

# Georgetown doctor to join OMA board

By Graeme Frisque  
gfrisque@metroland.com

Georgetown family doctor and anesthesiologist Nadia Alam has had enough.

Alam, who operates a family practice on Sinclair Ave. in Georgetown, was recently elected to the Ontario Medical Association's 25-person board of directors. She is expected to officially take her place on the board in May.

A vocal advocate for both doctors and patients, Alam has contributed numerous columns and opinion pieces about the state of Ontario's health-care system to various publications over the years. She will now bring that voice and passion — and her obvious frustration with the Ontario government — with her to the board.

Her election came ahead of a mass resignation of the OMA's executive branch earlier this week. The announcement of the six-member executive branch's leaving came in a press release sent last week.

"Right now there are a bunch of OMA elections going on. In May, about half of the board will probably get renewed through elections, depending on the outcome of the elections," said Alam.

"The executive (has) stepped down from the executive committee. Some of them are leaving the OMA entirely in May, some of them are staying on. There's going to be a lot of turnover at that time, the same that happens every year at the OMA," she added.

According to Alam, the board is made up of 25 doctors who are elected to represent the profession, whereas the six-person executive committee is tasked with making decisions on behalf of the OMA between board meetings.

The current leadership transformation stems, at least in part, from a 55 per cent non-confidence vote by the OMA's 260-member governing council at a Jan. 29 meeting. While governing council couldn't muster enough votes to oust the current group outright, the executive branch decided to step down amid the controversy.

"The board believes that the OMA can now refocus on mounting a strong and united front against a government that is intransigent in its approach to health care and disrespectful of physicians and the role we need to play in health-care reform," read the OMA's statement.

The shakeup follows years of stalled negotiations with the province. According to Alam, Ontario doctors have been working without a contract for three years.

"Over the past year or so, a lot of front-line doctors have noticed that what they want and what OMA leadership wants is completely divergent," said Alam. "Despite lots of members trying to change the course of the OMA's PR campaign, their government relations, their negotiation strategy, their advocacy — not just for physicians for the health-care system — despite a lot of effort that's gone into trying to change that,



Georgetown family doctor, Nadia Alam, was recently elected to the Ontario Medical Association's board of directors amid a shakeup of the executive branch.

Photo by Richard J. Brennan/Torstar News Service

the OMA leadership has remained out of touch."

"They've just not been able to unite members and we need to be united. If we actually want to help fix this health-care system so that it is more sustainable and accessible, we need doctors to be united."

"The OMA executive realized that this past week, and that's why they're resigning — because they realized under their leadership, doctors are not going to unite," she

added. "I respect (the executive) for the sacrifice they are making for the greater good."

When asked about the status of negotiations with the province, Alam was not optimistic and believes the sides are actually further apart than when the process began.

"I think we're actually further apart than we were. A lot of doctors are realizing this government just doesn't want to play ball," she said.

# Arsonist targeting abandoned buildings in Halton and surrounding areas

The OPP doesn't know if it is one person or more, but an unknown suspect(s) is setting fire to abandoned buildings in several communities in nearby Wellington County.

At about 3 p.m. on Friday (Feb. 10), Wellington County OPP advised that public that the OPP, Guelph police, Halton police and the Office of the Ontario Fire Marshal are investigating more

than a dozen unsolved fires that are being treated as suspicious.

Since the end of October, Wellington OPP Const. Bob Bortolato said police have been called to investigate 14 suspicious fires set in the south part of the county.

Most them have been set in Puslinch and Guelph-Eramosa, which borders the Town of Erin. A couple have been set in Guelph and Halton Region.

"The person or persons that have been doing this have been fairly active," Bortolato explained. "We don't know at this point if it is one or a few people doing it."

There is a pattern to the way the fires are being set, Bortolato explained. The suspect(s) are targeting abandoned homes, structures and barns in the early hours of the morning.

"We don't have specific times because you don't know how long they have been burning," Bortolato said. "Nobody is around. (The buildings) are unoccupied."

The OPP is advising the owners of any abandoned or vacant buildings to: Secure any unlocked structures; consider installing motion sensing cameras; request neighbours to watch properties

and make regular visits to vacant buildings.

The OPP is also urging members of the public to report any suspicious vehicles or people in the community to police.

Anybody with any information about the incidents is urged to contact Det. Const. Heidi Pautsch or Det. Const. Kevin Detweiler by calling Wellington County OPP at 1-888-310-1122.



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