

Weddings and events are the industry of hope, love, and fun. 2020 has been anything but fun for the wedding and event professionals that create the parties and memories that are often milestones in the lives of Ontarians. This overlooked, but very important sector of Ontario's economy is suffering greatly.

COVID has resulted in the postponement or cancelation of 80% of 2020 weddings a decrease of almost 54,000 weddings (annual average of 67,000) which causes an economic shortfall of 1.6 billion dollars. This economic shortfall will affect not just the families of the 5,000 Ontario business owners, most of which are women, and their employees, but all the local businesses that they support. The remaining 20% of weddings that will have gone ahead have been dramatically impacted by gathering limits, reducing guest counts from an average of 130 people to less than 50 in most cases.

A further reduction of the wedding and events economy of 50 to 80% of revenues.

2021 will not be a double cohort year. With a limited number of Fridays and Saturdays in which to host weddings and events, most vendors have seen an entire year of work and income disappear. We are even starting to see some of the weddings booked for early 2021 postpone to later in the year and even to 2022 if the couple wants to wait until gathering limits are no longer a factor.

Christmas parties, anniversary parties, retirement parties and more are canceling. Bridal shows, craft fairs, and other events are cancelled. These events cannot be postponed. A company will not host two Christmas parties or two craft fairs or two bridal shows next year.

The average wedding and event professional in Ontario have seen their personal income reduced by over 90%, many have relied on programs like deferred mortgages and CERB but didn't qualify for others like CEWS and CEBA. With most programs concluding or inaccessible, we face an uncertain future.

2020 was supposed to be an epic year in the wedding and events industry. Instead we can provide an endless number of stories of the canceled/postponed weddings and events, of the dramatically reduced events and of the damage this has done to the wedding and event businesses. A call to any Ontario marriage license office will also tell the tale of reduced weddings.

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 unprecedented 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. But to survive, we need meaningful financial support not further debt. This industry, like many others, cannot survive another year of shutdown, or even a portion thereof. Ontario's wedding and event professionals need this Government's help now and in the coming months/year. Let's ensure that Love continues to sustain Ontario.

**Anne Warren, Owner of Wedding Ring Inc., on behalf of
Canadian Wedding & Event Professionals**

