

Steve Pohorly Selected as 2026 Grape King

St. Catharines, ON (September 15, 2026) — Grape Growers of Ontario, together with title sponsor N.M. Bartlett Inc. and supporting sponsor Desjardins, are pleased to announce that Niagara-on-the-Lake grower Steve Pohorly has been chosen by his peers as the 2026 Grape King (*pictured – credit Megan Muir*).



“The Grape King tradition has celebrated excellence in Ontario grape growing for 70 years, recognizing growers who demonstrate outstanding vineyard management, industry knowledge and a commitment to their community,” says Debbie Zimmerman, CEO of the Grape Growers of Ontario. “Steve embodies those qualities, and we look forward to seeing him represent Ontario’s grape and wine industry throughout the year ahead.”

“We are proud to recognize Steve Pohorly as the 2026 Grape King. Steve has been a dedicated member of Ontario’s grape-growing community for many years, both in the vineyard and through his service to our industry,” says Kevin Watson, Chair of the Grape Growers of Ontario. “His

commitment to his family farm, his fellow growers and the future of Ontario agriculture makes him an excellent ambassador for our industry.”

“Our family has supported the growth of Ontario grapes for over 100 years, and it brings us great pleasure to partner in the tradition of honouring a Grape King to recognize the wonderful work that is done here in Niagara to make world-class wines,” says Craig Bartlett, president of the Bartlett Group of Companies. “Steve Pohorly will be an exemplary ambassador for the industry through his compassionate ability to share his experience with Canadian growers and stakeholders and is a well-deserving recipient of the honour.”

The Grape King carries the distinction of being nominated by their peers and selected by our industry judges who visit each of the nominated vineyards. The Grape King serves as a representative for Ontario’s grape and wine industry at events across the country, starting with the annual Grande Parade on September 26th at the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival and the Mayor’s Invitational Grape Stomp on September 27th in Montebello Park.

A second-generation grower, Steve operates Riverbend Farms Inc. alongside his parents, Frank and Susan, who established the family farm in 1971. Today, Riverbend occupies 50 acres of agricultural farmland, including 30 acres of premium wine grapes. Steve and his team cultivate Vidal, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Shiraz, and Sauvignon Blanc, alongside cherries, peaches, plums, and apples. As a grower partner for Arterra Wines Canada since the early Brights Wines days, Riverbend proudly supplies celebrated local wineries Inniskillin and Jackson-Triggs.

Steve holds a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from McMaster University. After early career detours as a programmer for the Bank of Montreal and bartender in Vancouver—where he met his wife, Breanne—Steve returned to Niagara to farm full-time.

Today, Steve and Breanne own his family's historic property in Virgil, where, together with his parents, they operated the well-known Fruit Shack market and bakery. Breanne teaches elementary school with the District School Board of Niagara. Together they are raising two children, Maelle and Harrison.

Deeply dedicated to the future of Ontario agriculture, Steve has served as a Director on the Grape Growers of Ontario for nearly two decades, sits on the Board of the Niagara Peninsula Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Association, and actively participates in numerous industry committees and research groups. Outside the vineyard, he is dedicated to youth sports, helping coach his son in the NOTL Minor Hockey Association and supporting his daughter's softball team.

For Steve, wearing the Grape King chains represents more than personal achievement—it celebrates a family legacy of hard work, continuous innovation, and an enduring commitment to world-class Niagara viticulture.

Steve will be officially installed as the 68th Grape King at Riverbend Farms in Niagara-on-the-Lake, on Wednesday, September 16th, following the Grape Growers of Ontario's annual Celebrity Luncheon.

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 all of Ontario's 475 farm families on 17,500 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 X and Instagram [@Grapegrowersont](#), like us on [Facebook](#) and get more information at [grapegrowersofontario.com](#).

About N.M. Bartlett

N.M. Bartlett Inc. is a family-owned and operated company since 1912 and is the premier distributor of crop protection products dedicated to the outdoor horticulture market in Canada. Along with its specialty horticultural equipment company, Provide Agro, the Bartlett family partners with varying facets of the fruit and vegetable industry across Canada to help bring growers solutions to ever increasing challenges. For more information, visit our website [www.bartlett.ca](#) or come by our office to chat!

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