

## DAILY BUSINESS BUZZ

*Last updated at 3:10 PM on 29/11/07*

### **Province claims tourist safety in accommodations rules** 📰

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The Nova Scotia Business Journal

The provincial government and tourism industry are working together to implement a new approach to ensuring safe, quality accommodations for visitors in Nova Scotia.

**Minister of Tourism, Culture and Heritage Bill Dooks** announced Tuesday a bill will be tabled in the spring to repeal the **Tourist Accommodations Act**, which had required accommodations properties be licensed. Instead properties may be rated by nationally or internationally recognized quality programs (such as Canada Select or the Canadian Automobile Association) or meet minimum quality standards established by the **Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia**.

“Our new approach ensures fairness for accommodations operators and ensures that all properties promoted in our marketing activities meet provincial safety requirements and industry standards for quality,” said Dooks in a release. “This approach is simple, reduces red tape, gives operators choice and meets consumers’ needs. We are moving in this new direction in partnership with TIANS and I am confident it will be successful.”

**Earlene Busch, owner of Chanterelle Inn near Baddeck and a member of the board of TIANS**, is cautiously optimistic the new policies will be successful. “I was probably the most severe critic of both Canada Select practices and of the department for not enforcing the licensing requirements,” said Busch. “I think we are cautiously optimistic because it seems to address both of those concerns simultaneously. As far as Canada Select goes, it will basically eliminate the monopolistic position of Canada Select because they will now have a choice among many (ratings systems). As far as the licensing issue goes, it appears that will be in the hands of inspectors that we already have, namely water, fire, basic safety . . . those inspectors that are already in place.”

Busch acknowledges there will need to be a development of standards by TIANS in relation to how they will establish minimum quality standards. “Enforcement will now be in the hands of the industry via TIANS,” she said. “There is basically a power and responsibility shift and so TIANS is going to have to develop the details how to do that, how to assume that responsibility.”

**Susan Tilley-Russell, chair of TIANS**, is pleased to see the resolution resolved and believes the solution will allow for an improvement of the tourism product by assuming responsibility to ensure the minimum standards are meeting consumers’ needs and expectations.

**Rick Bowers, owner of A Paradise Found Bed & Breakfast in Sydney**, doesn’t see the changes making much of a difference. “The bed & breakfast community in general didn’t want any changes,” said Bowers, who is already rated by Canada Select. “We were quite happy with the status quo, with the department doing the licensing and doing the inspections for all properties and would have preferred if it stayed that way. I guess

the biggest catalyst for change was the issue of unlicensed properties and I don't see this change doing anything to decrease the number of unlicensed properties at all."

In Bowers opinion, the unlicensed businesses will continue to exist with no fear of repercussions. "Those properties will still exist, well below standard," he said. "They won't be allowed to advertise in the Doers and Dreamers Guide for example, but they don't now. They're still doing business because they can do their business quite adequately on the Internet for example. (The change) doesn't address what was apparently the real problem, the unlicensed property issue." – Cape Breton Post

29/11/07