

ALL AREAS OF HALTON BECOMING MORE DIVERSE

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With immigrants hitting a demographic milestone in Canada, now making up nearly a quarter of the population — according to Statistics Canada — many are finding their way to Halton Hills and other parts of the region.

Jaydeep Bhatt has called north Halton home for the past four years.

Originally hailing from Gujarat, India, his immigration journey began as a student at Humber College in 2011 before being offered a job the year after — and eventually becoming a citizen.

"This land has everything for everyone. I wanted to have a nice family life, a balanced life. I always wanted that. And Canada has given me that," he said. "This is a land of opportunity, for sure."

Bhatt, 36, lives with his wife and young daughter. He is now employed by the City of Mississauga, working on projects where "I can give back to the community."

"So, that kind of completes the cycle," he said.

According to the 2021 census, more than 8.3 million people are or have been a landed immigrant or permanent resident in 2021, representing about 23 per cent of the population — the highest in 150 years.

"This land has everything for everyone... This is a land of opportunity."

- Jaydeep Bhatt

In its recent projections, Statistics Canada says the proportion could increase to between 29 and 34 per cent by 2041. The contribution of immigrants to the country's labour force is also highlighted in the report.

Of the more than 1.3 million new immigrants settled permanently in the country from 2016 to 2021, most came from India (18.6 per cent), followed by the Philippines (11.4 per cent) and China (8.9 per cent).

The record number of newcomers continues to shape Halton's diverse population.

People who identified as visible minorities made up 13.5 per cent of Halton Hills' population in 2021, up from 7.4 per cent in 2016. This compared to Milton's 55 per cent (up from 42.7 per cent in 2016), Oakville's 42.5 per cent (up from 30.8 per cent) and Burlington's 20.8 per cent (up from 16 per cent).

The two largest visible



Graham Paine/Metroland

Dennis Scott, chair of the Halton Black History Awareness Society, welcomes Halton's growing diversity.

minority groups in Halton Hills, Milton and Burlington were South Asian and Black residents, while South Asian and Chinese were the top two in Oakville, the latest census data reveals.

Here's a partial breakdown of the visible minority population in 2021 (based on 25 per cent sample data):

Halton Hills: South Asian (3,505), Black (1,090), Chinese (720), Filipino (650)

Milton: South Asian

(37,100), Black (7,655), Arab (7,405), Filipino (5,300)

Oakville: South Asian (28,685), Chinese (23,055), Arab (10,020), Black (7,020)

Burlington: South Asian (11,955), Black (4,670), Chinese (4,380), Arab (4,100)

Dennis Scott, chair for the Halton Black History Awareness Society, welcomes the diversification.

"It's been going on for quite some time now," he said of the demographic trend.

While the region has

many unique qualities that attract newcomers, he said, there is a lot more to be done to promote inclusivity and make sure everyone feel belong.

For its part, the multicultural organization focuses on promoting Black history, culture and arts — and fighting anti-Black racism. Among his goals is

HALTON'S POPULATION IN 2021

Halton Hills: 62,951

Milton: 132,979

Oakville: 213,759

Burlington: 186,948

Source: Statistics Canada

to get Black history into the education system across the country.

The group is also working to create a vibrant community for all.

He would like to see society continuing forging a path toward multiculturalism and diversity, because "anything else is going to hold us back."

"We are moving gradually toward what we need, and that's equality and appreciation on an equal basis to anything and everything that's happening within Canada. Because really, the bottom line is everyone in Canada, with the exception of the Indigenous, are immigrants," he said.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: We wanted to examine the growth of visible minorities in Halton following the latest 2021 census data released from Statistics Canada.



SCAN THESE CODES for first two instalments of census series, focusing on challenges facing seniors and the rise in multi-generational homes.

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