

# The Ottawa Board of Trade

## The voice of business through the ages

*For 163+ years, the Ottawa Board of Trade (OBoT) has been one of the most active and vocal groups participating in the economic, civic and social evolution of our region. Here is a chronological overview of OBoT's beginnings and contributions to date:*

- Our region was historically used and occupied by the [Algonquin people](#) thousands of years before European settlers arrived.
- 1826: Colonel John By arrived in command of a detachment of the Royal Engineers to construct the Rideau Canal to Lake Ontario. A Bytown settlement grew up.
- 1847: Having grown by thousands, the Bytown settlement was legally designated a town.
- 1855: Reaching a population of 10,000, Bytown was incorporated as a city and changed its name to Ottawa.
- June 10, 1857: The Ottawa Board of Trade came into being through an Act of the Legislative Assembly of Canada.
- December 31, 1857: Queen Victoria declared Ottawa the capital of “the Province of Canada.”
- 1865: Parliament buildings on the west side of the canal were opened.
- 1875: The first tap water was delivered to Ottawa residents (Thomas C. Keefer plant). Other firsts during these earliest years:
  - First public abattoir
  - A proper system of garbage collection
  - Securing a proper plebiscite for the proper maintenance of public hospitals and care for patients
  - Securing appointment of a qualified engineer as the first commissioner of works in Ottawa
- 1887-1889: Ottawa began to annex suburbs such as Edinburgh Village, Gloucester and sections of Nepean.
- 1910: At the annual dinner of the Ottawa Board of Trade, Governor General Earl Grey made the prophecy that Canada would be a “nation of from 50 to 100 million inhabitants.”
- 1933: With jobs and money scarce, the Ottawa Junior Board of Trade was launched to develop leadership skills within the 20-35 age group.
- 1934: The first survey of traffic and parking conditions was conducted, followed by a study of housing conditions and a traffic safety campaign.
- 1949: C.H. Pinhey donated a plot of 117 acres on Merivale Road (“Pinhey Forest”) to be reforested by boy scouts and students from Ottawa Teachers College in order to improve Canada’s “forest wealth.”
- 1950: The Ottawa Board of Trade changed its name to “The Ottawa Chamber of Commerce—Chambre de Commerce d’Ottawa.”
- 1953: The first Canadian Tulip Festival was launched. The next year, 125,000 bulbs were donated by Queen Juliana of the Netherlands in grateful memory of her war-time stay in Canada.
- 1954: The Board helped organize and support financially the Eastern Ontario Development Association, leading to the City giving the association a grant to become its industrial agent in the pursuit of encouraging industrial location in our region.

- 1956: According to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, the Ottawa metropolitan area had a population of 345,460 (which at the time included Gatineau and Hull, Rockcliffe, Templeton and Templeton Village, Aylmer, Deschenes, Eastview, Gloucester, Nepean). There were 18,000 industrial workers and 35,000 civil servants.
- 1957: The Board celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
- 1957: The Board played a role (along with EODA, the City and reps from Queen's Park) in convincing the province to locate the Eastern Ontario Institute of Technology (now known as Algonquin College) here in Ottawa.
- 1957: There were more than 100 Boards of Trade across Canada.
- 1959: The first Changing of the Guard on Parliament Hill occurs (authorized by the Prime Minister in response to a brief prepared by the Board).
- 1959: Inspired by an earlier Board-sponsored business group trip to Toledo, Ohio, the Sparks Street Development Association is formed to initiate a trial pedestrian mall between May and September in 1960. The aim is to make it a permanent mall by Canada's Centennial in 1967.
- 1965: The Ottawa Board of Trade's Clubroom, which opened at 226 Sparks Street, was the only businessman's club that welcomed women.
- 1965: Membership reaches 1,167 (increased from 750 two years earlier).
- 1968: The Board purchased and set up an office at 88 Argyle Street. An airport terminal opened on Uplands.
- 1970s: Membership reaches 1,200 (1973) and 1,500 (1976)—primarily in merchandising and services, manufacturing and contracting, banks, trust and insurance companies. Retail merchants only 18% of membership. Relocates to the 27<sup>th</sup> floor of the Holiday Inn (La Ronde Restaurant) in 1974. Continues diplomatic relations with foreign embassies. Administers group insurance plans. Answers thousands of enquiries from businesses and tourists around the world. Conducts research, study sessions, public opinion surveys, training and presentations.
- 1981: Relocates to 185 Sparks Street—departure from a traditional, in-house club operation to a modern shared operation with the National Press Club. Reviews and revises the Constitution of the Club, by-laws, size of Board of Directors, voting procedures, new leadership.
- 1983: Recession compels the Board to contribute to Canadian Chamber of Commerce recommendations about tax structure, revenue dependency, pension reform, government budgets, small businesses, homeowner security, high tech, retail, etc.
- 1994: New airport is launched.
- 2014: Introduces Ottawa Business Growth Survey, the first of its kind survey to measure business confidence and identify barriers to doing business in the city.
- 2016: Launches [CAPITAL magazine](#) as its flagship publication for advocacy and place branding for Ottawa.
- June 10, 2017: Celebrates 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a special proclamation of 'Ottawa Chamber of Commerce Day' in the City by Mayor Jim Watson.
- 2017: Inaugurates report on 'Immigrants and Skilled Shortages in Ottawa', the first report of its nature for any Canadian city.
- 2018: Consolidates operations with West Ottawa Board of Trade and Orléans Chamber of Commerce to form **Ottawa Board of Trade**.