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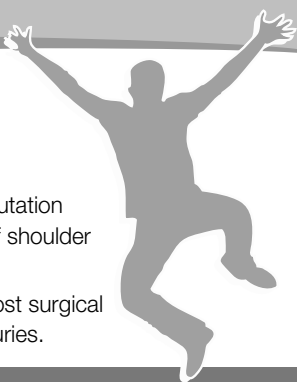
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Couples scramble for venues after event planner is evicted

By **LISA TALLYN**
Staff Writer

A Georgetown couple isn't going to be able to have the wedding they planned—and they're out \$3,300—after their event planner was evicted for unpaid rent.

Alene Malenfant and Ryan Busby, both 29, had booked Halton Hills Place in Milton last August for their June 30 wedding and made the \$3,300 deposit over three payments to secure the wedding of their dreams.

Malenfant said she heard through the grapevine on Friday, January 25 about event planner Remo Iaquinto's eviction for failing to pay over three months rent. She tried calling the facility, but got no answer, so Busby drove to the Steeles Ave. banquet hall and found a notice on the door placed by Halton Bailiff Services, saying Iaquinto owed at least \$73,000 in back rent, plus "additional rent" per the contract. There was also a note said to be from the Halton Regional Police fraud unit on the door, indicating an investigation was underway.

"We were very, very shocked," said Malenfant, who received an email from Iaquinto confirming his company closed over a landlord-tenant dispute. "There were a lot of tears over the weekend."

Some 50 couples had booked weddings at Halton Hills Place and are now out thousands of dollars and scrambling to find a venue.

Malenfant said the deposit is money they can't afford to lose, especially now that they are about to take possession of a new home March 5.

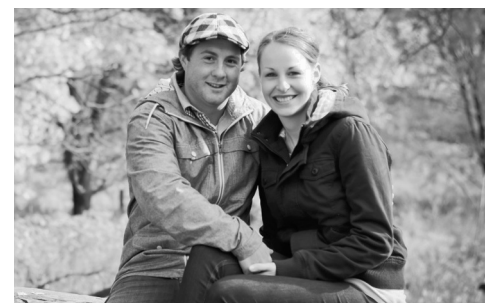
But it appears there may be some good news for the couple as they may not lose their deposit after all, and have an option for another location at Atrium Banquet and Conference Centre in Burlington. Iaquinto is part-owner of Atrium.

The Georgetown couple was offered to hold their wedding there on the same date for the same price—crediting most of their deposit. Malenfant said they hope to recoup the remainder of their deposit from their credit card company.

Iaquinto said the venue is honouring deposits from Halton Hills Place and they've saved between five and 10 weddings.

Malenfant and Busby haven't decided yet if they will have their wedding at the Burlington banquet hall.

"I'm having a hard time accepting it because it's more of a convention centre



Ryan Busby and Alene Malenfant of Georgetown were one of the couples whose wedding plans were thrown into disarray after the event planner at Halton Hills Place was evicted.

Devon Peters photography

feel," said Malenfant.

One of the main reasons they chose Halton Hills Place was because she said they loved the grounds and they could get married outside in front of a waterfall, which isn't the case at the Burlington facility.

"As much as they've been helpful, I'm having a hard time getting my head around the fact we're not going to get what we've envisioned," said Malenfant. "The whole experience has been sort of ruined for us."

Halton Regional Police Sgt. Dave Cross said Friday that police have completed its investigation of Iaquinto and the situation at Halton Hills Place and it's "being ruled as a civil dispute at this point."

Iaquinto said he began leasing the venue last January but renovation costs ballooned, forcing him into arrears on the rent. He said he plans to file for bankruptcy.

"I never received one pay cheque from this job," he said. "All the money I put in is personal money. I've lost well over a half a million dollars."

The personal money lost doesn't include the deposits, he added, which are also gone, though "I've been working with each and every couple to try and save their wedding."

He said he reached out to the landlords for financial help, but nothing came of it.

The property is owned by Ezio and Adrian Angelucci. Ezio Angelucci said Thursday they agreed to give Iaquinto the first five months rent-free when he took over last January. When he was unable to pay the rent and utilities after that, Angelucci said they deferred the rent with the expectation they'd get it back down the road.

—With files from *Torstar News Service*

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