



# Grape Growers *of* ONTARIO

GRAPE GROWERS OF ONTARIO STRATEGIC PLAN

**2013 Refresh**

**Growing a Healthy Future**



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## 1. BACKGROUND

The 2008 Strategic Plan has been deemed to be successful, and has provided a relevant framework for future strategic planning. The Board of the Grape Growers of Ontario has determined that it is appropriate to consider a “refresh” of the strategic directions, as set out in the 2008 document, as the directions are still relevant. Moreover, it is clear that the foundational regulatory responsibility for negotiating minimum pricing for grapes remains the indisputable core activity.

## INTRODUCTION

### 2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GRAPE GROWERS OF ONTARIO

#### 2.1 Early Days

- 1850s—Vineyards are planted on Pelee Island. Canada’s first commercial winery is established there in 1866. Grape growing and winemaking begin their relationship in Ontario.
- 1940s—Hybrid varieties are introduced in Ontario.
- 1947—The Ontario Grape Growers’ Marketing Board meets for the first time in September, just as the harvest of 36,000 tons is completed.
- 1952—Grower Bevis Walters proposes the idea of a festival to celebrate the annual harvest. Today, more than 500,000 wine lovers flock to the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival each year.

#### 2.2 Riding the Waves of Change

- 1960s/1970s—Grape tonnage grows, as does the price of wine grapes. Ontario growers add viniferas to their native and hybrid plantings. Sugar standards are introduced in the late 70s. The “Ontario Superior” designation signals attention to quality.
- 1980s—The industry finds its footing on the world stage as new wineries focus on making quality wines from vinifera grapes.
- 1988—The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade eliminates tariff and retail price protection for Ontario wines.
- 1988—The Vintners Quality Alliance was launched in Ontario to set standards and quality assurances. Native grape varieties are no longer used for wine.
- 1990s—Growers, government and wineries work to reinvent the industry with a focus on excellence. Growers invest more than \$100 million in vinifera plantings to grow premium grapes.
- 1999—The Vintners Quality Alliance Ontario (VQAO) becomes Ontario’s wine authority under the Vintners Quality Alliance Act.

#### 2.3 Focussing on a Sustainable Future

- 2000s—Ontario growers demonstrate the knowledge and skills to manage world-class vineyards, producing world-class wines. Vinifera production exceeds hybrid grape tonnage.
- 2001—A joint government, LCBO, winery, grower strategic process produces *Poised for Greatness*, a strategic framework aimed at a prosperous, quality-focussed Ontario grape and wine industry with market share targets for 2020.
- 2009—Ontario government strategy builds on the strength of the Ontario grape and wine industry with an emphasis on 100% Ontario VQA wines.

## OUR ROOTS

### 3. WHERE WE STAND . . . WHAT WE STAND FOR

Grape Growers of Ontario is a non-profit corporation regulated by the Ontario government through the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Act to represent over 500 registered grape growers and to advocate on their behalf.

#### 3.1 Our Mission

To work together to achieve sustainable growth and profitability by creating an improved environment for Ontario-grown grape products.

#### 3.2 Our Vision

We will see the markets for Ontario grapes and wines expand domestically and internationally, on a continuous basis—always finding new markets for our product. Ontario-grown grape products will be demanded at home and recognized internationally.

#### 3.3 Our Values

We exist to ensure our members' future and livelihood. This is **what** we do; our values describe **how** we do our work.

**Accountability:** We are accountable to the grape growers for decisions made and for the rationale upon which these decisions are made.

**Innovation:** We support innovation through research, new technology and continuous improvement of services provided to the grape growers.

**Quality:** We promote quality by developing and setting standards for vineyard management for the grape growers.

**Respect:** We understand the value of people to our organization's success. As such, we trust, respect, and value the opinions of all employees and grape growers.

**Responsiveness:** We are responsive to the needs of the grape growers in a timely manner so that they are supported in their activities which improve their livelihood and economic health.

**Service:** We exist to serve grape growers by providing them with current, informative and supportive services in order to maintain and grow the industry in Ontario.

**Ontario-grown  
grape products  
will be  
demanded at  
home and  
recognized  
internationally**

## **ABOUT THIS PLAN**

### **4. THE ROAD AHEAD**

Ontario grape growers are proud of our roots, our knowledge, and the world-class product we produce. We recognize that the key to industry sustainability lies in the same commitment to careful planning and preparation that we have demonstrated in our vineyards.

Centuries of experience, quality vines and proud family traditions characterize the vineyards that produce the world's fine wines. Ontario is a young wine growing area by such standards—but our commitment to quality is no less fervent. And we have tasted success—Ontario wines do well in international competition.

But the fact is that we have struggled to grow market share at home. This is the next great challenge.

Using this plan as a foundation, we intend to work together with our industry partners to plan and implement sound strategy. This strategic plan—and our commitment to pursue it—will become the cornerstone of grower and industry prosperity.

Our focus is on the long view—10-plus years and beyond. The long view is appropriate—because grape growing is our lifeblood and livelihood.

To achieve our vision requires commitment and focus on key result areas. While linked to the six key objectives in the *Poised for Greatness* strategy, our key result areas reflect the clarity of our mission more succinctly. We are focussed on the future.

**Focus on  
Growth  
Our Goal:  
Capture more  
than 50% of  
the Ontario  
market by  
2020**

## PLANNING FOR RESULTS

### 5. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (KEY RESULT AREAS)

#### 5.1 Grower Relations

Grape Growers of Ontario is committed to maintaining excellent grower relations that reflect good communication practices, mutual respect and trust, participative decision-making, and accountability.

To achieve this we will meet the following objectives:

- Governance
  - Refinement of the governance model with minor modifications to geographic/district representation.
  - The formula for Growers' Committee and Board representation will be reviewed on a three year cycle.
  - The concept of "staggered terms", a best practice that ensures good succession planning, will be explained to the grower community.
  - Enhance governance training for the Growers' Committee, and ensure that there is a clear understanding of fiduciary roles and responsibilities.
- Board policy is to be developed on information sharing that will clarify the scope of information that can be shared with the grower community.
- The Board is to establish annual research priorities to transmit to OGWRI.
- Review of committee and sub-committee structures on an annual basis.
- Enhance current outreach efforts by:
  - Holding spring meetings for the Growers' Committee and members across all districts to consider the upcoming season.
  - Holding fall meetings to elicit feedback.
- Timely dissemination of information:
  - Through e-blasts, electronic newsletters, and updated website.
  - Maintain print version for the short term.
- Promote opportunities for grower participation in educational seminars through partnerships with research and educational institutions.

**This strategic plan—and our commitment to pursue it—will become the cornerstone of grower and industry prosperity.**

## 5.2 Government Relations

Grape Growers of Ontario is committed to building a synergistic relationship with governments to sustain a favourable environment for the Ontario grape growing industry.

To achieve this we will meet the following objectives:

- Develop an appropriate, evidence-based foundational document to be used in provincial government relations work.
  - In the short term, create GGO materials that emphasize outcomes in terms of jobs with messages synchronized to the environment.
  - Monitor any changes in political emphasis in the next four years.
- Continue outreach to VQAO to develop and fortify our role in developing quality standards for Ontario VQA wines.
- Be an effective voice in the development of provincial policies, programs and regulations.
- Partner with stakeholders to bring Ontario VQA wines to prominence.
- Ensure an effective voice at national tables where appropriate.

## 5.3 Industry Relations

Grape Growers of Ontario is committed to building a culture of cooperation and collaboration to support the growth, viability and sustainability of the grape growing industry in Ontario.

To achieve this we will meet the following objectives:

- Commit to work on a Five-Year Sectoral Plan with key stakeholders.
  - Develop a strategic approach to Wine Council of Ontario (WCO), Winery and Grower Alliance of Ontario (WGAO), LCBO, and VQAO, with the underlying assumption that the work will be industry-led.
  - Create a short list of “common issues” for discussion at the sectoral table.
  - Inform the Ontario Government and the various Ministries of the efforts to work on a sectoral plan.
- Commit to work collaboratively with stakeholders to write the “story” of the Ontario grape and wine industry.
- Create an environment in which industry stakeholders can jointly address issues impacting grape growers in Ontario (through the Sectoral Plan).

## **5.4 Quality**

Grape Growers of Ontario is committed to producing premium quality grapes across Ontario's vineyards.

To achieve this we will meet the following objectives:

- Continue to communicate to industry the importance of growing to a varietal plan.
- Continue to invest in research and development projects that align with objectives of this Strategic Plan.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to enhance measures that promote quality through innovation, technological advancements, best practices and public education.
- Work with VQAO to ensure VQA standards reflect and encourage growers to produce premium quality grapes.

## **5.5 Sustainability**

Grape Growers of Ontario is committed to creating an environment that ensures sustainability of grape growers and the grape growing industry.

To achieve this we will meet the following objectives:

- Seek out alliances to support the premium wine industry and grow the market for Ontario VQA wines.
- Preserve the operational stability of the GGO by building and maintaining financial reserves at appropriate levels.

## **5.6 Profitability**

Grape Growers of Ontario are committed to ensuring the profitability of grape growers and the grape growing industry.

To achieve this we will meet the following objectives:

- Collaborate with the Ontario government on the development of policies and regulations that impact profitability.
- In consultation with industry partners, develop a strategy to grow the value of a bottle of Ontario/VQA wine through the Sectoral Plan.
- Develop a strategy through the Sectoral Plan that encourages the growth of 100% Ontario grown wines using a variety of mechanisms - plateau pricing, varietal match to market, government policies (provincial/federal).
- Ensure that profitability is a key theme in the Sectoral Plan.



## **5.7 Promotion and Marketing**

Grape Growers of Ontario is committed to increasing public awareness of the grape growing industry and how it relates to industries that rely on quality Ontario-grown grapes, and to increasing public knowledge and understanding of vineyards and how growers manage them.

To achieve this we will meet the following objectives:

- Build alliances to bring clarity to the labelling of products to avoid consumer confusion.
- Develop and publicize research that addresses consumer perceptions of, and taste preferences for Ontario products.
- Continue efforts regarding consumer awareness and the importance of the vineyard in making world-class Ontario grape products.

## **5.8 Organizational Sustainability**

To achieve organizational sustainability we will meet the following objectives:

- Internal
  - Develop a plan to ensure organizational sustainability.
  - Enhance marketing capacity.
  - Complete resource testing of capacity against 2013 priorities, and backdrop of 2008 outstanding priorities for review by the Board.
- Board Annual Plan Priorities
  - Establish ground rules of multilateral engagement in Sectoral Plan.
  - Review organizational sustainability plan.
  - Review the resource test results to provide framework for operational planning.
  - Review milestones in the development of the Sectoral Plan.