

I am very pleased to be able to welcome you to today's wine tasting and selection. Certainly one of the more enjoyable events that I have had the pleasure to host as Minister for International Trade.

The purpose of the tasting was to come up with a list of Canadian Wines representative of the finest wine produced in this country. Over the next year the Secretary of State for External Affairs and I will be urging our officials to feature these selected wines at Department of External Affairs functions both in Canada and at our diplomatic missions abroad.

I am taking this initiative because both I and my colleague Joe Clark believe it is time that wine-drinkers here and abroad recognize that Canada is producing wines that are on a par with fine wines produced in the more traditional wine-making countries.

Recently, I have been particularly encouraged to see that wineries in both the Niagara region of Southern Ontario and the Okanagan/Similkameen region of British Columbia have been gaining recognition by winning awards at International competitions. We are proud to serve Canada's finest wines at official events, and we want Canadians and the rest of the world to know that.

The actual wine-tasting leading up to the selection of the labels I am about to announce has been going on since this morning. Although we have provided the facilities for the event, I want to stress that it was organized entirely by an independent consultant, Mr. Andrew Sharp, a respected expert on Canadian wine whom I wish to compliment on the care he has given to this task. He chose the panel of seven judges, all of whom are leading Canadian wine writers. They have had to select today from among 147 different wines submitted by 24 Canadian wineries.

And now, if I may, I would like to announce the list of wines selected by our independent panel of judges (list attached).

At this time I would like to call upon Mr. Sharp to introduce his panel of wine judges and to say a few words about Canadian wines.