



# Community and Neighbour Relations



## Sustainability Committee Newsletter

March 2012

### Background

Being sustainable requires addressing the three pillars; economic profitability, environmental responsibility and social equity. Often, discussion and action about sustainable behavior focuses on the environmental and economic side. The social component is often ignored since it is the most contentious and difficult to measure.

However, wineries are members of the community. Both the local businesses and residents, and wineries benefit from each other's activity. Establishing strong relationships should strengthen both the reputation and the economic performance of a winery.

Proactive measures are the best way to manage these relationships. Effective communication and research will help you identify issues which are important to the community and allow your winery to become an active voice in planning the future of your community. It will also keep community members informed of upcoming winery activities and potential nuisances. However, eliminating or preventing these nuisances themselves are the best method for eliminating conflict with neighbours.

Additionally, socially responsible winemaking will foster closer ties to the community. Charity work and choosing socially and environmentally responsible suppliers will demonstrate your commitment to becoming sustainable.

Hopefully, you will not need to field complaints. However, when complaints are submitted to a winery, you must deal with them promptly and effectively before they are filed through formal channels. Otherwise your relationship with your neighbour may become permanently damaged.

Our "Sustainable Winemaking Ontario: A Charter for the Ontario Wine Industry" outlines Environmental Best Practices for Wineries including relationships with neighbours. Guidance for our program drew significantly from the [Certified Sustainable California Winegrowing](#) program. It was one of the early leaders in sustainable winemaking programs in North America. Their Lodi region's [Winegrape Guidebook to Establishing Good Neighbour and Community Relations](#) provides a good foundation for developing good relationships with neighbours and the community.

### What's your story?

Help Ontario's wine industry become more 'green'. Share a story on how your company has benefited from applying the principles of sustainability in your facility. We are also interested in what specific topics you would like to see addressed in these newsletters.



Please contact Regina Foisey with your stories or requests at:  
[regina.foisey@winesofontario.org](mailto:regina.foisey@winesofontario.org)

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## Researching Local Issues

The first step in creating a strong connection to the community is to understand the specific issues which are important to that community. It will allow you to proactively understand and address any concerns that neighbours may have.

You should stay updated through the local news media, attending city or regional council, talking with your neighbours on a regular basis, or more formal strategies such as questionnaires and surveys. In fact, the [Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs](#) conducted a survey in [1997 on Farm and Neighbour Relationships](#), that identifies the most common issues that farms have to deal with when relating to neighbours.

It is also important to review and understand current and upcoming legislation to ensure that you are complying. Please review the newsletters on Energy (January 2011), Water (March 2011), Soil (June 2011) and Air Quality (January 2012) for further detail on environmental laws and regulations. Also visit the [Ontario Ministry of the Environment](#) and follow the links to your local planning organizations and by-laws, which are provided below.

The [Provincial Policy Statement](#) may provide further direction on the direction of community land planning in Ontario. It is a policy that directs the [Official Plan](#) for each municipality. Another important piece of land use legislation is the [Green Belt Act](#), which protects environmentally sensitive land from the growing problem of urban sprawl.



According to their website, "Sustainable Niagara is a resident owned plan that will help guide the next 50 years of Regional Decision Making".

From 2009-2011 they actively involved stakeholders from government, community groups, educational institutions, business and agriculture to help develop a vision and goals for a sustainable Niagara in 2060 and determine key criteria to measure our position now and our progress towards meeting these goals.

Sustainable Niagara is presently looking to develop targets and an action plan to meet these goals. They actively encourage community feedback on their program

*For more information please visit the [Sustainable Niagara website](#)*

### Local Policy and Planning Organizations

#### Niagara Peninsula

[Integrated Community Planning](#)

[Sustainable Niagara](#)

[Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority](#)

[By-laws: Niagara-on-the-Lake](#)

[By-laws: St. Catharines](#)

[By-laws: Lincoln](#)

#### Prince Edward County

[Planning Services](#)

[Prince Edward Stewardship Council](#)

[Prince Edward County: Bylaw Enforcement](#)

#### Lake Erie North Shore & Pelee Island

[Essex County Planning Services](#)

[Essex Region Conservation Authority](#)

[Essex County: Bylaws](#)

[Chatham-Kent Strategic Planning](#)



## Establishing a Message

Communicating an appropriate message to the community will require that you understand the values of the community, the values of your winery and the audience of your communication. Your research will help you determine the issues that are important to your community.

**'The most effective and efficient means of resolving conflict with neighbours) involve simple time-tested tools: communication, consideration and ultimately respect', OMAFRA**

The content of your message should be developed from the vision and values of your vineyard. You should work internally to develop a set of values that you can state explicitly about your winery. Your winery's owners, winery management, the winemaker, marketing personnel, and your

grower should all be involved in developing these values based on your internal winemaking goals. You can now relay these values clearly and concisely to community members through a series of value statements.

Your message should also be directed towards its intended audience. Communication to politicians and regulatory agencies will require completely different content than communicating with your neighbours. Taking the time to decide who is your target audience will allow you to make a more directed and effective statement.



## Delivering the Message

Your choice of method of communication should be directly influenced by the message you are delivering. Several methods of communicating with your neighbours may be more appropriate for education whereas other methods may be more appropriate for promotion and advertising.

On issues that directly affect neighbours OMAFRA recommends communicating informally so that you can build mutual respect and trust before serious conflict takes root. These informal discussions can allow you to proactively identify and address any concerns that neighbours may have. You may engage in informal discussions by visiting neighbours in person, sending out newsletters, or inviting your neighbours on winery tours.

At Creekside Estate Winery they go door to door to distribute details of an upcoming events with a cellular phone number for direct communication of issues that may arise. They will also sometimes offer a bottle of wine to neighbours to show their appreciation for enduring minor nuisances from winery activities and events.

Offering neighbours winery tours may have the added

### Local Media

#### Prince Edward County

[countylive.ca](http://countylive.ca)

[The Picton Gazette](#)

[County Magazine](#)

[Quinte News](#)

#### Niagara Peninsula

[St. Catharines Standard](#)

[Niagara Falls Review](#)

[Niagara This Week](#)

[News Talk 610 CKTB](#)

#### Lake Erie North Shore & Pelee Island

[The Essex Free Press](#)

[Kingsville Reporter](#)

[Leamington Post and Shopper](#)



benefit of allowing you to educate your neighbours. Once they understand the winemaking process and why some of a winery's activities are necessary, they may become more tolerant of certain activities.

Furthermore, your website can be an effective tool for telling your winery's story to establish a better connection between the winery and the community at large. It provides the opportunity to market your commitment to sustainability while identifying your commitment to community improvement.

News media can also be an excellent tool for getting your story out to the public. It can provide great publicity for your winery and connect you with a broader audience in the community. However, the

message you wish to convey must be news-worthy, which means it should involve an exceptional activity or accomplishment.

You can work with your marketing or public relations department to develop a press-release for such an event or activity. The Wine Council's [Director of Public Relations, Tourism, and Marketing](#) has extensive experience with public relations and she can assist you in delivering your message. Her experience may be especially useful for smaller wineries who may not have a large marketing department. This communication also keeps the Wine Council up to date on the exciting new activities of our wineries and gives us great material for promoting Ontario wines.

## Reducing Nuisance

Often the best method of preventing strained relationships with your neighbours is by ensuring that you minimize nuisances for them. Obeying all relevant environmental laws and regulations are important in not only eliminating legal liability but reducing these nuisances. Some potential nuisances include odour, noise, light pollution, spray drift, drainage issues and traffic on site.

### Odour and Noise

Methods of controlling odour and noise have been detailed in the recent sustainability newsletter on Air Quality (January 2012).

Further nuisances can be reduced by avoiding nighttime operations or minimizing potential nuisance during these hours. At Angels Gate Winery they time their bird bangers to start as late as possible in the mornings and stop as early as possible in the evenings as well as positioning them as far as possible from neighbouring properties.

### Drainage

Disputes over water and drainage are a common problem among neighbours. Drainage problems can cause land erosion and flooding of neighbouring properties. OMAFRA recommends communicating with neighbours about drainage issues before using the courts to settle disputes. Court decisions rarely leave either side happy and fosters resentment between neighbours.

OMAFRA has released a [FACT SHEET: Top 10 Drainage Problems between Rural Neighbours](#) to help neighbours resolve drainage problems with one another.

More information on agricultural drainage issues can be found at the [Water-Product Catalogue](#) of [OMAFRA Publications](#).

### Spray Drift



Chemical pest control products drifting onto adjacent properties can deteriorate your relationship with your neighbours seriously. It can result in serious damage to humans, your neighbour's plants and animals. It also wastes your pest control product and reduces its effectiveness.

OMAFRA recommends the following measures to reduce pesticide drift in its [Pesticide Drift from Ground Application](#) Factsheet:

- Spray only in a light wind and when the relative humidity is over 40% and temperature is under 25°C
- Use nozzles that minimize drift and maximize spray quality

## Reducing Nuisance

- Minimize the nozzle to target distance while ensuring spray coverage
- Drive sprayers at a reasonable speed
- Calibrate sprayers
- Develop downwind shelter belts (buffer zones)
- Pesticide formulation and adjuvant to reduce drift
- Using equipment such as air blast sprayers, vertical boom sprayers and drift recovery sprayers

You should also consider what sorts of activities occur on neighbouring properties. At Angels Gate Winery, since one of their vineyards neighbours a school, they ensure that they do not spray at that vineyard during school hours. OMAFRA provides more links to resources for reducing spray drift on their [Reducing Spray Drift](#) webpage.

### Winery Events

If you hold events at your winery, increased traffic can annoy your neighbours if it is not handled properly. You must ensure that you have adequate parking, clear and obvious signs directing attendees to parking areas and, perhaps, someone to direct cars into your parking lot.

You may also want to limit events that can make noise to daylight hours or move them indoors if you have neighbours who live close to the winery property.

As previously discussed, communicating with your neighbours about upcoming events is also very important

to understand and address any concerns of neighbours. They may be more tolerant of activity on-site if they know about the event beforehand.

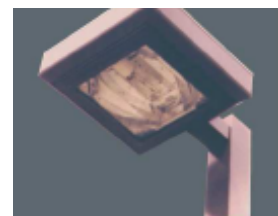
### Light Pollution

As well as a nuisance to neighbours, light pollution can negatively affect human health and the natural environment. The following recommendations have been made for effective outdoor lighting by the [Royal Astronomical Society of Canada](#):

- Light control options (timers and sensors)
  - Shielding to reduce upward glare and light trespass (Shoe-box style preferred over cobra-head style)
  - Targeted lighting
  - Using lighting powered for the minimum light levels
- Outdoor lighting recommendations can be found in their presentation of their [Light Pollution Abatement Program](#), which also provides the sample images shown below.



Flat glass cobra-style luminaire



Shoe-box luminaire

## Social Responsibility

Acting in a socially responsible manner is an excellent tool for establishing an excellent reputation in the community for your winery.

### Responsible Suppliers

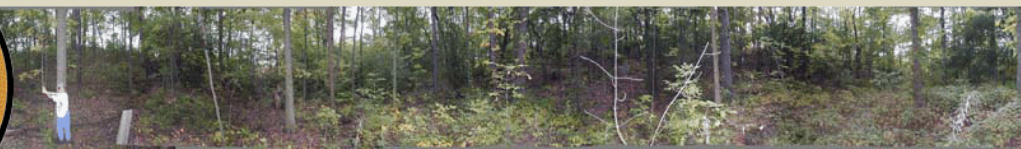
Community members and customers will be more likely to support companies who support the local economy by purchasing from local and sustainable suppliers. Choosing your source of wine bottles is one example of socially responsible sourcing. Originally, most suppliers of lightweight glass were from Asian or European markets. However since demand for lightweight glass has increased, an increased number of lightweight bottles from North America have become available. Please review the most recent (February 2012) lightweight glass product listing to review

your lightweight glass options.

You may also want to consider suppliers who manufacture their products from post-consumer recycled materials and minimize the amount of packaging they use with their products.

Additionally, wood-derived products manufactured from a sustainable sources will make your product more sustainable. Organizations such as the [Forestry Stewardship Council](#) and [CSA\(Z809\)](#), or similar organizations in Europe and the United States, certify that your wood derived products come from sustainably managed forests.

Remember that while local and environmentally responsible suppliers are ideal, a sustainable selection requires it be economically feasible as well.



Canadian Oak Cooperage provides the opportunity to become more sustainable while providing your wines with the distinct flavor of Canadian oak barrels. Their oak is harvested from small lots located right here in Ontario. Several Ontario wineries use Canadian Oak for their wine barrels including:

- Black Prince Winery
- Cave Springs Cellars
- Hernder Estates
- Reif Estate Winery
- Jackson Triggs Winery
- Maplegrove Vinoteca Estate Winery
- Hillebrand Estates Winery
- Henry of Pelham
- Niagara Teaching Winery
- Konzelmann Estate Winery
- Pelee Island Winery
- Southbrook Winery
- Pillitteri Estates Winery
- Vincor Canada
- Many others listed at <http://www.canadianoak.com/html/the-wine.html>

Canadian Oak Cooperage has also completed a study in partnership with the Niagara College Teaching Winery and Niagara Research to conduct a [Sensory and Aromatic Comparison between Canadian Oak, French Oak and American Oak barrels.](#)

## Social Responsibility

### Philanthropy

Giving your time and effort to a charitable organization is extremely rewarding on its own. Working hand-in-hand with fellow community members foster a stronger network of citizens and businesses in the community. These closer ties and communications with the community will ensure you are up-to-date on pressing issues that arise in your community

Charitable involvement also provides excellent material for the media. Your reputation will be bolstered and receive free advertising if the media covers your involvement. Neighbours will also be more receptive to pro-active communication about potential nuisances from the winery.

While community involvement provides many intrinsic rewards to wineries by strengthening the community in which they operate, increasingly many businesses are looking for more return on their charitable donations. Many companies are beginning to see the benefit of more strategic partnerships with charitable organizations. These relationships, known as [strategic philanthropy](#), can often result in benefits to a winery and provide more support than a simple donation, in-kind or monetary, to a charitable organization.





## Black Prince Winery shows a commitment to its local community

Black Prince Winery has shown excellent leadership in maintaining strong relationships with their local community. They have maintained involvement with several charities and environmental organizations.

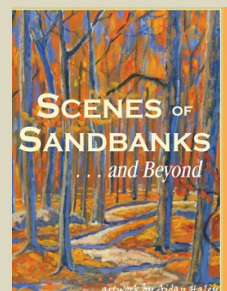
Black Prince Winery hosted the 4th & 5th annual Scenes of the Sandbanks and Beyond art show. All proceeds from the event supported the Dunes Trail Project, in 2010, and a sign for Lake Shore Lodge, in 2011, at [Sandbanks Provincial Park](#).

Their [project](#) to celebrate the 50th anniversary of [Amnesty International](#) is an excellent example of strategic philanthropy. They are offering a bottle of AI50 red and white wine, where two dollars from every purchase goes to support Amnesty International.

Black Prince Winery has also partnered with the Prince Edward Stewardship Council on several projects which include:

- Tree Planting
- Upgrading a stream crossing
- Wine labels to raise awareness about two species at risk in Prince Edward County.

Black Prince



## Responding to Complaints

Ideally, if you take pro-active measures to foster strong relationships with neighbours and avoid creating potential nuisances you will minimize complaints. However, sometimes these complaints cannot be avoided. Taking the time to listen to and address every complaint will help maintain strong relationships with the community.

The OMAFRA Fact Sheet [Farmer and Neighbour Relations Preventing and Resolving Conflicts with Neighbours](#) identifies that complaints that cannot be resolved informally will be addressed before the Normal Farm Practices Protection Board according to the Farming and Food Production Act. This act protects farmers from the following nuisance complaints as long as they are the result of normal farm activity: noise, odour, dust, light, vibration, smoke and flies.

However, OMAFRA highly recommends that complaints are dealt with before they are filed formally. Often, if the board is required to mediate a complaint then the relationship between the vineyard and its neighbour has been permanently damaged.

Additionally, not every complaint will be delivered directly to an individual who can address the concern ap-

propriately. Having a written policy for recording and responding to complaints will help ensure that every complaint will be addressed. Otherwise, complaints may get lost or forgotten before they are delivered to appropriate winery personnel.

A policy on addressing complaints should include:

- Responsibility
- Recording complaints
- Complaint log location
- Complaint review
- Addressing complaints
- Corrective action
- Follow-up communication
- Staff training

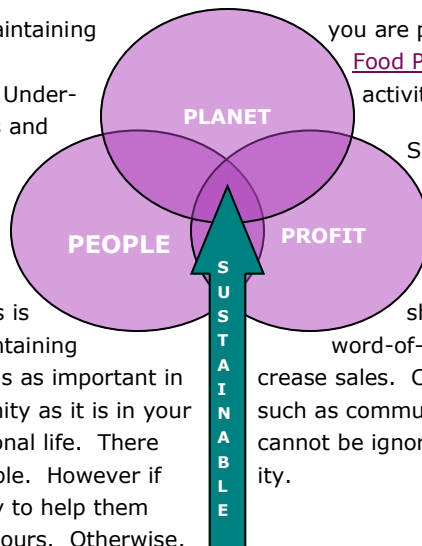
With a complaints log that may look like the following example.

Complaint	Date	Name & Phone Number	Assigned Responsible Person	Date	Corrective action & Follow-up communication	Date	Signature

## Closing Thoughts

Proactive behavior is a key to maintaining excellent relationships with your neighbours and the community. Understanding your neighbour's values and taking honest steps to respect those values demonstrates your commitment to being a positive member of the community.

Much of good neighbour relations is common sense and respect. Maintaining proper etiquette and disposition is as important in your dealings within the community as it is in your business dealings and your personal life. There will always be unreasonable people. However if you stay calm and reasonably try to help them then you will satisfy most neighbours. Otherwise,



you are protected by the [Farming and Food Production Act](#) for normal farm activities.

Sustainability is very interconnected. A good environmental record will certainly help your relationships with the community. Good community relationships will subsequently act as a word-of-mouth marketing tool to increase sales. Certainly, social components, such as community and neighbour relations, cannot be ignored when considering sustainability.

**Stay tuned for the next sustainability newsletter on Management Systems**