

**Family Services à la famille Ottawa – 312 Parkdale Avenue  
Celebrating Our 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
(A series of 9 articles leading up to our Birthday Celebrations in May 2005)**

*Did you know..... How we changed after the war?  
(1944-1954)*

**This fourth decade of the Ottawa Welfare Bureau's (OWB) existence began at the height of WWII. OWB, now Family Services à la famille Ottawa, was busier than ever, and demand for services continued to increase. An agency that began as a Social Service Exchange program, providing social programs wherever gaps in service existed, and ultimately almost sinking in provision of relief to the unemployed during the Depression, in this next 10 years became so stretched that it started to lose sight of its own mandate and purpose. By 1954, however, OWB had been re-cast and transformed, setting the stage for the next 50 years.**

**Between 1944 and 1954, OWB continued to support the Department of Defense as well as expand its role by helping soldiers returning from war. As the economy as a whole started to expand, OWB saw a shift in needs from unemployment issues to family concerns. Many families struggled as servicemen attempted to reintegrate into family life. There was a tremendous increase in marital problems, and Social Workers with OWB often played the role of mediator. The counselling agency Miss Williams envisioned was needed more than ever, yet OWB struggled to provide this service. Their role as investigator, supporting other agencies to evaluate income needs, continued with their work for the Red Cross, the City of Ottawa, the Canadian Legion and the Benevolent funds of the Army, Navy and Air Force. OWB also continued to manage and administer funds for Veterans Affairs, as well as for private citizens who wished to help returning soldiers. Essentially, OWB became all things to all people, and consequently lost its focus in the process. Something had to change.**

**The impetus for change coincided with the Government's taking a far more active role in creating a safety net for Canadians. OWB's role of relief agency for the community was no longer as necessary. The Board, now chaired by D. Roy Kennedy, a prominent Ottawa educator, longed to seize this opportunity to alter the focus of the agency towards counselling and casework. But the change would take some time yet, as the day-to-day demands for service were so all-consuming. Beyond acting as a third-party investigator, OWB devoted a lot of time and resources to securing summer camp placements for needy children and ensuring the children had the requisite camping gear. Children appeared to be a priority in service provision at this time, as OWB had funding to provide clothing when an emergency arose. An additional and somewhat controversial role, and one that**

**OWB had mixed feelings about, was securing temporary placements for children whose mothers were hospitalized. OWB had an arrangement with the Protestant Children's Village to assess children's needs, inquire if extended family members could help, and then if needed, arrange for and fund a temporary housing placement.**

**The importance of the Ottawa Welfare Bureau in the community is evident from the number of functions they served and the vast array of services they offered; yet, this ability to fill a variety of needs kept OWB from developing, and becoming known for providing, expertise in any one area. That perception changed in the early 1950s.**

**Miss Thelma Williams retired after serving OWB for 29 years, along with her assistant, Miss Emily Murphy, a staff member since 1919. Miss Williams was replaced by Miss Florence Christie, a woman who, like Miss Williams, believed the agency should become a counselling centre and develop more of an advocacy role. It appeared that one of the most significant barriers to this change in focus was the very name of the agency, Ottawa Welfare Bureau, a name associated with relief services. Thus it was that the Ottawa Welfare Bureau changed its name and began its 5<sup>th</sup> decade as the Family Service Centre of Ottawa-Carleton.**

**(Next issue, Decade #5, 1954-1964).**