

## 2023 AGM Motion Form

**Mover:** Helena Piccinini-Vallis

**Seconder:** Michael Mindrum

*Note: The mover and seconder must be in attendance (in person or virtually) for the business session of the AGM.*

**Date of Submission:** March 21, 2023

### Proposed Motion:

Several prominent health organizations have declared obesity as a chronic disease including the World Health Organization (1948), the American Medical Association (2013), the Canadian Medical Association (2015), and several provincial and territorial medical associations. In 2015, the Saskatchewan Medical Association declared obesity as a chronic disease, followed by the Yukon Medical Association (2019), the Ontario Medical Association (2020), the Alberta Medical Association (2021), Doctors of British Columbia (2021) and the Newfoundland & Labrador Medical Association (2021).<sup>1</sup> Following the examples of these medical associations and based on the Canadian clinical practice guidelines for obesity management in adults published in the CMAJ in August 2020<sup>2</sup>, we wish to table a policy motion with Doctors Nova Scotia to recognize obesity as a chronic disease.

A declaration of obesity as a chronic disease by Doctors Nova Scotia will support a unified voice across our country's medical associations and help change the way our province's medical community supports and cares for the 37% of Nova Scotians living with obesity.<sup>3</sup>

Specifically, the proposed motion is:

**“BE IT RESOLVED that the Doctors Nova Scotia Annual General Meeting asks the Board of Directors to recognize that obesity is a chronic medical disease requiring enhanced research, treatment and prevention efforts.”**

### Motion Type:

- By-laws Motion** (Requests or requires a change to the Doctors Nova Scotia By-laws)  
*Must be received by Doctors Nova Scotia no later than Friday, March 24, 2022.*
- Policy Motion** (Describes the position that Doctors Nova Scotia should take on an issue)  
*Must be received by Doctors Nova Scotia no later than Friday, March 24, 2022.*
- Directive Motion** (Describes a specific direction/action that DNS will explore or initiate)  
*Must be received by Doctors Nova Scotia no later than Friday, March 24, 2022.*

**Rationale:** By joining the CMA and the existing seven Provincial/Territorial Medical Associations that have declared obesity a chronic disease, we can meet our strategic plans by better serving our profession, supporting our communities and advocating for healthcare delivery policies that impact our patients and our practices at the front-line.<sup>4</sup> Below is a brief rationale for the proposed motion:

1. Obesity is defined as a chronic disease characterized by the presence of excessive and/or dysfunctional adipose tissue that impairs health and wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>
  - Obesity is caused by genetic, biological, cultural and environmental factors that alter the normal functioning of the neuroendocrine system that controls food intake and regulates body weight. As weight increases, biological factors adapt to defend excess body weight and promote weight regain.
  - The management of obesity requires a combination of chronic disease supports that include behavioural, medical, and/or surgical treatments.
  - Our scientific understanding of available treatments and best-practices have rapidly evolved in the field of obesity. Canadian clinical practice guidelines published in 2020 ensure that people living with obesity can be adequately diagnosed, provided with evidence-informed care and treated with respect, compassion, and equitability.
  
2. Obesity, like many other medical conditions such as hypertension or diabetes, is both a chronic disease as well as a risk factor for other medical conditions.
  - Unfortunately, obesity is commonly viewed by patients and physicians as a condition that is a patient's responsibility to solve with common and oversimplified advice to "eat less and move more".<sup>5</sup>
  - Viewing obesity as a simple problem of unhealthy lifestyle rather than a serious chronic disease leads to inadequate healthcare, weight bias, stigma, and discrimination.<sup>2</sup>
  - Weight bias and stigma affects people's mental and physical health, relationships, education, employment opportunities, and engagement with the healthcare system. Weight bias and stigma increases morbidity and mortality.<sup>2</sup>
  - Almost 90% of Canadians living with obesity have never asked physicians about evidence-based obesity care.<sup>5,6</sup> Rather than getting support and care from the medical community, Nova Scotians living with obesity turn to the commercial weight loss industry, resort to medical tourism or adopt unsafe or unsustainable health-behaviour practices.<sup>2</sup>
  
3. Nova Scotians living with obesity face barriers to equitable health care.<sup>2</sup> Recognizing obesity as a chronic disease could improve care by:
  - Increasing the number of physicians trained in bariatric medicine as well as improve remuneration for time spent managing obesity.
  - Provide up to date education for medical students, residents, practicing physicians and allied health professionals about the chronic disease of obesity.
  - Make provisions for healthcare equipment to be inclusive to all body sizes or weights leading to improved experiences and access or to care. Examples include appropriately sized gowns, chairs, blood pressure cuffs, scales, radiographic instruments, hospital beds, and operating tables.
  - Markedly increase access to multidisciplinary teams, evidence-based programs, medications, or bariatric surgery.

Resolving this motion will influence our knowledge as physicians about the disease of obesity and support the nearly 275, 000 Nova Scotians living with obesity.<sup>3</sup>

### Does this motion align with one or more of our strategic priorities?

- ✓ Connect the Profession
- ✓ Advocate on Behalf of the Profession
- ✓ Serve the Profession

### Comments:

***Please attach any background information or documentation that supports your motion.***

***Send completed form to:***

***Charmaine Smith***

***Director, Corporate Services***

***Email: [charmaine.smith@doctorsns.com](mailto:charmaine.smith@doctorsns.com)***

### References:

1. About Obesity. Obesity Canada. Accessed February 24, 2023. URL: <https://obesitycanada.ca/about-obesity/>
2. Wharton, S., et al. Obesity in adults: a clinical practice guideline (2020) CMAJ, 192(31):E875-E891; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.191707>
3. Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0096-20 Body mass index, overweight or obese, self-reported, adult, age groups (18 years and older). [Accessed: March 15, 2023] Available at: DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1310009601-eng>
4. Doctors Nova Scotia Strategic Plan 2021-27. [Accessed February 3, 2023] Available at: <https://doctorsns.com/sites/default/files/2021-06/strat-plan-2021-27.pdf>
5. Sharma AM, Bélanger A, Carson V, Krah J, Langlois M-F, Lawlor D, et al. Perceptions of barriers to effective obesity management in Canada: results from the ACTION study. Clin Obes. 2019;9(5):e12329. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cob.12329>
6. Obesity Canada-obésité Canada. Report Card on Access to Obesity Treatment for Adults in Canada 2019. Edmonton, AB. 2019. URL: <http://obesitycanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Appendices-Report-Card-2019.pdf>