DNS President, for his leadership and strong advocacy on behalf of the profession in Nova Scotia over the past year and welcomed Dr. Gehad Gobran to the role.

She also thanked the delegation for their dedication and commitment to making the world of medicine a better place.

## 6. Audit Committee Report

Dr. Gerard MacDonald, Chair of the Audit Committee, presented the Audit Committee report, which included an overview of the Audited Financial statements for the year ending Aug. 31, 2023, and an update on how the association is trending for the 2023–24 year.

He noted that from a governance perspective, the Audit Committee is responsible for ensuring that

internal controls are in place and executed properly. It represents the Board by overseeing the establishment and implementation of accounting policies and internal controls which promote good financial stewardship, managing overall risk including investment policies, tax compliance, adequate insurance and overseeing that compliance is adhered to.

### 6.1 Review Audited Financial Statements for 2022–23

The detailed audited financial statements for the year ending Aug. 31, 2023, were included with the registration package that was distributed to delegates and were also available online prior to the meeting.

Dr. MacDonald explained that the association's revenue and expenses are managed using the following funds: the Operating Fund, the Member Benefits Fund, and the Capital Fund (Property and Equipment). Operations are funded by annual dues from members, staff recoveries from Department of Health and Wellness (DHW) and the CMA, and payments from third parties for magazine advertising and sponsorships. The Member Benefits Fund consists of payments from the DHW that are provided via the Physician Agreement to cover the cost of member benefits. Revenues always equal expenses in this fund, resulting in a net of zero. The Capital Fund is used for property and equipment upgrades and maintenance.

There was a reported operating surplus of \$598K after investment income and depreciation against a budgeted deficit of \$93K. This was the result of: leveraging funding from the CMA to support leadership and physician wellness programming; leveraging virtual meeting technology to cut down on honoraria/expenses; and utilizing the modern features of our new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to streamline collections and improve cashflow. Revenues exceeded budget due to higher than anticipated membership numbers and an increase in sponsorship revenue. Total expenses for the year came in slightly under budget.

# AGM 2024 proceedings



KPMG successfully performed the annual audit and found no errors or omissions resulting in an unqualified opinion. The Audit Committee reviewed the audit process and resulting statements with KPMG. The statements required no adjustments, so a recommendation was made to the Board of Directors for approval. KPMG presented the Audit Findings Report to the Board of Directors in December 2023, and they were approved as presented.

Dr. MacDonald noted that the association is in good financial health and is well positioned to remain that way into the future. Funds from previous surpluses have been set aside in the Future Commitments fund to cover future expenses. As planned, a significant amount of this fund was spent during 2023 on contract negotiations with DHW. As a result, a transfer from the unrestricted Operating Fund to top up the Future Commitments will soon need to be made to cover the next round of negotiations as well as other annual commitments paid from this fund.

Dr. MacDonald explained that every five years, the AGM approves the external auditors for the coming term. A request for proposal was sent out last fall, and after careful review of the submissions by the Audit Committee, it was recommended that DNS continue its relationship with KPMG for the next five-year term covering 2024 through 2028. To maintain impartiality over the years, KPMG has assigned a new partner and rotated managers and staff on their audit team.

#### **Resolution – KPMG**

*The following resolution was moved by Dr. Gerard MacDonald and seconded by Dr. Shelly McNeil*

*BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Doctors Nova Scotia Annual General Meeting approves the appointment of KPMG as the external auditors for the years ending Aug. 31, 2024, to Aug. 31, 2028.  
CARRIED*

The Chair put the resolution to a vote, and declared it carried.

#### **Overview of Fiscal Year 2023–24**

Dr. MacDonald provided a brief overview on how the association is trending for the 2023–24 fiscal year, which closes on Aug. 31, 2024. Based on eight months of activity to date, management is projecting that this fiscal year will report a surplus as opposed to the \$205K budgeted deficit (before investments and depreciation). New revenue streams negotiated in last summer's Physician Agreement were not known when the 2023–24 budget was developed and are a major contributor to this projection.

The surplus is expected to roughly cover the capital budget for the year and help with the upcoming top-up to the future commitments fund.

For the balance of 2024, CMA Affinity funding will support the cost of several initiatives under the banner "Restoring the Joy in the Practice of Medicine" including leadership development, virtual care and physician wellness. This funding (\$250,000 per year) has now been fully received and must be directed to specific projects; it cannot be used to fund operations.

KPMG will perform the 2023–24 audit at the end of October and the audited financial statements will be available for review by the Board at their December 2024 meeting, then presented at the 2024 AGM.

## **7. Nominating Committee Report**

### **7.1 President-elect**

Dr. Colin Audain, DNS President and Chair of the Nominating Committee, delivered the Nominating Committee report. He explained that the Committee is responsible for reviewing the nominations for President-elect and recommending a candidate for the Board's endorsement and for approval at AGM.

# AGM 2024 proceedings



This year the Nominating Committee recommends Dr. Shelly McNeil, an infectious disease specialist in Halifax, for 2024–25 President-elect. The Committee has determined that Dr. McNeil meets the selection criteria and agreed that she will bring a valuable perspective to the Board and the association’s leadership.

Dr. McNeil is an experienced, highly respected, and trusted leader in the medical community and possesses strong written and verbal communication skills. Dr. McNeil has completed several formal leadership programs, including the DNS Physician Leadership Development Program. In her position as the Senior Medical Director of the Emerging and Re-emerging Infections Network with NSH, Dr. McNeil played a critical role in guiding the province’s response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Dr. McNeil currently serves as Chair of the Department of Medicine’s Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Reconciliation and Accessibility Committee.

Dr. McNeil previously spent three years on the Board (2020–2023) and volunteered for the Nominating Committee during her Board term. Dr. McNeil was also the recipient of the 2023 DNS Dr. Clement Ligoure Award.

The Board of Directors passed a motion at its May 10, 2024, meeting to endorse the committee’s nomination of Dr. McNeil. If approved, Dr. McNeil will formally step into the role of President-Elect following the AGM and will become President in June 2025.

Members of the delegation expressed their support for the committee’s recommendation, agreeing that Dr. McNeil is an excellent candidate for the role.

### **Resolution – President-elect**

The following resolution was moved by Dr. Colin Audain and seconded by Dr. Gerard MacDonald:

*BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Doctors Nova Scotia Annual General Meeting approve Dr. Shelly McNeil as President-elect for 2024–25. CARRIED*

The Chair put the resolution to a vote, and declared it carried.

### **7.2 2024–25 Board of Directors**

Dr. Audain reported that this year the Board welcomed the following new members:

- Drs. Janice Chisholm and Jacob Puthenparumpil, both elected for a three-year term
- Drs. Jayani Abeysekera (second term), Caitlin Lees and Michel Saccone, each for a one-year term
- Mr. Nnamdi Chiekwe as the student representative for the Dalhousie Medical Students’ Society
- Dr. Shelly McNeil as President-elect

A complete list of the 2024–25 Board of Directors can be found on the DNS website.

Additionally, on behalf of the association, Dr. Audain extended a special thank you to those Board members whose terms concluded this month: Mr. Korede Akindoju, Drs. Roshan Abid, André Bernard, Kelly Dakin Hache, Islam Eissa, Amanda MacDonald Green, and Cindy Marshall.

Donations will be made in each person’s name to the QEII Diversity and Healthcare Bursaries.

## **8. By-laws Revisions**

The Governance Committee reviewed the By-laws to ensure they:

- are in line with our governing legislation;
- are current and reflect any recent changes and governance updates that have been made; and
- have simple and easy-to-read language.

This year, there was one suggested revision to the By-laws. The change is to section S.6.4(d) under “Membership” which relates to changing “clinical assistants” to “associate physicians.”

This revision reflects a change made by the

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia (CPSNS), which, in recognition of their training and their clinical responsibility, now refers to clinical assistants as associate physicians. This change also aligns with the nomenclature used by other jurisdictions in Canada.

The Governance Committee and the Board have endorsed this revision:

### **Resolution – Approval of Revised By-laws**

*The following resolution was moved by Dr. Kelly Dakin Hache and seconded by Dr. Lynn Bussey:*

*BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Doctors Nova Scotia Annual General Meeting approves the revised By-laws as presented at the June 8, 2024, meeting. CARRIED*

*The Chair put the resolution to a vote, and declared it carried.*

## **9. Member Motions**

### **9.1 Gender bias in remuneration**

A member motion submitted by Drs. Robyn MacQuarrie and Leah Genge was approved. The motion calls on DNS to conduct a comprehensive review to identify and address structural gender-based bias in fee codes and physician remuneration. The motion recommends DNS conduct a comprehensive gender-based analysis of fee codes, remuneration methods and pay relativity to identify gender disparities and develop a plan to promote fair and equitable compensation for all physicians. Meaningful change to address this systemic inequity will benefit women in medicine, the medical profession and the care of Nova Scotian women.

There was strong support expressed in favour of this motion, with many expressing various views and perspectives on how this has impacted their experience in medicine.

### **Resolution – Gender bias in remuneration**

*The following resolution was moved by Dr. Robyn MacQuarrie and seconded by Dr. Leah Genge: BE IT RESOLVED that the Doctors Nova Scotia Annual General Meeting asks the Board of Directors to support Doctors Nova Scotia conducting a comprehensive review to identify and address structural gender-based bias in fee codes and physician remuneration. CARRIED*

*The Chair put the resolution to a vote, and declared it carried.*

### **9.2 Protecting the health of Palestinians in Gaza**

Drs. Monika Dutt and Suha Masalmeh submitted a motion asking DNS to add its voice to a growing list of medical organizations, including Médecins Sans Frontières, the Canadian Pediatric Society and the World Medical Association, by passing a motion that calls for urgent action to protect the health of Palestinians in Gaza. The motion calls for an end to violence against all civilians in Gaza; freeing Palestinian and Israeli hostages; immediate free passage and delivery of aid into Gaza, including clean water, shelter, food and medical supplies; and protection of all health-care workers and health-care facilities.

### **Resolution – Protecting health of Palestinians in Gaza**

*The following resolution was moved by Dr. Monika Dutt and seconded by Dr. Suha Masalmeh:*

*BE IT RESOLVED that the Doctors Nova Scotia Annual General Meeting asks the Board of Directors to call for the following:*

- 1. An end to violence against all civilians in Gaza.*
- 2. Freeing of Palestinian and Israeli hostages.*
- 3. Immediate free passage and delivery of aid into Gaza, including clean water, shelter, food and medical supplies.*
- 4. Protection of all health care workers and health care facilities.*

5. *Condemnation of any violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza.*
6. *Restoration of access to health care services, including public health measures and disease surveillance and response.*

Delegates debated the motion and discussed the role of health-care organizations in promoting human rights and addressing conflicts worldwide, with some expressing concerns about politicizing their member organization. The conversation highlighted the complexities of conflict resolution and the need for compassion and inclusivity in addressing these types of matters. Delegates also cautioned on the potential for such a motion to cause divisiveness among the membership. Some delegates noted that the exclusion of Israel in the motion can be perceived as one-sided.

A member of the delegation proposed a substitute motion, suggesting that DNS adopt the resolution passed by the World Medical Association (WMA) on this issue. The member indicated that the WMA's resolution provides more neutrality and balance than the original member motion. The WMA's preamble and position statement were projected on the screen for delegates to consider.

The following resolution was moved by Dr. Ben Schelew and seconded by Dr. Gary Ernest:

*BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Doctors Nova Scotia annual general meeting recommends that the Board of Directors adopt and support the World Medical Association's (WMA) resolution on the protection of health care in Israel and Gaza, from the 226th WMA Council session held April 2024.*

During debate, the mover of the original motion proposed that the language around the misuse of health-care facilities for military purposes, as highlighted in Number 7 of the WMA's list of recommendations, be removed from the proposed substituted motion. Delegates then debated and voted on the amendment to the proposed new motion.

The following resolution was moved by Dr. Monika Dutt and seconded by Suha Masalmeh:

*BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Doctors Nova Scotia annual general meeting recommends that the Board of Directors adopt and support the World Medical Association's (WMA) resolution on the protection of health care in Israel and Gaza, from the 226th WMA Council session held April 2024, with an amendment to Recommendation #7 as follows:*

7. *Verified investigations into alleged gross violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law including attacks on healthcare staff and facilities ~~and the misuse of those facilities for military purposes.~~ DEFEATED*

*The Chair put the motion to a vote, and declared it defeated.*

The discussion reverted to the substituted motion for further debate. Concerns were again raised about the organization's political involvement and the need for objectivity in advocacy. Some delegates felt that there is an inherent risk of opening a Pandora's box when entering advocacy in this space as there are many other global conflicts deserving of support. Others felt that it is an issue of humanity, not politics, and addressing global conflicts and humanitarian crises should have a place at DNS.

Following debate, the substituted motion moved by Dr. Ben Schelew and seconded by Dr. Gary Ernest was put to a vote:

*BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Doctors Nova Scotia annual general meeting recommends that the Board of Directors adopt and support the World Medical Association's (WMA) resolution on the protection of health care in Israel and Gaza, from the 226th WMA Council session held April 2024. CARRIED*



# AGM 2024 proceedings



*The Chair put the resolution to a vote, and declared it carried.*

Since the AGM voted in favour of Dr. Schelew's substituted motion, the original motion proposed by Dr. Dutt was considered dead.

The Chair thanked delegates for the respectful debate on a difficult matter and reminded them that it is the responsibility of the Board to identify implications and determine the association's ability to carry out resolutions passed at the AGM.

The Board will take the several factors into consideration, such as the motions' alignment with the association's strategic plan and direction, as well as the financial and staff resources required to carry out the work. The Board's review will take place in the fall.

## **10. Other Business**

*There was no other business.*

## **11. Announcements**

The Chair advised that a meeting evaluation will be circulated to attendees after the meeting and encouraged everyone to provide their feedback.

## **12. Adjournment**

The 170th annual meeting of Doctors Nova Scotia was adjourned at 11:59 a.m.

The following resolution was moved by Dr. Colin Audain and seconded by Dr. Gehad Gobran:

### ***Resolution – Adjournment***

***BE IT RESOLVED THAT the 170th Doctors Nova Scotia Annual General Meeting be adjourned.  
CARRIED***

The Chair declared it carried.