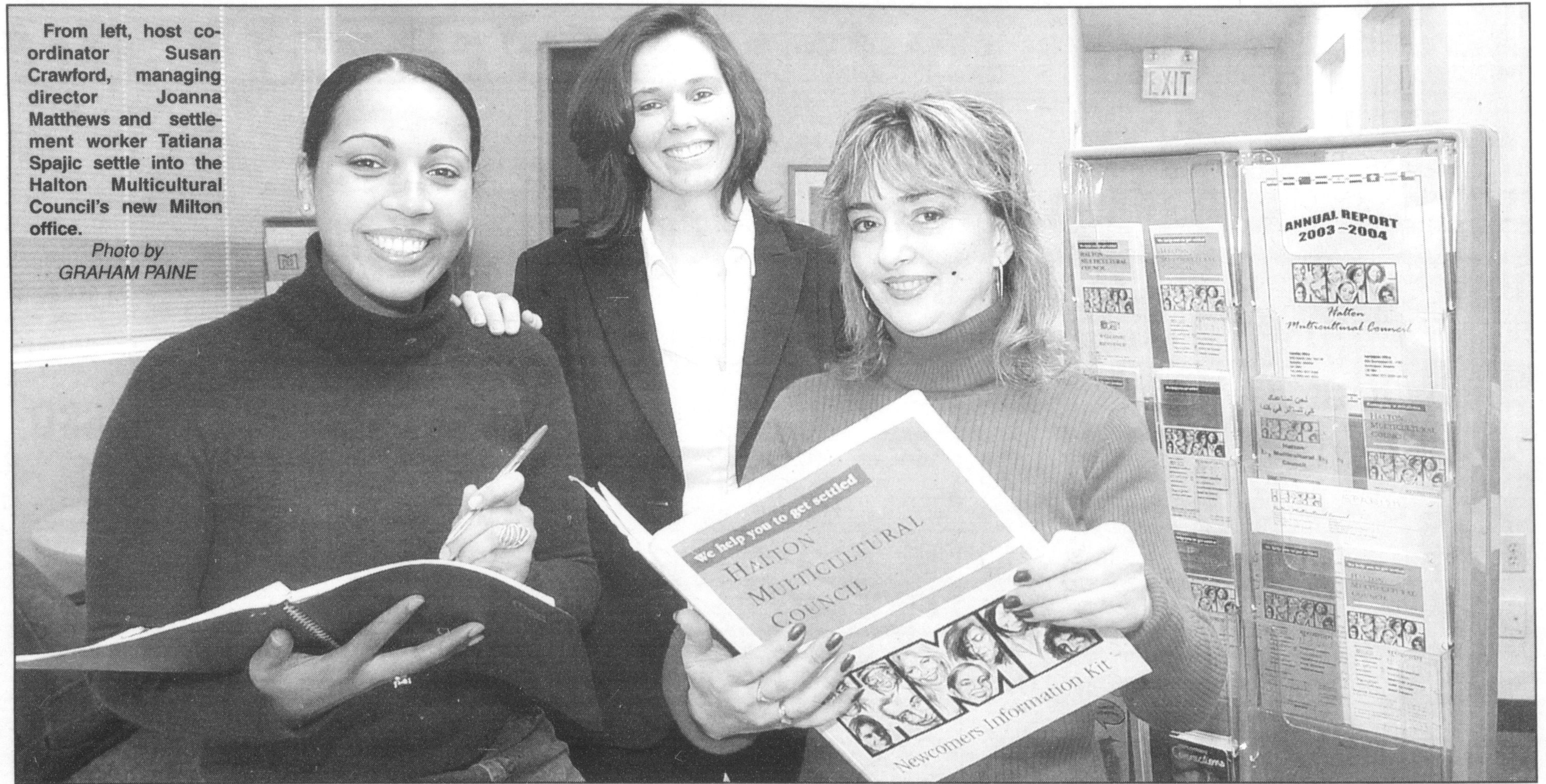




Community Page



From left, host co-ordinator Susan Crawford, managing director Joanna Matthews and settlement worker Tatiana Spajic settle into the Halton Multicultural Council's new Milton office.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Multicultural council opens Milton office

By ROBIN DOWNTON-POIRIER
Special to The Champion

The Halton Multicultural Council (HMC) opened a new office in Milton in early December to provide services to immigrants and refugees new to the community.

The office, located at 550 Ontario St., won't have its official opening until March, but work is already underway with the Settlement and Integration Program and the new Host Program.

The HMC was founded 25 years ago in April, 1979 by volunteers from several different cultural groups to fill the need for multilingual services in Halton, but it has been a very low-profile organization until now, say board members.

"Statistics show a 300 per cent increase in immigrants whose primary destination was Milton between 2001 and 2003," said board member and Ward 3 Councillor Jan Mowbray.

"The HMC has had such a low profile up until now that few people know about it. We are hoping that will change with the opening of the new

office in Milton."

Funding is provided by federal, provincial and municipal governments as well as other sources such as the United Way and the Trillium Foundation. Immigrants are often referred to the HMC through friends who have used the service as well as border officials, government offices, police and various emergency shelters.

The HMC offers eight different programs to immigrants and refugees new to Halton including the Interpretation and Translation Program and Job Search Workshops. The newest programs are the Transitional Housing Program and the Host Program.

"These programs help immigrants get settled and make the transition (from one place to another) easier and smoother," said HMC managing director Joanna Matthews.

"The Host Program is very new and pairs up a new immigrant with a resident, and allows them to share cultures, customs and experiences. It is a really wonderful program."

The Settlement and Integration Program provides services such as translation and interpretation, short-term counselling, information on government and community agencies and assistance

in accessing services such as health care, education and obtaining a social insurance number. The information is provided by HMC settlement workers, who speak a number of different languages and are familiar with many cultures. There's also a separate Interpretation and Translation Program available for community agencies and businesses that may have a need for these services.

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) is an English language training program that's offered to immigrants at the HMC head office in Oakville, states the HMC Web site.

"The Youth for Youth Program and the Multicultural and Anti-Racism Education Program are offered through both of the Halton school boards," said Ms Matthews. "They are geared towards the elementary schools and the new Host Program is for our high schools. The programs introduce students to different cultures and customs through the education system."

The Ethnic Seniors' Network aims to provide services to older immigrants. It helps to reduce isolation by promoting active living and increasing access to many community services.

Although there's no current funding for the program, future endeavours are being made to keep it active, said Ms Matthews.

The other new program, which officially started in December, is the Transitional Housing Program. The HMC has acquired two apartments in Burlington that can temporarily house immigrants until a more permanent residence is found. There are currently two families from Colombia, South America residing in these units, both warmly welcomed by the community.

"Christmas, for me, is for sharing so we invited these two families into our home for Christmas dinner," said Ms Mowbray. "We had a wonderful time and our guests were very polite and so appreciative. Some family members spoke some English and we had no problems (with a language barrier)."

In the 2003-04 fiscal year, HMC served 1,500 new clients and 2,600 returning clients as well as 6,000 students through youth programs. Besides the official opening of the Milton office in March, there will be the annual dinner/auction fundraiser in late April. For more information, call (905) 693-8458 or visit its Web site at www.halton-multicultural.org.

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Laurier Plaza

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Milton, ON L9T 4R3

905-878-9306

Cogeco Cable Channel 14

Programming Schedule – Tuesday, January 4 - Monday, January 10, 2005

Tuesday, January 4		Wednesday, January 5		Thursday, January 6		Friday, January 7		Saturday, January 8		Sunday, January 9		Monday, January 10	
Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00am-5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA
8:00am-5:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am-11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am-Noon	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am-11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am-4:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am-10:30am	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am-11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA
5:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	11:00am	Osler Health Connection	Noon	Swap Talk (Replay)	Noon	PeopleSpeak	4:00pm	TV Cogeco Sports: Jr. A Hockey - Streetsville vs Burlington	10:30am	TV Cogeco Sports: Jr. A Hockey - Streetsville vs Burlington	11:00am	Osler Health Connection
6:00pm	Osler Health Connection	11:30am	Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00pm	Milton Council - Dec 20	11:30am	Osler Health Connection	7:00pm - Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA	1:30pm - 6:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	11:30am	Plugged In! EXTRA
6:30pm	Optimist TV Bingo (Live)	12:30pm	PeopleSpeak	4:00pm-6:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00pm	Halton Region Council - Dec 15	6:00pm	Osler Health Connection	12:30pm	PeopleSpeak
7:30pm	PeopleSpeak	1:00pm	Halton Hills Council	6:30pm	Osler Health Connection	7:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	4:00pm-5:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	6:30pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00pm - 8:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA
8:00pm	Halton Hills Council	4:00pm-6:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00pm	Halton Region Council	8:00pm	Halton Region Council	5:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	7:30pm	PeopleSpeak	8:00pm	SportsZone Live
11:00pm-Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm	PeopleSpeak	11:00pm - Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA	11:00pm	Midnight	6:00pm-Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight	
		6:30pm	Plugged In! EXTRA										
		7:30pm	Swap Talk (Live)										
		8:30pm	Auto Experts										
		9:00pm	Milton Council - Dec 20										
		Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA										

Optimist TV Bingo returns tonight, 6:30pm