



Grape Growers of ONTARIO

Grey Cup Champion, Canadian Sports Hall of Fame Inductee, and Philanthropist Michael 'Pinball' Clemons to speak at Grape Growers' 41st Annual Celebrity Luncheon

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: St. Catharines, ON (July 10, 2026): The Grape Growers of Ontario's Celebrity Luncheon marks the opening of the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival by showcasing Canadian personalities and celebrating the annual grape harvest. This year, in partnership with Meridian, Ontario's largest credit union and the third largest in Canada, we are proud to welcome one of Canada's most beloved sports figures and inspirational leaders, Michael 'Pinball' Clemons.

Michael 'Pinball' Clemons is a Canadian Football League legend, Canadian Sports Hall of Fame inductee, philanthropist, author, and General Manager of the Toronto Argonauts. Known for his boundless energy, unwavering optimism, and commitment to excellence, Clemons has inspired audiences across North America through his achievements on and off the football field.

After joining the CFL's Toronto Argonauts in 1989, Clemons quickly became one of the most dynamic and exciting players in league history, earning the CFL's Most Outstanding Player Award and setting a single-season record for all-purpose yards. His remarkable athletic achievements, coupled with his determination and perseverance, made him one of the most respected and admired figures in Canadian sports.

Beyond football, Clemons had dedicated his life to serving others. In 2009, he founded the Michael 'Pinball' Clemons Foundation, an organization focused on supporting disadvantaged youth and helping build schools in developing countries. His outstanding contributions to the community have earned him some of Canada's highest honours, including the Order of Ontario and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Today, Clemons continues to lead and inspire as General Manager of the Toronto Argonauts, where his leadership helped guide the organization to a Grey Cup Championship in 2022. A passionate advocate for teamwork, resilience, and community service, Clemons shares powerful lessons on overcoming challenges, achieving personal excellence, and making a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

"At Meridian, we believe strong relationships build stronger communities. We are proud to continue our partnership with the Grape Growers of Ontario as primary sponsor of the Annual Celebrity Luncheon, an event that recognizes the dedication and resilience of grape growers across the province. Ontario's grape and wine sector plays an important role in driving economic growth, creating jobs and enriching communities, and Meridian is honoured to support an industry that contributes so much to our province," adds Stephen Otten, Regional Vice-President, Business Banking, Meridian Credit Union



“We look forward to kicking off another great Celebrity Luncheon and celebrating the strength and success of Ontario’s grape and wine industry.” — Kevin Watson, Chair, Grape Growers of Ontario

“We are thrilled to welcome Michael ‘Pinball’ Clemons to Niagara as we celebrate the beginning of the 2026 grape harvest. His extraordinary journey, unwavering optimism, and commitment to making a difference in the lives of others will inspire our growers, industry partners and guests alike.” — Debbie Zimmerman, CEO, Grape Growers of Ontario.

The Grape Growers of Ontario’s Celebrity Luncheon is on Wednesday, September 16, 2026, at 11:30 a.m. at Club Roma in St. Catharines. Ticket order forms are available at grapegrowersofontario.com or by contacting the GGO Board office at (905) 688-0990 or info@grapegrowersofontario.com.

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About the Grape Growers of Ontario

GGO is the official organization that represents over 500 actively producing grape growing families who are rooted in Ontario. 18,000 acres of vineyards are planted across the province’s three designated viticulture areas: Niagara Peninsula, Lake Erie North Shore, Prince Edward County, and emerging regions.

About Meridian

Meridian is Ontario’s largest credit union, and one of the largest in Canada. Guided by our purpose, “helping you achieve your best life,” Meridian delivers personal, and wealth financial business solutions to over 380,000 Members. Our bold Meridian for Good strategy is aimed at helping people get access to the money and advice they need; plan for a better future that is clean, resilient, and diverse; and be financially confident. Meridian also operates one subsidiary: Meridian OneCap Credit Corp. For more information, please visit: meridiancu.ca.

We acknowledge the land on which we operate is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabe, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

For more information, please contact:

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PRESENTED BY:

