



GRAPE EXPECTATIONS: John Fancsy, left, of Viewpointe Estate Winery in Colchester, Minister of Government Services Gerry Phillips and Essex MPP Bruce Crozier discuss the area's growing wine region at the winery.

Want wine, think Essex: Vintners

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When people think about Ontario wines, local vintners want them to get past Niagara and think about Essex County.

The local area boasts two of Ontario's wine growing regions: Pelee Island and the Lake Erie North Shore. Together they have 11 wineries, will soon add three more and produce world-recognized red wines.

"We're trying to build awareness," said Rob Muscedere of Muscedere Vineyards on County Road 18, north of Harrow.

"Niagara's not the only grape-growing area."

Muscedere was one of the local winemakers who got a chance to meet with Minister of Government Services Gerry Phillips Friday at Viewpointe Estate Winery, a multimillion-dollar winery being built in Colchester.

Phillips told vintners he already knows the local wine region is unique and important.

of Lake Erie in a winery still under construction, Phillips said the room is symbolic of the local wine region's future.

"You can visualize a lot of, I hope, American tourists standing here, bringing to our province economic prosperity."

The wineries are working together to promote the wine region, attract more visitors and even develop their own kind of grapes.

New wineries welcomed

Pelee Island Winery and Colio Estate Wines, two of the top five largest wineries in Ontario, have welcomed the new wineries that only add to marketing a wine region and wine route. Colio winemaker Tim Reilly said he thinks the area is on the brink of becoming a dominant wine region and is similar to Niagara 15 years ago.

Winemaker Dennis Sanson, who has a winery in McGregor, said he thinks the industry will continue to grow. He said the wineries are commissioning a study on tourists and are working with other industries such as bed and