

Benjamin Froese named 2022 Grape King

St. Catharines, ON (September 14, 2022) — Grape Growers of Ontario and Farm Credit Canada are pleased to announce that Benjamin (Ben) Froese of Willow Lake Ventures Inc. in Niagara-on-the-Lake has been chosen by his peers as the 2022 Grape King (*pictured – credit Denis Cahill*).



“As we celebrate our 75th anniversary of representing growers across the province, we are delighted to have Ben, a third-generation grower, selected as 2022 Grape King. Ben is a dedicated grower who believes that great wine starts in the vineyard,” says Grape Growers of Ontario Chair, Matthias Oppenlaender. “The annual crowning of the Grape King is the recognition of an exemplary grower. Ben will be a wonderful ambassador for Ontario’s grape growers,” Debbie Zimmerman, CEO of the Grape Growers of Ontario.

“FCC is pleased to support the tradition of naming an Ontario Grape King and with it, celebrating the best in the business like this year’s recipient, Ben Froese. Ben exemplifies all the best qualities of Ontario grape growers. He contributes to the innovation, product quality, shared knowledge and enhanced access to consumers that ensures the long-term success of this valuable agricultural sector.” said George Klosler, Senior District Director at Farm Credit Canada. “Ben is very deserving of being named Ontario’s Grape King and we wish him continued success.”

The selection of a Grape King is part of Ontario's grape growing history and an annual tradition that dates back to 1956. While the regalia has changed from a crown and cape, the King wears a chain that carries the names of all of the Kings that came before.

The title of Grape King carries the distinction of being chosen based on vineyard management and knowledge of the industry, and serves as a representative for Ontario's grape and wine industry at events across the country, starting with the Mayor's Grape Stomp on September 17th in Montebello Park and in the 70th annual Grande Parade on September 24th at the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival.

Ben was born and raised on a tender fruit farm in Niagara-on-the-Lake. His father passed away tragically when he was in his late teens. Ben graduated Niagara College with a four-year business degree, and then travelled to New Zealand to accept a one-year co-op position in farming.

Returning from New Zealand, Ben chose to take over the family business at the age of twenty. Willow Lake Ventures Inc. was a family farm of peaches, strawberries and wine grapes. Ben decided to convert the entire farm into vineyards, which he has now doubled in size to 40+ hectares. As an Arterra grower for the past twenty years, he continues to grow several different varieties of wine grapes, including ice wine.

A current member of the Grape Growers of Ontario's Growers' Committee and Metrics Committee, Ben is also the Zone Rep for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Minor Lacrosse Association. When Ben is not out on the farm, he is often found coaching lacrosse or hockey in the community.

Ben is married to his wife Pamela, and they have four children Hunter, James, Lucas and Tessa.

Ben Froese will be officially installed as the 65th Grape King on Wednesday, September 14th in his vineyard located at 1093 Line 6 in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Details and directions can be found at www.grapegrowersofontario.com or by calling 905-688-0990 ext 224.

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About the Grape Growers of Ontario

The Grape Growers of Ontario is the official organization that represents over 500 farm families on 18,000 acres in the province's three viticulture areas: Niagara Peninsula, Lake Erie North Shore and Prince Edward County, and emerging wine regions. Follow Grape Growers of Ontario on Twitter and Instagram [@Grapegrowersont](https://twitter.com/Grapegrowersont), like us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/Grapegrowersofontario) and get more information at www.grapegrowersofontario.com.

About Farm Credit Canada

FCC is Canada's leading agriculture and food lender, with a healthy loan portfolio of more than \$44 billion. Our employees are dedicated to the future of Canadian agriculture and food. We provide flexible, competitively priced financing, management software, information and knowledge specifically designed for the agriculture and food industry. As a self-sustaining Crown corporation, we provide an appropriate return to our shareholder, and reinvest our profits back into the industry and communities we serve. For more information, visit fcc.ca.

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