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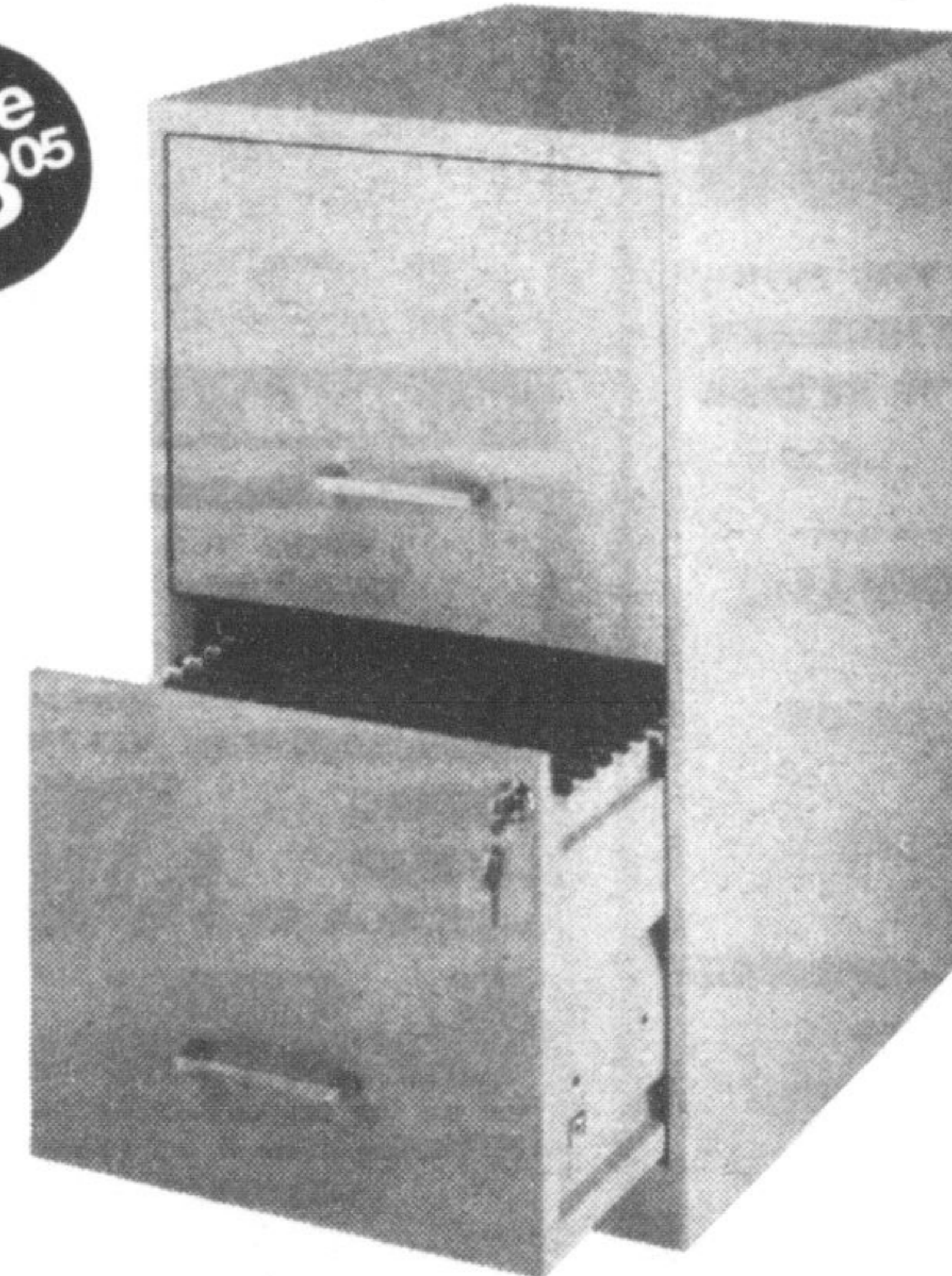


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New video aims to fight stereotypes and racism

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**

The Champion

Elizabeth Carmichael doesn't mince words.

"We all have biases within ourselves. The one who says he doesn't is the biggest liar in the world," said the representative of the North Halton Cultural Awareness Council.

Ms Carmichael was speaking at the recent launch of the Halton District School Board's newest weapon against racism and stereotypes — a video called Faces of Islam.

The video was made with the help of students at Halton public high schools, including those at E.C. Drury High School, where the video launch took place May 23.

The video looks at some of the myths surrounding Muslim women, using segments of acting by the students as well as interviews with police, Ms Carmichael and others in the community fighting racism on the front lines.

Ms Carmichael said the video is a response to the stereotypes that arose toward the Muslim community after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S.

Suzanne Muir, the Halton District School Board's diversity consultant, said the timing of the video is particularly relevant with Milton's quickly expanding population — because with the growth will come a greater diversity.

"It's critical that we help everyone understand (different cultures) and break down the stereotypes," Ms Muir said.

The video's creation relied on the school board's partnerships with the North Halton Cultural Awareness Council, Federation of Muslim Women, COGECO 23 and Halton Regional Police.

The video will be used as a teaching tool in Halton classrooms.

Miriam Bhabha of the Federation of Muslim Women said: "(We) needed an educational tool to counter the stereotyping of marginal communities, counter Islamophobia and promote social justice within a Canadian context."

Regional Chairman Joyce Savoline said Milton has its share of racist thinking.

"We have a wonderful community, but in each (community) there are hurts and little ugly spots. We're trying to overcome that," she said, adding, "I also experienced stereotyping as I grew up, so I understand the importance of starting at an early age to eradicate those ideas."

E.C. Drury students Katie Klein and Kim Hester are two of the video's stars.

Both students said they haven't seen too much racism in their school and suspect that's because there isn't too much diversity in Milton.

"We live in a small community with not as much diversity, so it's good for us to meet people who come from other (countries)," said Kim, a grade 10 student.

Katie said she had a great time making the video.

"I thought it was an awesome experience. I had so much fun."

Funding for the video was provided by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Culture.

The public can borrow the video from Halton public libraries.

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