

Alam, doctors committed to changing the OMA

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it's beginning to gain speed, especially with me becoming more involved in speaking for the OMA," said Alam when asked about her first few weeks as president-elect. She does not officially take over as sitting president until spring 2018.

"My job right now is to learn about the OMA. I was elected on a platform of change. People wanted the OMA to become a bigger advocate for physicians and for the system. They wanted OMA to become more politically and savvy. They wanted the OMA to become more media savvy and just to become more engaging to just regular 'joe-blow' members."

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- Dr. Nadia Alam

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"We've got an ambitious work plan ahead of us and it's going to be amazing," she added.

Alam said her new role with the OMA will cut into her regular practice, but she has enlisted the help of a new local doctor

to fill in when her OMA duties take her away from her patients.

"I've cut back a bit on my anesthesia practice, but I do plan to continue working while doing the president-elect stuff. Once I become president it can become very busy, so I may have to take a sabbatical from my anesthesia work and continue getting help in my family practice so I can work through the OMA as

well," she said.

"It's a juggling act. Like I said it takes a village. Not just in the OMA but in my family. To help me with my kids, to help my husband. Everybody's pitching in to help with my practice, all of my colleagues are helping out. It's amazing. I'm so lucky to have the kind of support that I have," added Alam.

Alam is taking the reins during an interesting time at the OMA.

Doctors in Ontario have been without a contract for four years and little progress has been made at the negotiating table until recently.

The most recent development was both sides finally agreeing to binding arbitration, which Alam

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hopes will get the process moving.

"Both the government - the Ontario Liberals - and the OMA have started taking steps toward building a relationship. Just this past weekend the membership ratified binding arbitration, and that's something physicians have been (requesting) for years," said Alam.

"We want to be classified and acknowledged as an essential service because striking as a physician is very difficult. But when negotiations break between the government and a party like the teach-

ers or the nurses, they can go on strike to resolve the impasse.

"Physicians, we're in a bit of bind because we can't. So binding arbitration takes the place of strikes," she said. "The next step will be to actually negotiate a proper contract, so that's one of the other things with binding arbitration, the government can't impose a contract. It can't just unilaterally do whatever it wants anymore."

"It's still a long road ahead of us, but at least we're walking in the same direction now."

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