

The COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions were responsible for the loss of 2.5 billion dollars (or 80%) of revenue in the wedding and events industry in Ontario in 2020. Sadly, 2021 looks just as bleak.

The Weddings and Events Industry continues to be among the hardest hit sectors in Ontario. In an average year, the industry of hope, love, and fun will generate over 3.2 billion dollars for Ontario's economy. These 3.2 billion dollars are generated by and support over 5,000 Ontario small to medium size businesses, most of which are owned by women, as well as their employees, families, and the communities that they live in.

Every single month for the last 11 months wedding and event companies experienced an average of 80-95% decreases in revenue. Until we have achieved immunity, this industry will continue to experience these devastating financial losses due to gathering limits and fear of further lockdowns resulting in the cancelation and postponement of weddings and events. A recent online survey found that less than 10% of couples who had planned 2021 weddings were willing to go ahead with their weddings if they were affected by gathering limits. That survey also found that only 15% of couples in the early stages of planning their weddings were unwilling to commit to plans, including paying deposits, until Ontario was closer to achieving immunity.

The average wedding and event professional in Ontario continues to see their personal income reduced by over 90%, forcing them to rely on programs like CERB/CRB. As many of these small businesses are sole proprietorships, they did not qualify for CEWS and CEBA. Other programs like deferred mortgage and loan programs have limited windows that if used, have all expired.

The recent Ontario Small Business Grant program has offered a glimmer of much-needed relief. In an informal poll of 200 wedding and event professionals, 100% of which applied for the OSB grant, 45% have heard nothing since applying and have received no further clarification when they have called for more information. Of the 55% that received notification or payment, the average grant was \$14,000.

This grant is an excellent starting point but certainly not the end of the need for financial support. With the previous 11 months of devastating financial losses and another 6 to 12 months of projected continued loss, Ontario's Wedding and Event Professionals need more.

The professionals in this industry are in it for the love. But to be clear, we generate 3.2 billion dollars for Ontario's economy. We support gathering limits and safety measures during these difficult times. We hope that when we can come together in large groups again, our businesses in the industry of hope and love will have survived. This industry desperately needs meaningful, on-going financial support from Ontario's Government, not further debt, going into the coming months/year. Help us to ensure that the industry of hope and love continues to sustain Ontario.  
**Anne Warren, Owner of Wedding Ring Inc., on behalf of  
Canadian Wedding & Event Professionals**

