

Province to Review Tourist Accommodation Act

Tourism, Culture and Heritage

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The province is reviewing legislation that deals with the licensing of tourist accommodation properties and consulting with industry on improvements.

"We recognize there are challenges with our current approach under the existing legislation," said Tourism, Culture and Heritage Minister Len Goucher. "We want to ensure that our visitors have a safe, quality experience. We're looking at best practices across the country and consulting with industry on the right approach for Nova Scotia."

There are many ways to achieve safety and quality in tourist accommodations. Some provinces and territories require licensing while others do not.

Nova Scotia's Tourist Accommodation Act requires that all fixed roof accommodations and campgrounds for the travelling and vacationing public be licensed. Licensing covers areas such as collection of occupancy statistics, visitor safety, and amenities. About 1,400 properties are licensed with the department. Only operators of licensed accommodations can participate in provincial marketing efforts such as promotion in visitor information centres, the Doers and Dreamers Guide, the Check In service, or on the website at www.novascotia.com.

The department estimates that there are 400 to 500 unlicensed accommodations in Nova Scotia. The majority of these are individual cottages. Many owners of these properties live outside the province and rent summer homes. The growing use of the Internet has made it easy for these operators to advertise and for the public to book these properties online.

"The issue of unlicensed properties is of major concern for our membership," said Susan Tilley-Russell, chair of the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS). "We believe that the prevalence of unlicensed properties throughout the province is detrimental to the sustainability and health of the entire tourism industry in Nova Scotia. TIANS applauds the leadership and action being shown by the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage in its efforts to address this very important issue and looks forward to working with the department through this process."

The department is currently consulting with key industry groups to prepare a discussion paper. The paper will be shared with members of the industry for feedback in the fall. The department will also dedicate resources to follow up directly with unlicensed property owners over the summer months.

FOR BROADCAST USE:

The province is reviewing legislation that deals with the licensing of tourist accommodation properties and consulting with industry on improvements.

The legislation requires that all tourist accommodations be licensed. There are about 14-hundred licensed accommodations in Nova Scotia and an estimated 400 to 500 that are not licensed.

Many individual cottage owners live outside the province and rent summer homes. The growing use of the Internet has made it easy to advertise and book these properties.

The department is developing a discussion paper to consult with industry members in the fall and will dedicate resources to follow up with unlicensed operators over the summer.

The Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia says the issue of unlicensed properties is of major concern to its members and applauds government for taking action.

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