

## **Quite a mouthful**

Your June 1 article on the [barber's vintage chair \(http://thechronicleherald.ca/thenovascotian/1290194-vintage-barbershop-chair-gets-hip-new-home-in-halifax\)](http://thechronicleherald.ca/thenovascotian/1290194-vintage-barbershop-chair-gets-hip-new-home-in-halifax) revived a memory about a sign on the wall of a barbershop during my childhood .

At around age 10, I was allowed to go for a haircut on my own and spent the time waiting for my turn by reading the many signs, notices and mottoes scattered over the walls.

One that held my attention included several big words that I could not pronounce or understand, although they were part of a rhyming four-line verse. Too shy to ask the barber to explain, I told my mother what I could remember of the verse and my need to learn what the two big words the first line meant.

She said that I should memorize those two words the next time I went for a haircut and spell them for her on my return. It took a big effort on my part to cram them into my head and hold them there all the way home, but I did. I have remembered the whole verse to this day:

Conspicuous expecorations

Do not improve the decorations

Turn your efforts towards the floor

Where you will find a cuspidor

**Beth Curry, Truro**

## **Political potshots**

The Conservative ads say Justin Trudeau is "not ready." Continuing with the use of cooking terms, I'd say Stephen Harper is "overdone." What do you do with something that's overdone? Toss it out.

**June DeLory, Halifax**

## **Obesity's causes and effects**

A body mass index (kg/m<sup>2</sup>) greater than 30 suggests an individual has obesity, whereas a body mass index between 25 and 29.9 indicates an individual has excess weight (i.e., is "overweight").

Around the world, the number of individuals with obesity or excess weight rose from 857 million in 1980 to 2.1 billion in 2013. In Atlantic Canada weight problems are rife: for example, our children and youth have the highest obesity rates in Canada.

Excess weight is associated with coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer. In 2010, having obesity or excess weight caused an estimated 3.4 million deaths worldwide. Individuals with obesity also face stigma in employment, interpersonal relationships, higher education and health care, and this stigma is linked to poorer mental health (e.g., depression).

Sedentariness, poor diet and lack of sleep are key contributors to having obesity or excess weight. Genetics and hormonal problems (e.g., hypothyroidism) also play a central role; however, unhealthy behaviours (e.g., poor nutrition) are usually required for obesity to manifest.

Prevention of obesity involves increasing exercise, improving nutrition and sleeping better. Reducing inactive behaviours (e.g., heavy TV use) is beneficial. Treatment of obesity includes strategies to enhance motivation, reduce cravings and manage stress without food. Nutritional recommendations, increased exercise, weight-reducing drugs and surgical intervention may also reduce obesity.

**Dr. Dayna L. Sherry, Behaviour Change Institute, Nova Scotia Health Authority; and Cynthia Ramasubbu, research assistant, personality research team, Dalhousie University**