



## **Bette Stephenson, MD**

A pioneer and role model for women, Dr. Bette Stephenson had an outstanding career in the field of Canadian medicine, academics and politics. Dr. Stephenson was most notably recognized by her series of “firsts” as a woman in positions and offices traditionally held by men. She successfully contributed to putting the practice of family medicine on the international medical map and, in turn, inspired countless women to pursue careers in medicine.

Dr. Stephenson grew up with a deep admiration for the practice of medicine. Earning a medical degree from the University of Toronto in 1945, she was one of only ten women to graduate out of a class of 142.

After graduation, she and her husband opened a busy general practice that lasted for more than 40 years. Spurred on by the lack of medical professionals entering the field of family medicine, Dr. Stephenson helped create the College of Family Physicians in Canada which promoted the importance of family doctors. She became a member of the medical staff at the Women’s College Hospital and later became the Outpatient Department and Chief of the Department of General Practice.

With a keen interest in political affairs, Dr. Stephenson became the first woman to serve on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Medical Association and the Ontario Medical Association. Subsequently, she became the first female president of both associations. In 1975 she was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and was the first female to hold various distinguished offices, such as the Minister of Education, Minister of Colleges and Universities, Minister of Finance/Treasurer, and to serve as Deputy Premier.

In addition to her medical and political careers, Dr. Stephenson helped promote medical research in Canada including the development of the Ontario Research Development Challenge Fund and the MaRS Discovery District. She was a founding member of the Canadian Institute of Advanced Research and a trustee of the Ontario Innovation Trust.

Dr. Stephenson was honoured for her dedication to medicine in Canada through various awards. Among them she was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1992, awarded the Order of Ontario in 1999, and in 2009, an award was established in her name to honour her pivotal role and lifelong commitment to Ontario’s publicly funded education system: The Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement.

