



MEDIA RELEASE - September 11, 2017

## Doug Whitty, Ontario's 2017 Grape King

**St. Catharines, ON** — The Grape Growers of Ontario and Farm Credit Canada are pleased to announce that Doug Whitty of Whitty Farms and 13<sup>th</sup> Street Winery in St. Catharines has been chosen as the 2017 Grape King. “We are thrilled to have someone with Doug’s experience and commitment serve as Grape King and ambassador for our grape and wine industry”, says Grape Growers of Ontario Chair, Matthias Oppenlaender.

“Each year, the Grape King is recognition of exceptional quality, expertise and leadership in this industry. Doug Whitty’s 13<sup>th</sup> Street operation helps elevate the entire Ontario grape industry and is proof that Ontario vineyards are more than capable of competing on the world stage,” says Trish Botter Senior Director of Agribusiness and AgriFood, Farm Credit Canada.

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 16<sup>th</sup> and in the 66<sup>th</sup> annual Grande Parade on September 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival.

“On behalf of the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival, we extend heartfelt congratulations to Doug Whitty, Ontario’s 2017/18 Grape King. In 2015, the Whitty family received the RBC Winery with Heart award, where their commitment and passion for our community was recognized. Without doubt, Doug is deserving of this notable honour and he will be an incredible ambassador for our grape and wine industry over the next year.” Kimberly Hundertmark, Executive Director, Niagara Grape and Wine Festival

The selection of a Grape King is part of Ontario history and an annual tradition that dates back to 1956. This year is particularly remarkable as Canada celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Grape Growers of Ontario celebrates 70 years of building this industry together and Whitty Farms will mark its 110<sup>th</sup> year during the term that Doug Whitty reigns as Grape King. 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 including Doug’s uncle, 1983 Grape King Rodger Whitty. “As a third-generation grape grower in Ontario, and the second of the family to be crowned Grape King, Doug is experienced in all aspects of the industry,” says Debbie Zimmerman, CEO of the Grape Growers of Ontario.

Whitty Farms is a family affair, established by his grandfather in 1908, followed by his parents Joseph and Leith Whitty and now Doug, his wife and business partner Karen, and sons Luke, Benjamin and Thomas.

Whitty Farms is a diversified agricultural operation including 55 acres of vinifera wine grapes and has expanded to 13<sup>th</sup> Street Winery and 13<sup>th</sup> Street Bakery, all located on Fourth Avenue. The Whitty’s participate extensively in farm research and host community activities such as Grapes of Wrath Mud Run in support of Canadian Cancer Society Wheels of Hope program.

“I believe that a key component to our continued success as an industry is related directly to our ability to work creatively together with all our partners so that enjoyment of local wine and food experiences are more fully recognized as an important part of Canadian culture,” says Doug Whitty. “I am pleased yet humbled by this nomination. I have learned a great deal from other grape growers. It would be a great honour and privilege to represent them as Grape King this year.”

Doug Whitty will be officially installed as the 62<sup>nd</sup> Grape King on Wednesday, September 13<sup>th</sup> at 13<sup>th</sup> Street Winery, St. Catharines. Details and directions can be found at [www.grapegrowersofontario.com](http://www.grapegrowersofontario.com).

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### **About the Grape Growers of Ontario**

The Grape Growers of Ontario is the official organization that represents over 500 registered grower members on 17,000 acres in the province’s three viticulture areas: Niagara Peninsula, Lake Erie North Shore and Prince Edward County.

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### **About Farm Credit Canada**

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For more information, please contact:

Debbie Zimmerman  
CEO, Grape Growers of Ontario  
[d.zimmerman@grapegrowersofontario.com](mailto:d.zimmerman@grapegrowersofontario.com)  
905-401-2471