

# Multicultural group raises racism concern

By TONY FITZ-GERALD  
The Spectator

A race relations committee wants to educate the public in anticipation of a population boom in north Halton.

The Halton Multicultural Council race relations committee hopes to reach out to the community in the next few months to discuss racism and discrimination.

"We want people to bring forward concerns and ideas so we can address them in a positive manner," said committee chair, Halton police Sergeant Ray Hendry. "The problem with it (racism), is it isn't being reported. It takes place and it maybe subtle but it

does go on. It goes on everywhere."

Rajneesh Sharda, president of the Halton Multicultural Council, says issues of racism get "really hot" when there is a reported incident, but the council's approach is to be proactive rather than reactive. He said educating children is the best approach.

"There is a concern in Halton about hate groups coming into play and encouraging different views," Sharda said. "If it happens, then you trust the youth and children if given the right tools early on will use them in the right way."

The committee hopes to have a plan in place by the fall in preparation for the huge potential for growth in the

Milton Georgetown areas. North Halton is set for a huge increase in population now that a plan is in place to provide more water for the area by use of a big pipe stretching north from Lake Ontario.

"The potential for growth in that area is going to be tremendous," Hendry said. "Once that happens, we'll be more reflective of communities that border us like Brampton and Mississauga which are far more diverse than we are. In anticipation of that growth we need to be proactive in our approach to address issues of racism or diversity."

Sharda said when people are so familiar with their own environment



Sharda

change can lead to fear.

"North Halton is going to go through change and there is probably a fear that change will lead to more crime and all the stereotypical assessments that people tend to bring," Sharda said. "You can't prevent that. What you try to do is give them a more proactive insight. That's what we'll try and do."

"They probably have community leaders that know there will be a

change and realize they will have to handle the change the best they can."

He says a proactive approach in Milton and Halton Hills is particularly important because race relations is not in the forefront in those communities.

"We will work closely with the North Halton Awareness Council and seek knowledge from our neighbours in Peel to get the best out of our resources," Sharda said.

"We can't tell the future but what will probably happen is we may have incidents even though we're trying to do it proactively. There may well be incidents that give us more impetus."

1999- Rajneesh Sharda, President of the Halton Multicultural Council, discussed the council's race relations committee hopes to reach out to the community to discuss racism and discrimination.

30<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary

Halton  
Multicultural Council