

Ontario MPPs

**Subject:** Save the Weddings and Events Industry

Dear friend,

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 our more than 100,000 employees, not to mention our families and the communities that we live in.

Every single month for the last 12 months wedding and event companies experienced an average of 80-95% decreases in revenue and personal income losses of over 90%. Personally, my business has lost \_\_\_% of revenue, or \$\_\_\_\_. I had to layoff \_\_\_ employees and thanks to the CEWS I've been able to bring \_\_\_ back.

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 cancellation, postponement, or diminished size of weddings and events. A recent online survey found that less than 50% 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 willing to commit to plans, including paying deposits, until Ontario was closer to achieving immunity with clear reopening plans.

We need your help! The recent Ontario Small Business Grant program with it's newly promised second installment has offered some much-needed relief. With COVID restrictions likely easing/ending in the fall, at approximately the same time as wedding season ends, Ontario's wedding and event industry will not begin to bounce back until the spring of 2022. We need ongoing financial support as well as clarity in restrictions and a clear reopening plan.

We are asking for:

- Provide additional grant funding for companies that are still more than 70% impacted from June 2021 to December 2021. With the possibility of additional funding into the winter of 2022 as needed.
- That weddings and events be allowed to have the same capacities as restaurants – 50% occupancy, but with a maximum of 150 people where space and physical distancing is

possible. Venues that have multiple event spaces with separate entrances, washrooms, kitchens, etc. should have each space accounted for individually. For example, a venue with 3 banquet spaces with entirely separate washrooms and entrances should be able to have 3 independent events with no mingling between events.

- Provide rapid testing tools to allow the wedding and event industry to reopen as soon as possible and on a scale that can be profitable by Spring/Summer 2021
- A clear framework of restrictions for weddings and events is desperately needed. The current colour framework is open to interpretation by individuals, local public health, and the bylaw or OPP officer that enforces the restrictions. The CanWed team welcomes the opportunity to work with you to create this clear framework. Some of our questions are:
  - Is dancing permitted if they can maintain physical distancing?
  - Are buffets allowed at weddings and events if the vendor serves from behind a shield?
  - Are passed hors d'oeuvres permitted?
  - Can a wedding couple host multiple events in the same day to accommodate larger guest numbers? For example, 50 people for lunch, then 50 people for dinner
  - Do all the rules including dancing, buffets, masks, and bar hours remain the same on private property?
  - Is contract tracing required? If so, who is responsible for collecting contact information?
  - Are guests required to answer screening questions?
  - Who is liable if the wedding and event guests do not follow the rules?
- We are also seeking a clear reopening plan. When Ontario has achieved the goal of 70% immunization, will everything be open? Is there a plan to reopen in the weeks/months leading up to this goal? What are the benchmarks of a reopening plan?

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, as well as a clear path forward. Thank you for helping us to ensure that the industry of hope and love continues to sustain Ontario.

Sincerely,

Name

Business Name

Canadian Wedding & Event Professionals