

Many new residents of Halton feel disenfranchised

By BERNADETTE WARD

Many residents of Halton from diverse cultures feel disenfranchised and not welcome according to the preliminary findings of a study done by Dr. Ingrid Waldron for the Halton Diversity Advisory Committee (HDAC).

These findings and more were passed on to members of the committee, interested residents and local politicians attending a public information session held in Milton on April 27 designed to provide an opportunity to discuss access to regional services by diverse groups.

"We're very serious about this initiative...we need to constantly evaluate the way we provide services to this diverse community," said Regional Chair Joyce Savoline.

The three-year project began last year after receiving grant funds from the Canadian Heritage Multicultural Program and has consisted of focus groups conducted by Waldron as well as a series of four public information sessions.

Based on round-table discussions that took place after the presentation, it appears that language barriers and a lack of cultural sensitivity are a large part of the reason that many people feel left out and unaware of the services provided by the Region.

"There needs to be leadership at the top... the region becomes a model that demonstrates inclusivity," said Jennifer Bascom, a member of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Trans-generated People (LGBT) community.

Along with overt signs of welcome such as the rainbow flag suggested by those from the LGBT community, people are looking to have their unique cultural values recognized in areas such as health and healing and for less intimidating environments for those

who have suffered from domestic violence.

"People want to feel more included and more powerful in programs and services created for them," said Waldron.

How to get the message out was discussed with suggestions including provision of written material in more languages and distributed to places where newcomers and others from different cultural perspective congregate, such as mosques.

Although people don't appear to be aware of what services are available, it was widely recognized by those in attendance that the Region has provided a strong foundation and is in position to move forward.

"The Region has shown leadership by having a diversity committee," pointed out Elizabeth Carmichael and resident and member of the committee. "We're lucky with the partnerships we've been able to forge in Halton."


Milton Mayor Gord Krantz noted that times are changing and continue to, albeit slowly in some cases. He also pointed out that councilors are pushed and pulled in different directions by different elements and that the community needs to persist in bringing issues to the fore.

"It's important that you keep our feet to the fire," said Krantz.

The next public information session will be held in Georgetown on May 4 at St. Catherine of Alexandria, 407 Barber Drive between 7 and 9 p.m.

Once the public information sessions have been completed, Waldron will provide a final report and the committee will decide which programs to implement and how.


For more information regarding the Halton Diversity Advisory Committee call 905 825-6000, ext. 7972.



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Dear Tracey,

In a recent article you talked about how to start up a business - do you have any advise for those of us who are already in business?

Signed, new business owner.

Dear New Business Owner

As a business owner, your days are no doubt filled with concerns about satisfying customers or sourcing raw materials. Planning for your retirement is likely one of the last things on your mind. But it shouldn't be. After all, the only way to realize a gain on your years of hard work is to liquidate your investments. That can mean selling your company outright, hiving off a stake, or passing it down to your kids-which also raises the question of how you're going to get money out of them. Whatever the option, you should begin planning your way out at least 10 years ahead of retirement. And that includes ensuring there is suitable management in place to take over when you leave.

It's important for business owners, depending on their situation, to consider how they pay themselves - through a salary or dividends. Dividends have tax benefits but aren't eligible for RRSP contributions. Self-employed people stand to benefit the most from insurance. Without critical illness, disability or long-term care insurance a business owner is at risk of losing his or her savings if something unforeseen happens.

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