



CANADIAN FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT GROCERS · FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE DES ÉPICIERS INDÉPENDANTS
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Will & Ingrid Willemsen Receive Inaugural Life Partners Designation from CFGI

TORONTO—September 5, 2024. . . Jamie Nelson, Chair of Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers (CFGI), Ron Welke, President and CEO, and the CFGI Board of Directors are pleased to announce **Will & Ingrid Willemsen**, as the **2024 recipients of CFGI's inaugural Life Partners Award**.

CFGI Life Partners Award honours exceptional partners who have made a significant and lasting impact on the independent grocery industry.

In 1982, Will Willemsen founded SUNRIPE in Sarnia, Ontario with \$2,000 cash, a 1978 Ford Econoline van and a \$10,000 loan from a friend. Seven years later, at a farm market conference in Dayton, Ohio, he met Ingrid Penton. They were married in 1990, and Ingrid moved to Canada. Will and Ingrid built Sunripe into three stores, one in Sarnia and two in London, Ontario, that have become cornerstones in their communities.

Will's early morning trips to Toronto ensured that his shoppers would be preparing dinner with produce that left the Ontario Food Terminal less than 24 hours earlier. Ingrid created hundreds of recipes for Sunripe customers to enjoy. She mentored many employees, not to mention more than 20 European exchange students. Ingrid's no-nonsense management style and candid approach set many staff on successful career paths.

Ingrid passed away in 2023 after a short battle with cancer. Her legacy continues with Will, and their children Kysa, Ryall and Mia, who are all active in the business.

The Willemsens will be officially recognized at the Canadian Independent Grocer of the Year awards gala held on Wednesday, October 30 at **Grocery Innovations Canada 2024 (GIC)**. GIC is Canada's premier grocery exposition and conference that takes place at the **Toronto Congress Centre, October 29-30, 2024**. www.GroceryInnovations.com

The Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers (CFGI) — CFGI is a non-profit trade association founded in 1962, which continues to be a collaborative community, equipping and enabling independent, franchised and specialty grocers for sustainable success. CFGI is the strong and united voice for the independent grocery retailers to Industry and Government across Canada. CFGI also provides programs that support operational excellence while fostering solid relationships among retailers, distributors and suppliers. www.cfig.ca

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