

2022 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
— Saturday, June 4, 2022—



# ANNUAL REPORT

**TO COUNCIL 2021-22** 

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## Leadership Message







It has been another busy year for Doctors Nova Scotia (DNS).

At last year's AGM, the association's Board of Directors unveiled the 2021–27 Strategic Plan. This document was the culmination of months of member consultation, evaluation and planning, and positions the association for success this year and in the years to come.

Despite the ongoing challenges posed by the ever-evolving COVID-19 pandemic, over the past year, DNS has taken meaningful steps toward advancing the goals outlined in the new plan.

#### **CONNECT THE PROFESSION**

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of connection in our personal and professional lives. When the chips are down, strong collegial relationships can make the difference between making it through or breaking under the strain. With that in mind, DNS has continued to support initiatives that foster connections among colleagues, from mentorship programs to leadership training (see page 7). The Doctors Lounge, our new members-only web forum, provides physicians across the province with opportunities for online connection (see page 7).

Of course, the ultimate source of connection with our colleagues is our annual conference and general meeting. We are delighted to be able to return to an in-person conference for the first time in three years.

#### **ADVOCATE ON BEHALF OF THE PROFESSION**

The election of Premier Tim Houston and his Conservative

provincial government in August 2021 brought a new immediacy to the association's advocacy work (see page 7). The association also continued to work with stakeholders to make meaningful changes to health care in Nova Scotia – see page 7 for more.

#### **SERVE THE PROFESSION**

Helping physicians live their best lives is at the heart of the association's day-to-day work. The benefits DNS provides are explained in the *Member Benefits Guide*, published in September. In addition to continuing to administer one of the country's most comprehensive extended health benefits packages for physicians, DNS has also refined its mental health support offerings (see page 8). Supporting physicians with the business of medicine is another facet of our work, and this year saw the publication of new toolkits, resources and practical support for physicians. Learn more on page 11.

#### **COVID-19 RESPONSE**

All of the above work took place against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and provincial pandemic response. Throughout it all, Nova Scotia's physicians have continued to be the backbone of our health-care system, and we recognize and appreciate your hard work and the sacrifices you have made to help keep Nova Scotians healthy.

Finally, please know that supporting physicians personally and professionally remains our priority. Without a strong, vibrant, connected physician workforce, we cannot have a high-functioning health-care system. Read more about our recent work in the following pages.

Dr. Heather Johnson President Nancy MacCready-Williams

CEO

**Dr. André Bernard** Chair

#### 2021-22 Doctors Nova Scotia

# **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. Heather Johnson, President

**Dr. Robyn MacQuarrie,** Past-president

**Dr. Leisha Hawker,** *President-elect* 

Dr. André Bernard, Chair of the Board

Dr. Gerard MacDonald, Audit Committee chair

#### FAMILY PHYSICIANS IN HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Dr. Gehad Gobran

Dr. Cindy Marshall

**Dr. Dahir Farah** (regional representative)

#### FAMILY PHYSICIANS OUTSIDE HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

**Dr. Patty Menard** (regional representative)

Dr. Amanda MacDonald

Dr. Mike MacDonald

#### SPECIALISTS IN HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Dr. Tammy Keough-Ryan

Dr. Kelly Dakin-Hache

**Dr. Chadwick Williams** (regional representative)

Dr. Shelly McNeil

#### SPECIALISTS OUTSIDE HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Dr. Chakshu Sharma

Dr. Islam Eissa

#### **SECTION FORUM CHAIR**

Dr. Jason Williams

#### MARITIME RESIDENT DOCTORS REPRESENTATIVE

Dr. Courtney Gullickson

DALHOUSIE MEDICAL STUDENT SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVE

Qendresa Sahiti

CANADIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE

Dr. Gerard MacDonald



## Financial Report

Sept. 1, 2020 to Aug. 31, 2021

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.



Audit Committee chair

The financial statements for the year ended Aug. 31, 2021, and were audited by KPMG in accordance with generally accepted Canadian accounting principles. No errors or omissions were reported,

and the financial statements were approved by the Audit Committee and the Board of Directors.

The unrestricted operating fund has a balance of \$3,351,417 (\$2,787,797 at Aug. 31, 2020). The operating fund reported a surplus of \$474,347 against a budgeted deficit of \$530,566 for a positive variance

of \$1,004,913. This positive budget variance was made up of the following components:

- \$250,000 expense additional staff allocation to targeted projects due to lower expenses from COVID-19 restrictions
- \$188,000 expenses lower operating costs from cancelled travel, conferences, etc., due to COVID-19 rules
- \$322,400 investments realized gains from investment trading
- \$298,800 investments unrealized gains from market value adjustments

The association invested \$141,353 in capital assets (\$127,000 in 2020). This included capital repairs to the building, scheduled computer hardware replacements and software upgrades, furniture and fixture replacements and ongoing work toward an enterprise resource system replacement.

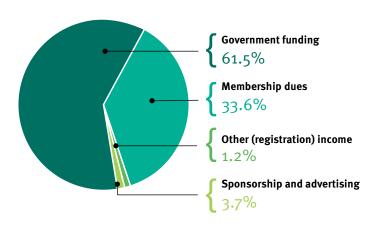
In accordance with the current Master Agreement with the Department of Health and Wellness, DNS received \$7.907 million in funding toward the cost of member benefits programs (\$6.824 million in 2020). This funding was distributed to the various benefit programs as follows:

- \$5,068,320 health and dental (65% of total plan costs; 35% paid by plan members)
- \$1,261,500 parental leave
- \$80,517 professional support
- \$1,198,000 targeted projects
- \$299,247 benefits administration

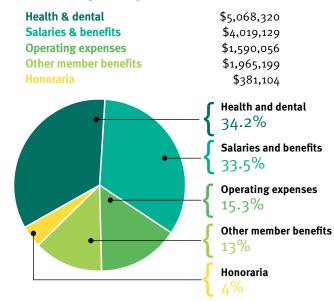
Overall, the association is in a healthy financial position and continues to perform well against targets set annually.

#### **Summary of Funding**

Government funding Membership dues Other (registration) income Sponsor & advertising \$7,907,584 \$4,310,653 \$150,463 \$477,973



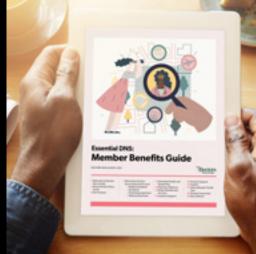
#### **Summary of Expenses**





# 2021–22 Achievements

Doctors Nova Scotia (DNS) supports physicians from across Nova Scotia, who have shown leadership and resolve in the midst of a global pandemic. Here are some of the association's achievements from the last year.



#### CONNECTING AND SUPPORTING PHYSICIANS

Doctors Nova Scotia continues to support initiatives that foster connections among colleagues. The association has developed two new mentorship programs that will soon begin matching new-to-Nova Scotia physicians with local mentors, with the aim of creating a more supportive practice environment. The association has also boosted its Professional Support Program, with a new company providing round-the-clock help for physicians in crisis and physicians across the province providing peer support. The association has also worked with physicians to promote on-going Balint groups, which offer physicians the opportunity to work through difficult situations and build communities of support.

#### **BETTER BUSINESS RESOURCES**

To help enhance physician education and confidence around billing, DNS has been providing family medicine billing seminars for fee-for-service and alternative payment plan physicians — with webinar recordings available to watch on-demand. The association has also published a toolkit on closing a medical practice and updated patient education materials about non-insured services.

#### STRENGTHENING FAMILY MEDICINE

The association's Restoring the Joy in the Practice of Medicine framework continues to help shape the future of comprehensive family medicine in Nova Scotia. In a new DNS research report, *The Future of Family Medicine*, more than 550 family physicians shared their input on providing comprehensive family care and what is needed to strengthen Nova Scotia's health-care system.

#### 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, 2023.

#### ADVOCACY WORK

When the premier asked DNS to respond to the province's "Speak Up for Healthcare" call

to action, the association distilled years of research and experience into a comprehensive document containing 32 recommendations for how to support physicians in the province and improve health care for all Nova Scotians.

#### **COLLABORATING WITH STAKEHOLDERS**

Doctors Nova Scotia has continued to collaborate with stakeholders including the Department of Health and Wellness and other government departments, plus Nova Scotia Health and IWK Health, in the service of improving physicians' professional lives. That work has seen meaningful advances in reducing red tape, increasing physician recruitment and incentives, support for permanent virtual care fee codes and a blended capitation pilot project.

#### **BUILDING COMMUNITY**

To help build community among physicians, DNS launched the Doctors Lounge – a new online community where physicians from across the province can connect and share ideas with their peers. More than 650 physicians have registered on the members-only forum.

#### LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Doctors Nova Scotia continues to provide a variety of leadership training opportunities, with weekend-long Physician Leadership Institute courses offered in the fall and spring, and the fourth session of the intensive Physician Leadership Training, which graduated in the spring of 2022. In addition, the popular Section of Physician Leaders, supported by DNS, continues to provide opportunities for physicians to build their leadership skills and their communities.

#### **EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) continue to be a point of learning and growth for the Board of Directors and DNS staff. Both groups have participated in training sessions over the past year and the association now has a standard process to ensure that policy and hiring decisions are considered through an EDI lens. Physicians who are looking for support in bringing EDI into their own practices can now download the association's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit, an interactive guide for DNS members.







# STRATEGIC PLAN Progress Report

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:** Connect the profession

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Commitment	Actions
Connecting physicians with each other	• Doctors Nova Scotia (DNS) physician advisors provided ongoing support to members, ensuring they were connected to one another, monitoring their needs and responding as appropriate.
	<ul> <li>Developed a physician mentorship program pilot to support International Medical Graduates (IMGs) on defined licences through the Practice Ready Assessment Program. Another mentorship program, for physicians transitioning into and out of practice, was researched and developed. In the next year, DNS will evaluate its success and determine next steps for supporting the mentorship of other physician cohorts, such as new-to-practice and new-to-province physicians.</li> </ul>
	• Evaluated the pilot for the Doctors Lounge, a new online member discussion forum. The Doctors Lounge was made available to all members and was evaluated to inform the future direction of the platform.
Connecting physicians with DNS	Began scoping a new member engagement strategy to define and measure engagement with DNS.
	Launched a new welcome package for new DNS members.
	<ul> <li>Continued to provide 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.</li> </ul>
	Continued to build and enhance relationships with physicians in each zone through the Physician Advisory Team.
	<ul> <li>Increased outreach of the Professional Support Program (PSP) by focusing on upstream interventions, adding access to the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) Wellness Support Line, and increasing the complement of PSP counsellors.</li> </ul>
	Provided virtual dinners for varying cohorts of physician members, including learners, IMGs, residents and many others across the province.
Connecting physicians with the system	Continued to support the onboarding of new physicians to the province in collaboration with Nova Scotia Health and their recruitment team and the new Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment.
	<ul> <li>Leveraged funding from the CMA and worked with stakeholders to complete a needs analysis and project plan to guide the creation of a Medical Learners Leadership Program.</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Continued to support the development of physician leaders through various program and educational offerings and support to the Section of Physician Leaders.</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Continued to implement the physician wellness strategy called Restoring the Joy in the Practice of Medicine. Provided enhanced supports for the PSP, including adding expedited access to a psychologist and implemented an electronic medical record. Continued to support the Fountain of Health with specific attention to their work supporting the health and wellness of physicians.</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Doctors Nova Scotia re-established its relationship with provincial and national physician assistant associations to support the advancement of physician assistants in Nova Scotia.</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Developed a DNS standard for responding to and advocating in relation to changing/expanding scopes of practice for physicians and other health-care providers.</li> </ul>
	Doctors Nova Scotia participated on the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia's advisory committee to represent physicians' interest with respect to tariff implementation.
	Ongoing advocacy and focus on 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

# Help make positive changes in population health and health-care policy through collaboration with government, Nova Scotia Health and IWK Health.

#### Actions

- Developed a research paper exploring the future of family medicine. The research will be used to support DNS's position at a provincial primary care action team, when established, and upcoming contract negotiations.
- Developed relationships with new e-health decision makers at the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW) and Nova Scotia Health (NSH) to influence e-health direction and establish governance models that will support enhanced physician engagement.
- Through involvement in provincial One Person, One Record (OPOR) committee(s), continued to ensure physician engagement is prioritized throughout the OPOR initiative.
- 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, exploring the
  opportunities for the council to support the priorities of the new Health Leadership Council.
- Together with NSH and the DHW, moved forward virtual care solutions and supporting policies in Nova Scotia.
- Co-chair for Choosing Wisely Nova Scotia. In 2020, Choosing Wisely Canada launched a campaign called Using Blood Wisely (national benchmarks for transfusion). In October 2021, Nova Scotia became the only province in Canada to meet Choosing Wisely targets in 100% of the hospitals where blood is administered.
- 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 physician vaccine clinics with technology, education and guidance throughout the
  vaccine program.
- Supported the charitable arm of DNS, the Healthy Tomorrow Foundation, in launching a second iteration of a
  provincial social marketing campaign designed to encourage Nova Scotians to interrupt sedentary behaviour
  and take steps toward a healthier life by implementing short bouts of unstructured movement into their daily
  life. In-kind supports from DNS continue and enhanced communications updated members about the work of
  the foundation, including the launch of a member donation campaign.
- Supported collaboration between physicians and other providers given changing scopes of practice (pharmacy, physician's assistants, etc.).

#### **Government relations**

- Focused on building relationships with both political and non-political key decision-makers in the health system, with specific attention on government and physician services.
- Continued to strive to secure the investments and initiatives committed by the Progressive Conservative
  government. Doctors Nova Scotia has done significant work investigating possible parameters for and
  opportunities of a physician retirement fund. The association continues to meet with DHW Physician
  Services to help advance this work.
- Explored opportunities to inform government's action on investing in family physician compensation.
- Held frank discussion with all members of the Health Leadership Council about the prevalence of, and need
  to reverse, an anti-physician culture within their organizations, and the importance of cascading a new tone
  from the top.

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:** Advocate for the profession cont.

#### Commitment

#### Actions

Pursue fair compensation for physicians by negotiating provincial and local agreements and advocating for members' economic interests.

- Continued to implement the contracts negotiated in 2019, with a focus on moving forward with the launch of
  a blended capitation payment model pilot, advancing 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.
- Worked with DHW to engage Deloitte to complete an analysis and make recommendations for a permanent
  approach to virtual care compensation in Nova Scotia. Deloitte's analysis helped support an extension of the
  synchronous virtual fee codes to March 31, 2023, along with the inclusion of walk-in clinics. Doctors Nova
  Scotia will continue to work with DHW to define parameters for more permanent virtual fee codes. In addition, the association is working with DHW to identify opportunities and define compensation structures for
  asynchronous virtual care (i.e., secure messaging) and e-consults.
- Continued advocacy for fair compensation to support physicians during the pandemic, including income stability and isolation payment as required.
- Continue to advocate and work toward reducing administrative burden for physicians through the work of
  the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness. This includes piloting a draft "Blue Form," which is
  simpler and faster to use, creating a draft of a tool that measures the impact that forms have on physicians,
  exploring the impact that the cessation of sick note requests may have had on employment relationships
  during the pandemic and next steps to evaluate that impact, and exploring how to improve the Maternal
  Serum Test form.
- Engaged a consultant to conduct a review of working conditions and compensation of clinical assistants.
- Continued to support members in fee applications and billing audits, including work to improve the billing audit process and clear the backlog of audit appeal cases in the queue, and to institute the "first audit is educational only" provision from the 2019 Master Agreement.

# Enhance the reputation of physicians and of DNS as their professional association.

- The association's Physician Advisory Team has established and continues to nurture relationships with NSH recruiters. The focus this year has been to meet regularly with the new Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment and to establish regular recruiting and onboarding touch points with all relevant stakeholders (NSH, Office, Immigration, DNS, DHW, etc.).
- Developed and implemented public relations and digital marketing strategy to enhance trust and confidence in Nova Scotia's doctors, and measured effectiveness of these strategies.
- Developed and implemented a strategic media relations plan that resulted in more than 200 media
  interviews featuring the DNS President and physician subject matter experts and leaders speaking 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 and more.
- Launched a marketing campaign to reinforce Public Health's messaging around COVID-19 to keep Nova Scotians informed and compliant. Campaign focused on physicians thanking their patients (through video and social media content) for their support in efforts to keep everyone safe and healthy.
- Launched a social media campaign for Doctors Day. The theme was "Your Care is Our Calling." Doctors Nova Scotia collected hundreds of messages of gratitude from Nova Scotians and shared those directly with physicians through a targeted email and posted mail campaign. Launched a media advertising campaign to support the digital campaign (billboards and transit ads).

### **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:** Serve the profession

Provide practice
supports to help
physicians with the
business side of

practising medicine.

Commitment

#### **Actions**

- 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 practice supports to help individual and groups of physicians with the business side of practising medicine, as well as individual member benefits to help physicians achieve a happy, healthy and productive lifestyle. Billing education seminars focused on primary care were delivered and recordings were posted to the DNS website for on-demand viewing.
- 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 E-health Privacy and Security Guide 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.
- Continued to implement DNS's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework to ensure DNS considers EDI in its governance framework and the work of the association, including supports, advocacy and opportunities for greater connection. Staff members, the Board of Directors and other committees and sections continue to receive education. Education opportunities have been and will continue to be offered to the broader membership. An action plan is being developed for the Board of Directors to support understanding and clarity of roles, as well as change and growth. Doctors Nova Scotia engaged in a project with ISANS and other stakeholders to develop web-based resources to better orient and support IMGs to practice in N.S. An EDI toolkit was developed and shared with members to support them in consideration and action with respect to EDI in their practice.

#### **OPERATIONAL**

#### Commitment **Ensure financial** sustainability

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

Continued to support office staff with working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on ensuring minimal interruption to member service. Office officially re-opened in April 2022, with staff transitioning to a hybrid model where they balance working from home and working in the office.

#### Communications

- Developed and implemented member communications strategy.
- Continued to implement COVID-19 Member Communications Plan: • Regular COVID-19 updates
  - COVID-19 information hub on www.doctorsNS.com
  - Webinar series
- Public/member awareness and education campaigns
- Other: FAQs, one-pagers, quick resource guides, etc.

#### Equity, diversity and inclusion

- Integrated EDI into the DNS Style Guide, including language, titles, pronunciation guide, etc., to guide standards for internal and external communications
- Focused and prioritized EDI at DNS's Editorial Board meetings to improve diversity and critical education in doctorsNS magazine, including first-person stories/experiences.
- Applied EDI lens to hiring practices and prioritized EDI in 2022 recruitment for new staff positions.
- To ensure our Board of Directors and standing committees reflect the diversity of our membership, the Governance Committee has developed a Board and Committee Diversity Policy, guidelines and a skills and attributes matrix. The committee also reviewed expression of interest and nomination forms to ensure processes do not create unintended barriers for those who have historically had less representation in our governance structure. These new and updated governance processes will be in place for Board and committee member selection in 2023.

## In Memoriam (April 13, 2021—Feb. 21, 2022)

Dr. Wayne J. Edwards (67) on April 13, 2021, in Lethbridge, A.B.

Dr. Harry P. Poulos (95) on April 15, 2021, in Halifax

Dr. Bernard Wm. D. Badley (87) on April 30, in Halifax

Dr. John Simon McGrail (90) on May 24, in Dartmouth, N.S.

Dr. Said A. K. Awad (84) on June 19, in Halifax

Dr. Martin S. M. Abenheimer (70) on June 27, 2021, in Sydney, N.S.

Dr. Gerard Mallon (84) on July 28, 2021 in Antigonish, N.S.

Dr. Donald J. MacIntosh (96) on July 27, in London, Ont.

Dr. S. Clair MacLeod (87) on Aug. 1, in Halifax

Dr. Jozef Zaremba (67) on Aug. 16, in Halifax

Dr. Scott J. Murray (66) on Aug. 28, in Halifax

Dr. Brian K. E. Hennen (84) on Aug. 30, 2021, in Dartmouth, N.S.

Dr. David Winfield Morse (75) on Sept. 9, 2021, in Bedford, N.S.

Dr. Roger Hamilton (61) on Oct. 3, in Port Williams, N.S.

**Dr. John R. Dill (79)** on Oct. 14, 2021, in Truro, N.S.

Dr. George C. Jollymore (87) on Oct. 19, 2021, in Halifax

Dr. Richard B. Goldbloom (97) on Nov. 19, 2021, in Halifax

Dr. James R. Rae (88) on Dec. 5, 2021, in Halifax

Dr. Lystra R. Dayal-Gosine (88) on Dec. 9, 2021, in Halifax

Dr. Sonia R. Salisbury (86) on Dec. 20, 2021, in Halifax

Dr. John Abdul Sattar (70)
on Dec. 21, 2021, in Hammonds Plains, N.S.

Dr. Michael S. Ramsey (85) on Jan. 2, 2022, in Tantallon, N.S.

Dr. lain G. Macpherson (97) on Jan. 29, 2022, in Riverview, N.B.

Dr. Amin Akbarali Nanji (68) on Feb. 2, 2022, in Halifax

Dr. Cheryl K. Conrod (59) on Feb. 12, 2022, in Sydney, N.S.

**Dr. Paul A. Begin (62)** on Feb. 21, 2022, in Oxford, N.S.

Dr. A. Emerson Dunphy (99) on April 9, 2022, in Antigonish, N.S.