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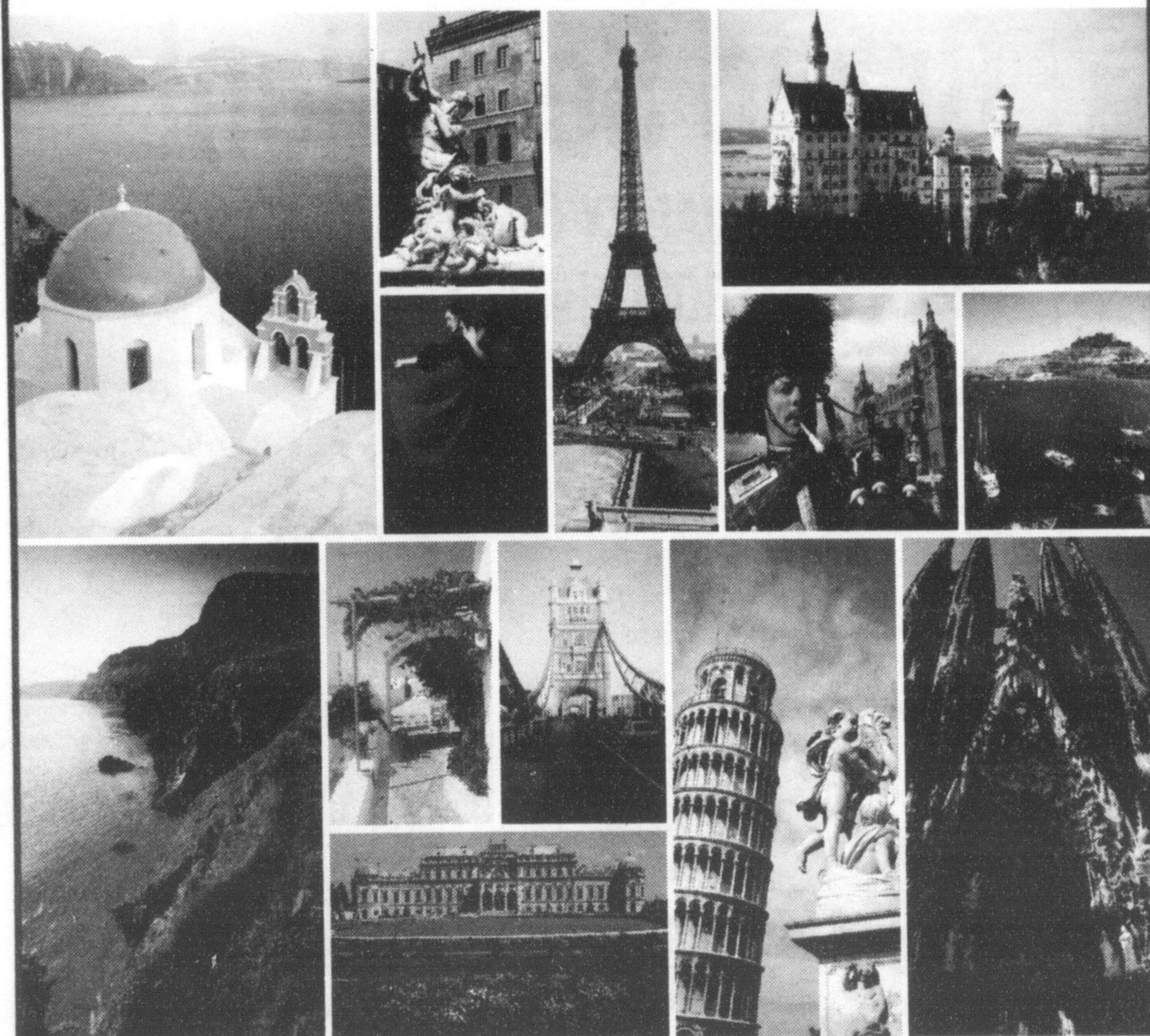
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Halton Multicultural Council delivers message of respect

Flag raising marks International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

By Stephanie Thiessen
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

There's no doubt that the face of Milton is changing. With its burgeoning population comes a plethora of nationalities and cultures.

At a Wednesday morning flag raising held by the Halton Multicultural Council (HMC), a message of the need to learn from our differences and respect each other was driven home.

The ceremony was held to mark the designation of the day as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination by the mayors of Milton, Oakville and Burlington.

"The face is changing not only with regards to the nation, but our community as well," said Mayor Gord Krantz. "Diversity is what it's all about."

Town councillor and HMC board member Jan Mowbray said at the Town Hall event that the significance of the day needs to be remembered all year.

"It's a shame we have one day a year when we celebrate the elimination of racism. It should be 365, not one day," she said.

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was established by the United Nations in 1966 to commemorate the March 21, 1960 massacre by police of 69



GRAHAM PAINE/CANADIAN CHAMPION

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY: Trivi Mehendale (centre), president of the Halton Multicultural Council, is joined by Chris Hadfield Public School students (from left) Shirley Chen, Kiera Antaya, Eric Fisher and Valencia Octave in a flag raising at Town Hall to designate Wednesday as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In the background are other attendees and political officials.

young students peacefully protesting apartheid in South Africa.

Lakhdeep Singh Dhaliwal, a youth worker with HMC, said Canada was one of the first countries to step up and support the UN proclamation.

He explained the day holds particular importance to youth.

"March 21 mobilizes youth to rise up and do something about racism. Youth are the heart and soul of the annual March 21 campaign," he said. "They're the voice of the present and the future."

Rick Nodwell, principal at Chris Hadfield Public School, spoke at the event about the rich diversity at his school, which is in one of the new areas of town.

"Most of the students from

school are born in Canada. But go back one generation and they represent 50 to 60 countries," he said.

Recently, the HMC helped create a mentorship program at Chris Hadfield.

"It's basically helping children smaller than us from different countries who don't speak English," explained Shirley Chen, one of four students from the program who were on hand to read some poetry.

Also in attendance were Oakville councillors Ralph Robinson and Mary Chapin. Burlington Mayor Cam Jackson was planning on being part of the ceremony but wasn't able to.

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com.



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