

# New Settlement Counsellor serving Huron County

## Shetha Roomi helps newcomers settle

Today, around 59,000 people call Huron County home and most of us have a settlement journey in our family history. Some of us have First Nations ancestry, some of us are descendants of the original 19th century settlers, and many are more recent additions arriving from various points of origin. These first settlers and newcomers had to make the difficult settlement journey and adjustment on their own.

Today, though, the situation has changed and newcomers will now be able to find some additional help.

Shetha Roomi, a settlement counsellor, is now working in

Exeter and Stratford to help newcomers settle, providing assistance and guidance with government documents such as immigration forms, citizenship forms, and much more.

As a settlement counsellor, Shetha's main purpose is to help newcomers settle in; but, she has another objective too. Shetha hopes to reach out and help local residents understand how important immigration is to the area and how newcomers contribute to the over-all well-being of the communities they move to. Shetha has her own settlement story and her experiences will help her to help others.

“My dream is to help people understand the benefits of immigration.”

– Shetha Roomi  
Settlement Counsellor,  
Centre for Employment and Learning



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## SHETHA'S STORY:

# A journey from Iraq to London

"Immigration is a difficult process, it takes a long time and sometimes feels a little hopeless, but if I can make it, you can too," insists Shetha. "I moved to Canada in 2007, 10 years after applying. I am originally from Iraq, and I have a degree in Statistical Science. After getting married in 1996, my husband and I decided that we wanted a better life for our children, so we moved to Jordan with the hopes of immigrating somewhere else, and we eventually applied to Canada."

Upon arrival in Canada, Shetha worked hard at learning English. She went to English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, listened to English radio, and watched English movies. Learning the English language was the best way for her and her children to settle in. After a year and a half in ESL school, she worked as a babysitter, in retail, and even cooked for other people. Through this, Shetha gained Canadian experience, as well as the confidence to move up.

Shetha explains, "Throughout your immigration journey,

people will tell you that it is impossible, that you can never make something of yourself, and that you will never succeed in this culture. But I am here to tell you that success means different things to different people, and you will be successful if you work hard! When I first came here, there were very little settlement services. Now, everywhere you go there are many people here to help you succeed, and I am one of them. I am here for you."

Shetha works out of the Exeter and Stratford locations of the Centre for Employment and Learning and she can provide settlement assistance to anyone who needs it. She is available by appointment one day per month at each location. For more information or to make an appointment, contact Shetha at one of the locations below:

- **Exeter** – Centre for Employment & Learning, 349 Main St., Exeter; Phone: 519.235.0471
- **Stratford** – Centre for Employment & Learning, 220 Oakdale Ave., Stratford; Phone: 519.271.4896

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## Background on the settlement counsellor initiative

Often newcomers require specific information regarding immigration and citizenship matters and the completion of documentation. Staff of the Centres for Employment and Learning, ESL Program, currently have limited capacity to provide one-on-one support for newcomers requesting assistance and local community workers and volunteers are limited in the assistance they could provide.

The initiative to bring a settlement counsellor to this area has been in the works for a while and has come to be through the planning and teamwork of different organizations. The Perth-Huron Settlement Services Working Committee (PHSWC) was awarded a Development & Demonstration Grant by the United Way Perth-Huron to provide a support service for newcomers to Perth and Huron Counties.

The service provides assistance and guidance with government documents such as immigration forms, citizenship forms, and more. This interim support is required until such time as funding request is considered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada Settlement Service program. At this time the organizations that make up the Working Committee do not have the resources and/or expertise to provide in-depth advice.

"This will be a tremendous resource for newcomers to both counties", stated Mark Hertzberger, a project co-ordinator at the United Way Perth-Huron. "Government processes and forms can be confusing to all of us, but in a second language it is especially helpful to have some knowledgeable guidance."

*With special thanks to Shetha Roomi, Settlement Counsellor, and Mark Hertzberger, Project Coordinator at the United Way Perth-Huron, for their assistance and permission to reprint materials in this edition of Make Huron Home.*

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