

# research snapshot

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## Innovative Guide Helps York Region to Grow Its Workforce

### What is this research about?

Research suggests that by 2011, immigration will account for 100% of Canada's labour force growth, making it more important than ever for employers and immigrants to connect. The labour force growth of York Region, in particular, depends on immigration. The Region is growing but its workforce is declining. With an aging population and low fertility rates, York Region does not have the numbers of workers required for its labour force. Skilled immigrants are needed to fill positions that are opening as the economy expands and baby boomers retire.

As a result, small and medium employers, which make up 97% of the businesses in York Region, are calling for human resource support to help ease immigrants into the Region's workforce. Many employers have identified their lack of cultural understanding as a key roadblock to hiring and interacting with immigrant workers. Employers want employees that will integrate smoothly into their organization and represent their company well in their dealings with clients and customers. A better cultural understanding of immigrant workers will help York Region to grow and enrich its workforce.

### What did the researchers do?

The Markham Board of Trade in conjunction with the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce and the York, South Simcoe Training & Adjustment Board

### What you need to know:

The Chinese Cultural Guide for Employers is a vital tool for employers, particularly in York Region, who need to replenish and grow their workforce. The Guide provides employers with invaluable information about Chinese culture and practices, which may affect the decision to hire a Chinese worker as well as his or her success in the workplace.

(YSSTAB) released the Chinese Cultural Guide for Employers, a vital 56-page resource that promotes a better cultural understanding among employers seeking to hire Chinese immigrants. The Chinese Cultural Guide for Employers was developed as one of seven local community initiatives, entitled Global Experience @ Work, sponsored by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

The Guide covers eight topics that span the sourcing, hiring, and managing of an employee who has come to the employment market specifically with a Chinese cultural background:

- Contributing to Workplace Success
- Sourcing Chinese Immigrant Applicants
- The Interview Process
- Orientating the Employee to the Workplace Culture
- Leaders and Team Members

- Traditions, Beliefs and Sensitive Issues
- Communication on the Job
- Training and Performance Evaluations

### What did the researchers find?

Within its pages, the Guide offers rich insights into cultural differences between Western and Chinese approaches to work. For example, the Guide notes that Chinese employees often do not make eye contact when speaking with a potential employer in an interview or when speaking with a manager. This can be misinterpreted as low self-esteem and, as a result, an employer might turn away a potentially good employee. However, employers need to know that because of cultural influences, Asian subordinates often do not look directly at superiors; looking directly at superiors is seen as disrespectful and also suggests that subordinates do not fear their superiors, and consider themselves to be of equal ranking. The Guide contains many similarly well-researched insights – or ‘issues’ – all of which have been vetted by people of Chinese origin to ensure sensitivity. Each issue is followed by useful recommendations to interviewers and employers, designed to help smooth the way for Chinese immigrants adjusting to a new work environment.

### How can you use this research?

Employers can use the Guide to become more aware of the cultural nuances in the Canadian workplace. They can also use the Guide when sourcing, hiring, and managing an employee who has come to the employment market with a Chinese cultural background. The goal of the Guide is to build bridges between communities and provide generalizations only. It does not apply to everyone and every situation should be considered individually.

### About the Partners

The York, South Simcoe Training & Adjustment Board (YSSTAB) is a not-for-profit, community-based organization working to develop solutions to local labour market needs and issues. The Markham Board of Trade is the voice of the regional business community, advocating on behalf of member companies on issues critical to the economic vitality and quality of life within Markham. The Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce is the voice of business in Richmond Hill, providing a leadership role in promoting the business interests of its members.

### Citation

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### Keywords

Immigration, Employment, Social integration, Human resources, Chinese Canadians

### Knowledge Mobilization at York

York's Knowledge Mobilization Unit provides services for faculty, graduate students, community and government seeking to maximize the impact of academic research and expertise on public policy, social programming, and professional practice. This summary has been supported by the Office of the Vice-President Research and Innovation at York and project funding from SSHRC and CIHR.

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