



NEWS RELEASE

Ontario's fruit and vegetable growers re-elect Chair, Vice Chair

For immediate release

Guelph ON, 16 February 2021 – Grape grower Bill George Jr. has been elected to a third one-year term as Chair of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA). Apple grower Charles Stevens was re-elected as Vice Chair. Both George and Stevens first assumed their respective roles in 2019 and were re-elected at the OFVGA annual general meeting held virtually on February 16.

"COVID-19 has made the last year one for the history books; I'm honoured to serve my fellow growers for another year as chair of their organization and bring their issues and concerns to the attention of policymakers at all levels of government," says George. "I'm proud of the relationships we've built across our industry and with government to help us get through the pandemic so far, and I look forward to continuing that work as we look ahead to this coming growing season and post-pandemic recovery."

One example of the strong working relationship between OFVGA and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) during the pandemic is reflected in a funding announcement made by Minister Ernie Hardeman at the meeting. OMAFRA is supporting the development of a "Cultural Resources Library" of specialized COVID-19 resources that will be designed by OFVGA in a variety of languages and formats and distributed to farms and greenhouses across Ontario.

"This project is one of many initiatives that the OFVGA and the Ontario government are partnering on to ensure the health and safety of this critical workforce," says George. "The resources developed through this project will further support the efforts of Ontario's farm employers to keep all farm workers safe while producing food for Canadians."

George and his wife Lesliann grow 160 acres of wine grapes in the Niagara region, as well as harvesting and processing ice wine juice on a farm that has been in the family since 1796. A former Chair of the Grape Growers of Ontario, he became a director on the OFVGA board in 2015 and was elected Vice Chair in 2017. He also currently represents Ontario on the Canadian Horticultural Council.

Stevens farms in the Newcastle area. In addition to being the director representing apples on the OFVGA board, he is chair of the crop protection section and Past Chair of the Ontario Apple Growers. He also previously led the crop protection committee at the Canadian Horticultural Council.

Joining George and Stevens on the OFVGA management committee are directors Norm Charbonneau (small fruit/berries), Mike Chromczak (asparagus) and Shawn Brenn (potatoes). OFVGA's other directors are Jan VanderHout (greenhouse), Fred Meyers (tender fruit), George Gilvesy (greenhouse), Glen Gilvesy (ginseng), Kenny Forth (fresh vegetable – other), John Hambly (fresh vegetable – muck), and Ronald VanDamme (processing vegetables). Chromczak also chairs the safety nets section, and VanderHout leads the environment and conservation section. Other section chairs include Ken Forth (labour), and Brian Gilroy (energy, property and infrastructure).

The OFVGA is the voice of Ontario's 3,500 fruit and vegetable farmers on issues affecting the horticulture sector. The sector grows produce in fields and greenhouses across the province for fresh and processed consumption. Visit www.ofvga.org, or follow [@OntFruitVeg](https://twitter.com/OntFruitVeg) on Twitter or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ofvga.



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