

Protocol & process for Changes to the Doctors of BC Fee Guide/MSC Payment Schedule

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
1.	Introduction1
2.	Overview of Process2
	• Section Proposals2
	• Pre-review Process
	Tariff Committee Review/Recommendation4
	Consensus4
	Unresolved Issues4
	Board of Directors Approval & the Amendment & Clarification5
	$\bullet$ MSC Review and Approval and the Minute of the Commission $5$
	• Fee Guide/Payment Schedule Updates5
	• Schematic Diagram of Administration of New Fee Items 6
3.	Timelines7
4.	Monitoring of Process8
5.	Roles and Responsibilities
	• Tariff Committee
	Medical Services Commission (MSC)9
	Medical Services Branch (MSB)10
	• Sections10
6.	Resolution of Disagreement11
	• Tariff Committee/Board11
	• Review Committee11
	Medical Services Commission (MSC)11-12
7.	Funding for New Fee Items13
8.	Definitions14
9.	Contact Information15-16
10.	Choosing the Correct Form17
11.	Application Form Guidelines18-19
12.	Fee Guide/Payment Schedule Forms20



## Fee Guide Modification Process Fee Guide & MSC Schedule

Modifications to the Doctors of BC Fee Guide and MSC Payment Schedule

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Doctors of BC maintains and publishes the Doctors of BC Fee Guide on behalf of its members. The Guide lists the services insured by the Medical Services Plan (MSP) and provides recommended private fees for uninsured services. The MSC Payment Schedule is the official document in which insured medical services are paid in BC. The MSC Payment Schedule and the Doctors of BC Fee Guide mirror each other in most respects, with the exception of the recommended private fee for uninsured services. The following provides an overview of how modifications are made to the Fee Guide and the MSC Payment Schedule. It outlines the process and the roles the various parties play in making changes to these fee schedules.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF PROCESS

Under the Physician Master Agreement between the Government, the Medical Services Commission (MSC) and Doctors of BC, additions, deletions, fee changes or other modifications to the MSC Payment Schedule are made by the MSC, upon recommendation by the Tariff Committee and Board of Directors. If Doctors of BC and MSP agree with the proposed modifications, the MSC will implement them. If the parties disagree, the MSC will determine the matter if requested by one of the parties.

#### **Section Proposals**

Proposals for new fee items, amendments to existing items or the deletion of an existing item must be initiated by the Section and approved by the Section Executive. Individuals wishing to submit a fee guide proposal on behalf of the Section must contact the Section President or Section Economic Representative prior to proceeding. Approval of the proposal must be recorded in the Section's Executive minutes, and must accompany the submission and signed form.

Prior to submitting a formal proposal to amend the Fee Guide/
Payment Schedule, a Section may meet with the Fee Guide
Advisor and/or other staff of the Doctors of BC Economics and
Policy Analysis Department to go over the various components
of the application. Doctors of BC staff can provide guidelines
and assistance in the successful completion of the form (see
Application Form Guidelines). Proposals from the Section
should be directed to the Fee Guide Advisor, Doctors of BC
Economics and Policy Analysis Department, with all required
documentation attached.

Once a Section has submitted an application to modify the Fee Guide/Payment Schedule the Fee Guide Advisor and/or other staff will review it to ensure it has been properly filled out (i.e., no omissions, errors, ensure the fee item(s) is owned by the Section). All incomplete applications will be returned to the Section with a note outlining the deficiencies. In addition, all surgical applications will be sent to the Section of Anesthesiology for input on the anesthetic intensity/complexity level.

Once the application has been completed in a sufficient manner, the proposal will be forwarded to the Medical Services Plan (MSP) for pre-review.

In the interim, a Section may request from MSP the ability to bill under a Miscellaneous fee code if no fee item currently exists that adequately describes the procedure. MSP will generally determine a miscellaneous rate payable, based on information contained in the application.

#### **Pre-Review Process**

MSP pre-reviews all submissions prior to review by the Tariff Committee.

When MSP receives the proposal from Doctors of BC, they will write the Section indicating they have received the application. MSP will endeavor to complete the initial review within 3 months.

During the pre-review process MSP may have several concerns or questions relating to a component of the submitted proposal. These are usually resolved through written correspondence between MSP and the Section. However, in the event that some issues are not resolved through written correspondence, rather than sending it back to Tariff for resolution, a Working Group may be established between Doctors of BC, MSP and the Section. The Working Group would meet prior to the conclusion of the pre-preview process to try to resolve the outstanding issues.

The timelines for the overall process are outlined in Section 3. Please note that Sections are requested to respond to MSP's pre-review questions within 3 months. If Section's do not respond within 6 months, MSP will consider the proposal to be dormant and will not pursue the application any further.

At the completion of the pre-review process MSP will write to the Tariff Committee to indicate that the pre-review process has been concluded. MSP will specify whether or not a consensus has been reached or if there are still unresolved issues to be worked out.

#### Tariff Committee Review/Recommendation

#### Consensus:

When a consensus has been reached by MSP and the Section on all of the components (e.g., description, level of fee, guidelines, payment rules, notes etc.), this will signal completion of MSP's pre-review process. In a letter to the Chair of the Tariff Committee, MSP will advise that the pre-review process is complete and that the proposal is ready for final review and recommendation by the Tariff Committee. The letter will document the terms agreed upon through the exchange of correspondence or meetings between the Section and MSP.

Following review of the final proposal, the Tariff Committee will formulate a motion for Board approval with the information provided in MSP's covering letter. The motion will include the description, level of fee, and applicable notes or guidelines. The minutes, if applicable, will also document payment policies that were discussed and agreed to during the pre-review process. Should the Tariff Committee have any questions or concerns about the final proposal, further input from the Section and/or MSP will be requested. Approval will be deferred pending further review.

#### Unresolved Issues:

If consensus has not been reached on all points, MSP will outline the areas of concern in a covering letter to the Chair of the Tariff Committee. The Tariff Committee will try to resolve these issues with the Section prior to making a recommendation to the Board of Directors by corresponding with the Section. Generally, the Section will be invited to meet with the Tariff Committee and MSP representatives to work out the details. In cases where consensus cannot be reached, the Tariff Committee will make a decision based on the research and background material provided. In the final step, a recommendation will be forwarded to the Board of Directors for consideration.

#### Board of Directors Approval and the Amendment & Clarification (A&C)

Following Board approval, an Amendment & Clarification (A&C) will be drafted for submission to the Medical Services Commission (MSC). An Amendment & Clarification is the official document for submitting Fee Guide/Payment Schedule proposals to the MSC following Board approval.

All proposals regarding Fee Guide/Payment Schedule changes that are the responsibility of the Medical Services Plan must be submitted to the MSC in an Amendment & Clarification.

#### MSC Review and Approval and the Minute of the Commission (MOC)

Board approved proposals are submitted to the Medical Services Commission (MSC) for review and final approval. The MSC is the only body that has legislative authority to change the Payment Schedule. If the Doctors of BC and MSP disagree on a proposed change, the MSC will make the final determination. MSC approved proposals will be released as a Minute of the Commission (MOC). This is the final step in the review and approval process.

## Fee Guide/Payment Schedule Updates

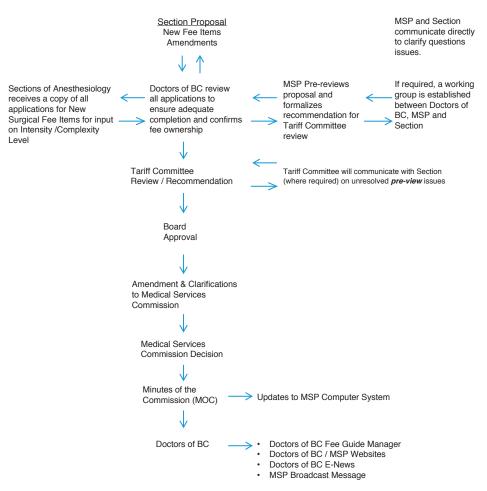
The Minute of the Commission (MOC) is the final document that officially denotes a modification has been made to the Payment Schedule and approved by the MSC. MSP will forward all signed MOC's to Doctors of BC. Once received, the Fee Guide Advisor updates all internal documents and databases including the website which lists all updates to the Fee Guide since the last printing.

It should be noted that although a MOC has been signed, it generally may take up to 3 months for the necessary computer system updates to be completed before a new item may be billed. When the computer systems are updated accordingly, MSP will send out a broadcast message to all physicians notifying them of the modification to the MSC Payment Schedule.

Members will be notified of Fee Guide/Payment Schedule changes via one or more of the following publications:

- 1) Doctors of BC and MSP websites.
- 2) MSP Broadcast Message.
- 3) Letter or email to the Section from the Economics and Policy Analysis Department.
- 4) Doctors of BC E-News.

# Figure: Schematic Diagram of the Administration of New Fee Items, Amendments, and Deletions



## 3. TIMELINES

The time from Section application submission to actual fee implementation can vary significantly depending on many factors. However, the Tariff Committee has set a targeted time line of 12 months from the date the application is received by MSP to date the MOC is approved. This takes into account the many different parties involved as well as the many steps in the administrative process.

#### **Timeline Benchmarks**

STEP	DURATION	CONDITIONS/FACTORS
Doctors of BC Initial     Review of Proposal	2 weeks	A Section can minimize this process by ensuring proper completion of form (see Application Form Guidlines).
2. MSP Pre-Review (Includes establishing a Working Group, if required)	Acknowledgement letter from MSP in 3-5 days  3 months for initial response from MSP  3 months for response by Section to MSP questions  2 months for additional correspondence between Section & MSP including Working Group if needed	The MSP pre-review process is the lengthiest part in the administrative process. After the initial acknowledgment letter, MSP corresponds directly with the Section to clarify all issues and or questions they may have. How quickly the Section responds will also play a part in how long the pre-review process takes. Therefore, the Section may influence the speed of the process by ensuring a timely response to MSP.  Sections are requested to respond to MSP's pre-review questions within 3 months. If Sections do not respond within 6 months, MSP will consider the proposal to be dormant and will not pursue the application any further.
3. Tariff Committee Review/Recommendation	1 month	The Tariff Committee generally meets once per month. The item will be placed on the agenda at the next upcoming Tariff meeting. If the issue is still unresolved, the Section may be required to respond to the Committee either in writing or in person for the next Tariff meeting.
4. Board Approval	2 months	The Board meets approximately 5 times per year. Therefore, a Board Resolution on the proposal may occur anywhere from 1 to 8 weeks.
5. Amendment & Clarification (A&C)	1 week from Board meeting	
6. Minute of the Commission (MOC)	2 weeks from receiving the A&C	
7. Notification to Section	1 week	

## 4. MONITORING OF PROCESS

Throughout the process, the Economics and Policy Analysis
Department monitors the progress of each proposal against the
timelines set out in Section 3 and facilitates compliance with these
timelines in the following manner:

Doctors of BC documents the date that the pre-review submission is sent to MSP and if there has been no documented correspondence between MSP and the Section after 45 days, Doctors of BC will send a reminder to MSP that the 90 day review period is at the half-way point. If there has been no documented correspondence between MSP and the Section at 90 days MSP will be contacted and requested to complete their initial review without delay.

Likewise, once MSP has sent correspondence to the Section, Doctors of BC will contact the Section after 45 days and 90 days and advise them in a similar fashion. Therefore, it is pertinent that the Section copies the Economics and Policy Analysis Department on all correspondence with MSP.

Towards the end of the pre-review phase, if there has been no consensus between MSP and the Section on the proposal, Doctors of BC may suggest that a Working Group between the Section and MSP be established, ideally, within the 8-month pre-review phase. This will help facilitate resolution of any outstanding issues. Alternatively, Doctors of BC will arrange for the proposal to be placed on the next upcoming Tariff meeting agenda and, if required, the Section will be requested to come and speak to the Committee.

## 5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

#### **Tariff Committee**

The Tariff Committee is a Statutory Committee of Doctors of BC that reports directly to the Board of Directors. The Tariff Committee is authorized to study all matters concerning medical economics and report on those matters to the Board. The Board considers all major decisions of the Tariff Committee before final action and/or publicity is undertaken.

The Tariff Committee is composed of eight physician members with support staff provided by the Economics and Policy Analysis Department. Three representatives from the Government attend the Tariff Committee meetings; however, they do not have a vote. These representatives were added to the Tariff Committee in the early 1990's in order to streamline and speed up the process.

#### **Medical Services Commission (MSC)**

The Medical Services Commission (MSC) manages the Medical Services Plan (MSP) on behalf of the Government of British Columbia in accordance with the Medicare Protection Act and Regulations.

The MSC is a nine-member statutory body made up of three representatives from Government, three representatives from Doctors of BC and three members from the public jointly nominated by Doctors of BC and Government.

The responsibilities of the MSC are two-fold: to ensure that all BC residents have reasonable access to medical care and to manage the provision and payment of medical services in an effective and cost-efficient manner.

The MSC is a signatory to the Physician Master Agreement Articles 13 and 14 of the agreement outline the consultation process between Doctors of BC, government and the MSC regarding changes to the Payment Schedule. If Doctors of BC and Government agree to a change to the Payment Schedule, the MSC will implement such changes. In the event Doctors of BC and Government disagree on an amendment to the Payment Schedule, Doctors of BC and the Government may make separate recommendations to the MSC and it will determine the changes, if any.

#### Medical Services Branch (MSB)

The Medical Services Branch in the Ministry of Health is responsible for the administration and operation of the Medical Services Plan (MSP). The MSP is managed by the Medical Services Commission according to the legislative provisions of the Medicare Protection Act and Regulations.

The staff of the MSB is responsible for reviewing all proposed amendments to the Fee Guide/Payment Schedule prior to it reaching the Tariff Committee and the Medical Services Commission.

All aspects of the proposal are reviewed. The main focus is whether or not it is a medically required service and whether it should be insured by the Plan. At the completion of the pre-review, the MSB may make recommendations to the Section in regards to the proposed fee, fee item description, billing restrictions, payment rules, etc.

#### **Sections**

Physicians who wish to propose modifications to the Fee Guide and MSC Payment Schedule should submit their proposals to the Tariff Committee through the appropriate Section. If a Section chooses to advance a proposal to the Tariff Committee, it must submit its proposal in writing and complete an application form. In addition, the Section must submit a copy of the Section's Executive minutes that relates to the proposal.

The Section is responsible for addressing all questions regarding the proposal. The Section is also responsible for meeting with MSP, and the Tariff Committee (if required) to discuss the proposal and respond to questions.

## 6. RESOLUTION OF DISAGREEMENT

#### Tariff Committee/ Board of Directors

If there is disagreement between the Section and MSP during the pre-review process, the Tariff Committee will try to resolve the issue with the Section prior to making a recommendation to the Board. If the Section does not agree with the Tariff Committee's recommendation, the Section may request that the decision be re-reviewed. If there is still disagreement after the re-review, the Section may make their case to the Board.

#### **Review Committee**

If a Section disagrees with the decision of the Board, the Section may request that the matter be brought before the Review Committee for resolution. Paragraph (iv) under Doctors of BC Bylaw 9.2(f) stipulates:

(iv) Any Section may refer any decision of the Board regarding any recommendation of the Tariff Committee to the Review Committee for review within one hundred twenty (120) days after the date of distribution of the decision.

Once a decision has been rendered by the Review Committee it is final and binding on every member, the Society of Specialists, the Society of General Practitioners, every Section and the Board.

The Review Committee is a Statutory Committee within Doctors of BC. The Committee is comprised of 4 physician members, a non-physician Chair, a member from the Section whose case has been referred to the Committee, and if required, a member from the Section that the Board has designated from among the Sections that are adverse in interest to the Section whose case has been referred to the Committee. Only the 4 physician members and the Chair are entitled to vote.

#### **Medical Services Commission (MSC)**

In situations whereby Doctors of BC and MSP are still in disagreement over a modification to the Fee Guide/Payment Schedule after a decision of the Tariff Committee and Board, either party may submit the matter to the Medical Services Commission (MSC) for decision.

Doctors of BC and MSB each prepare and provide Briefing Notes to the Commission for its review. A Briefing Note provides the background to the issue, areas for discussion, documentation to support its claim, as well as recommendations for the Commission to consider. At a Commission meeting, a member of the Tariff Committee and/or a member of the Economics Department, and often a member of the Section, present on behalf of Doctors of BC. MSB also has a delegate to represent its interest. Once the Commission has rendered its decision, it is final and binding.

## 7. FUNDING FOR NEW FEE ITEMS

Under the 2004 and 2006 Agreements, funding is available to pay for new fee items. Fee item proposals that qualify to be funded out of this money must meet the following criteria:

The new fee item fund established in the 2004 and 2006 Agreements is to be used to fund new fee items that are created for new procedures and techniques. It may also be used to fund medically required work currently not paid under other fee-for-service items. The money is not to be used for fee increases or for new fee items that have a higher fee for a service currently adequately described and paid under an existing fee item.

If proposed changes have a financial impact and do not qualify for new fee item money they must be funded by the Section. This can be accomplished in two ways: 1) decrease an existing fee item(s); or, 2) funded out of a fee allocation.

## 8. DEFINITIONS

#### Miscellaneous Codes

According to Preamble C.4., miscellaneous fee codes are intended for unusually complex procedures, procedures that are established technology but are infrequently performed and are not yet listed in the Fee Guide/Payment Schedule, or in cases where a physician desires independent consideration.

#### **Provisional Fee Items**

Provisional Fee items are items prefixed with a "P" and are usually determined by the Medical Services Plan or recommended by the Tariff Committee when it is required to "keep track" of billings for items that require monitoring (generally to ensure certain fiscal responsibilities are met.) Provisional designations are used as an interim measure to pay physicians for services rendered and to keep stats until fiscal impact has been confirmed.

#### **Temporary Fee Items**

Newly introduced fee codes/services are assigned a "T" designation at the time of implementation. The steps are: Tariff Committee review, Board approval, and then MSC approval. The reason for the "T" designation is to indicate that the item is a newly implemented item and that it is subject to re-review by Doctors of BC approximately 2 1/2 years following its implementation. The review will include the service and payment data as well as the technology and guidelines applicable to the service. This is done to ensure that the level of the fee and the guidelines are in line with current practice in the event medical practice changes and the item requires updating, and to ensure that volume levels are within estimated volumes at the time of implementation.

## 9. CONTACT INFORMATION

## **Doctors of BC Economics and Policy Analysis Department**

Contact Person/Role	Mailing Address	Phone/Fax/Email
Tariff Proposals & Tariff Inquiries: prereview@doctorsofbc.ca		
Ms. Catriona Innes Fee Guide Advisor	Economics & Policy Analysis Dept. Doctors of BC Suite 115, 1665 West Broadway Vancouver, BC V6J 5A4	Phone: (604) 638-2866 Fax: (604) 638-2922 Email: cinnes@doctorsofbc.ca
Fee Guide & Billing Question	s:	
Ms. Lea Harth Fee Guide Advisor	Economics & Policy Analysis Dept. Doctors of BC Suite 115, 1665 West Broadway Vancouver, BC V6J 5A4	Phone: (604) 638-2827 Fax: (604) 638-2922 Email: lharth@doctorsofbc.ca
Data Requests:		
Mr. Raaj Tiagi Senior Health Economist	Economics & Policy Analysis Dept. Doctors of BC Suite 115, 1665 West Broadway Vancouver, BC V6J 5A4	Phone: (604) 638-2896 Fax: (604) 638-2922 Email: rtiagi@doctorsofbc.ca
Mr. Patrick Melia Economics Consultant	Economics & Policy Analysis Dept. Doctors of BC Suite 115, 1665 West Broadway Vancouver, BC V6J 5A4	Phone: (604) 638-2890 Fax: (604) 638-2922 Email: pmelia@doctorsofbc.ca
All Other Inquiries:		
Mr. Jim Aikman Executive Director	Economics & Policy Analysis Dept. Doctors of BC Suite 115, 1665 West Broadway Vancouver, BC V6J 5A4	Phone: (604) 638-2893 Fax: (604) 638-2922 Email: jaikman@doctorsofbc.ca

## **Medical Services Plan**

Contact Person/Role	Mailing Address	Phone/Fax/Email
Dr. Rinze (Ray) Dykstra, MD, FRCSC Medical Consultant	Ministry of Health Payment Schedule Administration Compensation Policy & Programs Health Sector Workforce Division PO Box 9649 STN PROV GOVT Victoria, BC V8W 9P4	Phone: (250) 952-3352 Fax: (250) 952-1417 Email: ray.dykstra@gov.bc.ca

Mr. Bob N. Hart Director, Payment Schedule Administration Compensation Policy & Programs	Ministry of Health Payment Schedule Administration Compensation Policy & Programs Health Sector Workforce Division PO Box 9649 STN PROV GOVT Victoria, BC V8W 9P4	Phone: (250) 952-1204 Fax: (250) 952-1417 Email: bob.hart@gov.bc.ca
Ms. Betty Louie Manager, Payment Schedule Administration Compensation Policy & Programs	Ministry of Health Payment Schedule Administration Compensation Policy & Programs Health Sector Workforce Division PO Box 9649 STN PROV GOVT Victoria, BC V8W 9P4	Phone: (250) 952-1706 Fax: (250) 952-1417 Email: betty.louie@gov.bc.ca
Ms. Marie Ty Executive Director, Payment Schedule Administration Compensation Policy & Programs	Ministry of Health Payment Schedule Administration Compensation Policy & Programs Health Sector Workforce Division PO Box 9649 STN PROV GOVT Victoria, BC V8W 9P4	Phone: (250) 952-1587 Fax: (250) 952-1417 Email: marie.ty@gov.bc.ca

## **Tariff Committee**

Contact Person/Role	Mailing Address	Phone/Fax/Email
Dr. Brian Winsby Chair	c/o Economics & Policy Analysis Dept. Doctors of B C 115 - 1665 West Broadway Vancouver, BC V6J 5A4	Fax: c/o Doctors of BC (604) 638-2922 Email: prereview@doctorsofbc.ca

## 10. Choosing the Correct Form

## There are five forms applicable for proposing modifications to the Fee Guide/Payment Schedule:

Form	Use this Form When:
1) New Medical Fee Item	Requesting a new fee item for a service that is NOT considered a surgical procedure. All new consultations, visits, and counseling fee items should be submitted using this form, regardless of the Section requesting it.
	If a fee item is to be deleted in conjunction with this new fee item, the Delete Fee Item form should accompany this form.
	If more than one fee item is being requested each fee item should be submitted on a separate form.
	Example: Fee Item X is to be split into Fee Item Y and Fee Item Z.  If Fee Item X is to be deleted, a Delete Fee Item Form and two New Medical Fee Item Forms would be submitted.
	If Fee Item X is to be maintained but at a different fee level, then an Amend Description or Fee Form and two New Medical Fee Item Forms would be submitted.
2) New Surgical Fee Item	Requesting a new fee item for a surgical procedure.
3) New Diagnostic and Selected Therapeutic Procedures Fee Item	Requesting a new fee item for diagnostic and selected therapeutic purposes.
4) Amend Description or Fee	Requesting an amendment (i.e., clarification or additional notes) to the description or fee of an existing fee item. However, the intent of the fee item must not change. If the original intent of the fee item has changed, the fee item should be deleted using the Delete Fee Item form and a new fee item requested using either the New Medical, Surgical or Diagnostic Fee Item forms.
5) Delete Fee Item	Requesting the deletion of an existing fee item (i.e., fee item is obsolete or is being replaced by a new procedure).

## 11. Application Form Guidelines

One of the major delays in processing requests is due to insufficient information or lack of detail. Please answer the questions on the forms with as much detail as possible. Any questions that are not applicable should be specified as such rather than leaving the space blank. Any proposals submitted with blanks in any portion of the document will be considered incomplete. The following check list will assist in the completion of the form.

Physicians or Sections that are not familiar with the new application process are encouraged to meet with the Fee Guide Advisor prior to submitting an application form. It is also recommended that Sections take advantage of the resources of the Economics and Policy Analysis Department to assist with any data or costing requirements (see Contact Information).

Check Box √	Item			
	Fee Item Description	Is the title of the fee item adequately described? It is important that the title be as unambiguous as possible. In order to achieve this, it may be necessary to have long titles which detail inclusions/exclusions etc.		
	Supporting Documenation	Is the procedure supported by medical evidence? If so, then copies of all medical journal articles or other related research should be attached along with application.		
	Current Billing Practice	Has the Section indicated how the procedure is currently being paid (i.e., under wha code)? MSP will require this to determine the financial impact of the proposal.		
	Volume Estimates	Has a volume estimate been provided? The assistance is required.		
	Anesthesia Requirements	The Economics Department will forward sectional proposals to the Section of Anesthesiology when the pre-review letter and forms are forwarded to MSP.		
		If anesthesia is not applicable, then put N/A in this field.		
	Contacted Sections Impacted by Proposal	Have all the Sections impacted by the proposal been contacted for input?		
	No Missing Information	Has any part of the form been left blank? Any question s that are not applicable, not available, or unknown should be specified as such. Any fields left blank on the form will be considered incomplete and returned to the Section to complete.		
	Required Signatures & Minute Excerpts	Has the excerpt from the Section's minutes approving the proposal been attached?     Has the application been signed by the section president/chair?		

Please submit form(s) with an accompanying covering letter to:

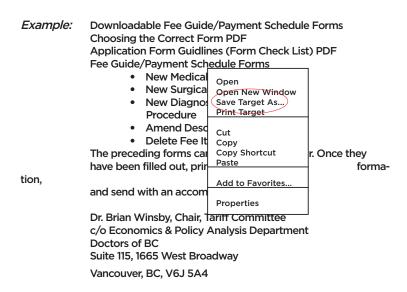
Dr. Brian Winsby, Chair, Tariff Committee c/o Economics & Policy Analysis Department Doctors of BC Suite 115, 1665 West Broadway Vancouver, BC, V6J 5A4

## 12. Fee Guide/Payment Schedule Forms

All Fee Guide/Payment Schedule Forms can be downloaded from the Doctors of BC Website at: https://www.doctorsofbc.ca/member-area/fee-guide-agreements/fee-guide

#### To download a form:

- Highlight the desired form
- 2. Right click with your mouse
- 3. Save target as (save to a drive on your computer)



Once the form has been filled out in its entirety, please print out, attach all required information, and send with an accompanying covering letter to:

Dr. Brian Winsby, Chair, Tariff Committee c/o Economics & Policy Analysis Department Doctors of BC Suite 115, 1665 West Broadway Vancouver, BC, V6J 5A4



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