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Brock University opens its testing lab to the grape and wine industry

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Ontario's grape and wine industry is welcoming a lab at Brock University that provides vital juice and wine analysis.

The initiative is part of CCOVI's heightened focus on outreach to the grape and wine community. This project, the first in a series of new outreach programs is part of the larger project announced last December by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. This funding results from the collaboration between the government through its Developing Innovative Agri-Products (DIAP) program, the Grape Growers of Ontario and Brock's CCOVI.

Winemakers are saying the new service at Brock's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI) will help Ontario produce more consistently high quality wines because the analysis that wineries need can now be done less expensively and right in their backyard.

"This is a nice change from having to send my samples to a Californian lab," said Brian Hamilton, assistant winemaker at Southbrook Vineyards in Niagara-on-the-Lake. "That was expensive, and just dealing with the papework at the border was very time-consuming."

Under the new service, growers and wineries can bring samples to the Brock lab where they will be tested for everything from sugar and acidity levels to alcohol content. In addition, the lab will also offer project design analysis services for both industry and CCOVI research projects.

"This is great for smaller wineries who don't have the equipment necessary for testing," said Richie Roberts, winemaker at Fielding Estate Winery in Beamsville. "This is the kind of service that will help Ontario produce better wines."

Debbie Inglis, the Director of CCOVI who is a scientist as well a grape grower herself, said the validated test methods used by the lab produce accurate results that enable the industry to more consistently understand and improve their product.

Inglis continues by saying, "We are proud to provide this innovative outreach service which will help advance the grape and wine industry."

Additional community outreach programs will be developed in the coming months with the addition of two new researchers to the CCOVI team. The search is now underway for a

viticulturist specializing in grapevine cold hardiness and an oenologist focusing on grape and wine flavour chemistry. These positions will be on hand to support grape growers and winemakers through industry-driven research and outreach.

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