



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Industry Greats Celebrated at 2023 Canadian Wine Industry Awards Ceremony

July 19, 2023 – Wine Growers Canada (WGC), the national association representing the Canadian wine industry, is proud to continue honouring industry leaders and champions through the 2023 Canadian Wine Industry Awards, which took place today in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Alongside Wine Growers Canada (WGC), Wine Growers Ontario (WGO) and Ontario Craft Wineries (OCW) announced the winner of the 2023 Ontario Wine Industry Champion Award.

This year's distinguished recipients are:

Canadian Wine Industry Awards of Distinction – Jay Wright & John Howard

Canadian Wine Industry Champion Awards – Minister of Agriculture & Agri-Food, Marie-Claude Bibeau & the Parliamentary National Wine Caucus

The Karl Kaiser Canadian Winemaker Award – Jean-Laurent “J-L” Groux

Ontario Wine Industry Champion Award – Rebecca Mackenzie

2023 Canadian Wine Industry Awards

The Canadian Wine Industry Awards, sponsored by national accounting, tax and business firm MNP, are presented annually by WGC to recognize individuals in Canada's grape wine industry and honour those who have gone above and beyond to support the growth of the wine industry in Canada.

The joint winners of the **Canadian Wine Industry Award of Distinction** – regarded as the highest form of peer recognition in the Canadian wine industry – are Jay Wright, former President & CEO at Arterra Wines Canada, and John Howard, Owner/ Founder of Megalomaniac Winery.

“Over the past two decades, Jay's pioneering legacy has helped take the Canadian wine industry to new heights,” said Dan Paszkowski, President & CEO of Wine Growers Canada. “A passionate advocate and champion for VQA wine, Jay remained persistent in his vision and played a key role in growing the VQA premium Canadian wine category and served as a forward-looking voice on Wine Growers Canada's Board of Directors,” added Paszkowski.

“John Howard brought his business savvy and entrepreneurial attitude to the Canadian wine industry, creating a lasting impact. He has been an integral part of the development of the Niagara Escarpment,

and helped pave the way for Niagara wine country tourism,” said Greg Berti, Vice President - Global Markets, Industry Relations, Business Development, Andrew Peller Ltd.

The **Wine Industry Champion Award** is presented to an individual who has provided exemplary support to the Canadian wine industry through media, policy or advocacy, and was awarded jointly to Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau, Federal Minister of Agriculture & Agri-Food and the Parliamentary National Wine Caucus.

“This year, our national industry awards committee knew that, if there was one sole initiative that made the greatest impact on every grape winery across Canada, it was the implementation of the federal government’s Wine Sector Support Program,” stated Paszkowski. “The Wine Sector Support Program is the direct result of the unwavering support and dedication from the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture & Agri-Food, and a long list of Members of Parliament from every political party in wine ridings across Canada. We are delighted to recognize them today,” added Paszkowski.

The **Karl Kaiser Canadian Winemaker Award** celebrates great Canadian winemakers, in honour of the legacy of the late Karl Kaiser, a Canadian wine industry pioneer and viticultural visionary. The recipient of this year’s award is J-L Groux, the founding winemaker of Stratus Vineyards.

“J-L’s contributions to the Canadian wine industry have made him a Canadian wine legend. He introduced new grape varieties to Canadian vineyards, and his passion for precision viticulture, sustainable practices, and the art of blending have made a critical mark on terroir-driven, appellation-focused wines across Canada,” said Paszkowski.

2023 Ontario Wine Industry Champion Award

The Ontario Wine Industry Champion Award is bestowed to an individual who has provided exemplary support for the Ontario wine industry through media, research, policy and regulation, education or advocacy, or significantly contributing to the overall strength and long-term viability of the industry. The award recognizes champions who are passionate about Ontario wine and industry prosperity, beyond those employed directly in the industry.

“Ontario Craft Wineries and Wine Growers Ontario are excited to announce the second annual Ontario Wine Industry Champion Award winner. It is very important to our organizations that we recognize the significant contributions from people who make the success of our industry possible,” said Aaron Dobbin, President and CEO of Wine Growers Ontario.

Wine Growers Ontario and Ontario Craft Wineries wish to congratulate Rebecca Mackenzie, President & CEO of the Culinary Tourism Alliance (CTA) as the recipient of the Ontario Wine Industry Champion Award! Rebecca is passionate about the interconnection between food, agriculture, tourism, arts, and culture. She has been instrumental in developing tourism experiences including Prince Edward County’s award-winning Taste Trail and the Culinary Tourism Alliance’s Feast On certification program. In her role as President & CEO of the CTA, she manages highly participatory and asset-based community development projects at the regional, provincial, and national levels. Rebecca oversees programming, partnership development, and comprehensive marketing partnerships that aim to increase awareness of Canada’s food tourism offerings, including the recently (June 2023) launched Great Taste of Canada.

“It’s an honour to receive this award - thank you to the OCW and WGO. The Ontario wine industry is a wonderful reflection of our taste of place,” said award winner Rebecca Mackenzie.

Congratulations to this year’s worthy recipients and thank you for your extraordinary contributions to the Canadian wine industry.

To learn more about the Canadian Wine Industry Awards, visit [WineGrowersCanada.ca](https://www.winegrowerscanada.ca), and for information on the Ontario Wine Industry Champion Award, visit [WineGrowersOntario.ca](https://www.winegrowersontario.ca).

ABOUT WINE GROWERS CANADA

Wine Growers Canada (WGC) is the national voice of the Canadian wine industry, with membership representing more than 90% of annual Canadian wine production. WGC members are engaged in the entire wine value chain from grape growing, farm management & grape harvesting, to wine production, bottling, retail sales and tourism. For more information about Wine Growers Canada, visit [WineGrowersCanada.ca](https://www.WineGrowersCanada.ca). @winegrowersca

ABOUT WINE GROWERS ONTARIO

Wine Growers Ontario (WGO) are the leading Ontario wineries and grape growers that are committed to offering Ontario wine drinkers a wide range of quality wines to enjoy at any occasion. From 100% Ontario Vintners Quality Alliance (VQA) to International Domestic Blends (IDB) wines, our award winning wines span the taste preference, quality and value appreciated by our local customers. We are generations of winemakers as well as new entrepreneurs. We cultivate vast acreages of grapes and smaller vineyards too. Together, we are proud of our international acclaim for award winning wines produced from the beautiful, rich and diverse Wine Country of Ontario. Visit [WineGrowersOntario.ca](https://www.WineGrowersOntario.ca).

ABOUT ONTARIO CRAFT WINERIES

The OCW champions and advocates for the growth and success of Ontario VQA wine producers. As a capital intensive and vertically integrated businesses, OCW helps its winery members navigate the industry, grow and be successful. Over the past five years, VQA wine producers have grown to 183 wineries from 161 in 2016. VQA production rose to 3.3 million cases in 2021 from 2.24 million cases in 2016, a striking 47% increase. VQA grape production rose to an estimated 40.6 tonnes from an estimated 31.2 tonnes in 2016. Annually, the Ontario VQA industry contributes well in excess of \$2 billion to the province’s economy and supports over 11,000 direct and indirect jobs. Visit [OntarioCraftWineries.ca](https://www.OntarioCraftWineries.ca).

ABOUT MNP

MNP is a leading national accounting, tax and business consulting firm in Canada. Through partner-led engagements, MNP provides a collaborative, cost-effective approach to doing business and personalized strategies to help organizations succeed in Canada and internationally, and has an extensive history of working with food and beverage processors. For more information about MNP, visit [MNP.ca](https://www.MNP.ca).

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