

## SFU Report on The Fate of the Wine Industry in Beautiful British Columbia

While perusing the local British Columbia liquor stores you may have noticed the “B.C. Wine” section gradually growing in size and selection. Although this may seem like a good thing on the surface for wine drinkers and wine growers, Simon Fraser University political science Professor Andy Hira begs to differ.

Wineries in B.C. have been continuously growing since 1992, when the NAFTA trade agreement between Canada, the USA and Mexico was established. This agreement gradually eliminated most trade barriers between the three countries, therefore allowing the wine industry to not only flourish in Canada but other countries as well. Until now, that is.



(Photo credit L Pennington)

In a study entitled “The Wine Industry in British Columbia: A Closed Wine but Ready for Harvest,” Hira dives into the complicated workings of the wine industry and whether or not it is fated to succeed in B.C. Much to my dismay, Hira has concluded that there are definite “vulnerabilities” that need to be addressed, and soon. “The question for the future is, can BC’s wines improve their quality and value to expand their markets or are we at the peak for the wine industry now?”

According to Hira, the increasing number of wineries popping up in the Okanagan Valley and surrounding area could eventually lead to the wine industry’s downfall. Hira states that “market forces threaten the continued growth of the industry.”

However, there is still hope. The director of sales at the prestigious winery Mission Hill Family Estate, Ingo Grady, believes that the report “needs to be discussed beyond the realm of academia.”

Grady is not alone in his belief that the wine industry still has some time to age. Wine-writer John Schreiner (author of “John Schreiner’s Okanagan Wine Tour Guide” & “British Columbia Wine Country”) criticizes the paper as being “pessimistic,” although he does note that Hira makes a valid point about vulnerabilities, and that they will need to be addressed by the major stakeholders in the B.C. wine industry.

The report, which includes over fifty interviews with experts in the wine industry (including: “winemakers, suppliers and public support institutions to the Okanagan wine industry”), is only the first step in Hira’s research. Hira, along with other researchers, will continue to examine the industry in B.C. He will also begin comparing our wine industry to similar ones in Italy, Chile, Australia and Spain. His results will remain inconclusive as of yet. This summer wine experts from Italy, Chile, Australia and Spain will make presentations to the industry regarding their own findings in wine research.

The fate of the wine industry in beautiful British Columbia is yet to be determined. BC wine has made its mark on the wine world, and whether it continues to grow or not one thing remains certain.

People all over the world have come to enjoy BC wine, and that will not change.

Challenging times for B.C. wine industry – report [Simon Fraser University]