

Law firms merge to give better service

By ALEX MATHESON
Public need for more specialized legal service has led to the amalgamation of three Burlington law firms.

The Nov. 1 merger means that lawyers with different areas of specialty will be under one roof, said Noel Bates, one of six lawyers in the firm of Ralfe, Green, Germann.

When lawyers come across a need for special knowledge they don't have, they are tempted to send the client far afield for the expertise, Bates said.

Lawyers are reluctant to send a client down the street to a competitor for fear of losing the client on other matters also, he added.

Brought into the new firm were the two-lawyer, Green and Green, the three-lawyer, Ralfe, Bates and Germann and the one-man operation of Fred For-

sythe, a former crown attorney.

Areas of specialty included in the one house are real estate, matrimonial, tax, general business, criminal and litigation, Bates said.

"There is no law firm in Burlington larger," he said.

Clients are demanding a more informed lawyer and are not necessarily content with one man to handle all their legal matters, said Bates.

A larger firm can offer the expertise and experience of all its people to the client.

Along with more lawyers, the new organization has the resources to invest in a \$40,000 computer. Bates believes it is the largest employed by lawyers in the Burlington-Hamilton area.

As well as doing basic word processing for legal documents, it can be connected to large terminals useful in reducing research time.

The accounting function will also be handled by the terminal, he added.

All of the support personnel of the original firms have been retained. They are referred to as "paralegal," with responsibilities additional to legal secretaries, he said.

These people will be trained to handle matters previously delegated to lawyers. It is costly having lawyers do things that can be handled by paralegals, Bates said.

Bates expects that these modifications will reduce the cost to the client. However, vigilance will be necessary to ensure that individual contact is not lost.

The new firm is housed at Suite 524-518 Brant St.



These three legals supply support to the new amalgamated six-lawyer firm of Ralfe, Green, Germann. The larger firm allows for more specialization and better service. In addition, the reduced

overhead allows for the purchase of this \$40,000 computer terminal. From left to right, are: Kitty Macdonnell, Judy Morris and Margaret Prieur.

Photo by GEORGE TANSLEY