

PUTTING DOWN ROOTS IN HALTON

SECURING HOUSING CAN BE A CHALLENGE FOR MANY IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

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The following is part two of a three-part series exploring experiences for immigrant families coming to Halton. Next week, we take a look at support services in place for newcomers to the region.

Hemav Mahanta, an immigrant of Indian origin, moved to Canada in 2018 after living in numerous countries like the United States, China and the United Kingdom.

He now calls Halton home.

Mahanta had his fair share of challenges when

coming to Canada. Adjusting to the extreme cold and the Canadian social culture were among them.

But the biggest obstacle was establishing a line of credit here and proving that his internationally-earned money was indeed his. This served as an initial roadblock to buying a house.

"The challenge was that, approving the trail of paperwork to show that the money was mine for the deposit when I'm seven days into a country was difficult," recalled Mahanta.

Securing financing for housing can be a major challenge for many immigrants, as Murryanna Bahadoor's experiences as a real estate agent suggest.

"Moving to Oakville as an immigrant, straight out of your country, it's a different cost and a different kind of money you're bringing into the country,"

said Bahadoor, herself an immigrant from Trinidad and Tobago. "As opposed to somebody who moved here and they're thinking, 'Oh, I should move to Oakville. Oh no, it's too expensive. It's different. It's not for everyone.'"

Between 2011 and 2016, the last census period, the population of Halton grew by 9.3 — more than double the provincial average. Roughly 160,000 of the close to 550,000 people in the region are immigrants.

One of the first challenges typically faced by newcomers is finding adequate housing.

"The housing market is now too tough to buy houses in Burlington and Oakville," said Louis Tsai, a community volunteer who often works with immigrants.

Tsai has observed that "more [immigrants] are actually going to Milton... be-



Graham Paine/Metroland

Like many immigrants moving to Halton in recent years, Hemav Mahanta faced challenges in settling here.

cause Milton's cost of housing is much less than Oakville."

Tsai has also observed that in the Asian community, members of the extended family, sometimes two generations, pool together their money to buy a house.

"Home prices definitely are a challenge. No doubt about it. But people find different ways to overcome

this."

Kim Jenkinson of the Halton Multicultural Council said that Halton is usually the place of "second migration."

In other words, many immigrants will settle in cities closer to the airport — like Mississauga, Brampton or Toronto — before eventually moving to Halton.

"Some people, though, have done their homework

before they've gotten here. But you really need to live in a place before you get to know it," she added.

Lydia Law, language program manager at the Halton Multicultural Council Connections, said most immigrants she has worked with say they come to Halton for the safety of the municipality.

"Also some of them may (come) because of their family or friends. They are already here and they know how good this city or this region is," she added.

Among the many resources available to all area residents — including newcomers — through Halton Region (halton.ca) is Halton Housing Help, which connects people with affordable housing and other supports.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: With many immigrant families settling in Halton in recent years, we wanted to examine what challenges face newcomers in settling here.

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