

# Multicultural council idea wins applause

By BRAD HONYWILL  
The Spectator

receives its funding from several sources also.

THERE APPEARS to be wide support for a multicultural council in Burlington which would give newcomers the same support immigrants to Oakville and Hamilton receive.

An informal poll of local political, police, education and ethnic leaders reveals a strong belief that Burlington's ethnic mix is changing to include increasing numbers of visible minorities and that new methods are needed to ease the transition.

"We can't simply assume this is the old Upper Canada, Anglo-Saxon society," Alderman Walter Mulke- wicz said yesterday. "That is no longer the case."

## Financial commitment

He said he will support the concept of a multicultural council, and believes the rest of council will do the same, if a local group follows through on plans to approach council in June with a proposal.

"I'm very strongly in favor of some sort of council and from what I've heard this group is on the right track," he said.

The group is composed mostly of East Indians but includes representatives of other racial groups. The effort is being spearheaded by Shyam Chhibbar, a Burlington insurance broker and a former president of the Oakville Multicultural Council.

The Oakville Multicultural Council spent \$78,000 last year to run its operation, receiving 30 per cent of its funding from the federal Secretary of State for Multiculturalism, 38 per cent from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, 13 per cent from Oakville and 19 per cent from membership dues and local fundraising. The Hamilton Multicultural Council spends about \$200,000 a year and

Such councils help in the organization of cultural festivities, provide volunteer translation services, investigate and attempt to reduce racial disputes, and help new immigrants get through the immigration process, find jobs and accommodation. A recent study by the Oakville Multicultural Council found that Burlington has the largest immigrant population — 26,000 people in 1986 — of the four municipalities in Halton.

"I think it would be good to have a multicultural festival in Burlington," said Mr. Mulke- wicz. "But more significant than that is the activity of a multicultural council in helping everyone understand each other."

Halton police Inspector Les Graham, the force's representative on the Oakville Multicultural Council, was also supportive of a multicultural council in Burlington.

## Timely

"You've got a city of 120,000 people there and people from a number of different cultures," he said yesterday. "Oakville's got one and Burlington's a bigger city than Oakville."

Elizabeth Welsh, multicultural co-ordinator for the Halton Board of Education, also said she supports the concept of a multicultural council in Burlington.

Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale said the multicultural council has served her community well in the agency's 11-year existence.

"You need to have someone you can communicate with about multicultural issues so you can be proactive," she said yesterday.

Two other groups are also exploring ways to establish a multicultural council in Burlington, including the Burlington YMCA's multicultural advisory committee and the Oakville Multicultural Council.

1990- Halton Multicultural Council was recognized by officials in the Burlington as an important force in supporting the diverse community.

30<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary

Halton  
Multicultural Council