

**ONTARIO LEGISLATURE HANSARD MARCH 17, 2014****FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS**

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

On behalf of all members of the Legislature, I would also like to welcome the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario to the Legislature. Their presence is especially appropriate as we have reached another 10-year milestone this weekend. It's been 10 years since our government established Ontario's first family health teams. I'm pleased to report that FHTs have been making a positive, multidisciplinary impact not only across Ontario but within my own riding of Etobicoke North. Patients report significant benefits from having access to select health care practitioners all at the same location and with an internal referral system.

Beyond my own riding, I respectfully ask you to share some of your insights on the broader accomplishments and contributions of family health teams across Ontario.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Thank you to the member from Etobicoke North for this question. I want to say thank you to the representatives from the Association of Ontario Family Health Teams who are here with us today. I want to say thank you to the dedicated nurses, the doctors, the dietitians, the pharmacists—all of the other health providers who are working in our family health teams. We now have over 200 family health teams, and Ontarians benefit from their skills, hard work and compassion every single day.

In just 10 years, we've gone from zero family health teams to 200 family health teams. That means more than 1,800 interdisciplinary health professionals are working side by side with over 2,400 physicians in our family health teams. It's a team-based model—

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(Hon. Deborah Matthews)

... health professionals are working side by side with over 2,400 physicians in our family health teams. It's a team-based model. It provides improved coordination and collaboration so that patients get the care they need.

Three million Ontarians are benefitting from family health teams, including 700,000 who previously did not have a family doctor. This is progress in 10 years and we say thank you to family health teams.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** Thank you, Minister, for the insights, your review and your dedication to this file. It has been said that medicine is the most scientific art and the most artistic science. I think family health teams particularly embody this, mixing the right amount of evidence-based science with the right amount of delivery, care and the humane approach—indeed, the art—of medicine.

My own constituents in Etobicoke North benefit from Canes Family Health Team and the Etobicoke Medical Centre Family Health Team. I was there for the ribbon-cutting at the opening and now we're serving 30,000 patients.

In your presence, Minister, in Parliament, I would also like to thank them. Yet there are still some people across Ontario without a family doctor—clearly, as you know, the best kind of doctor. Minister, I ask you, how are we increasing access to primary care across Ontario?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I must say that primary care providers really are the entryway into Ontario's excellent health care system. Not only do they provide care when Ontarians need it most; they have an important role to play in health promotion and illness prevention to keep people out of our emergency departments.

I'm pleased to say that 2.1 million more Ontarians now have a family doctor than in 2003, but there is still more to do. That's why we're training more doctors at home. We're recruiting more from abroad. We now have 5,000 more doctors working in Ontario than just a decade ago.

HealthForceOntario and initiatives like the Northern and Rural Recruitment and Retention Initiative ensure that those doctors are going where they're needed, and Health Care Connect helps patients who don't have a family doctor find one. I remain committed to increasing access to excellent and timely primary care.