

# Letter: The Battle on the Bruce – Penalize (STAs) Who Have Infracted, Not Those Who Are Responsibly Sharing Homes

October 31, 2019



In response to an article in the 2019 Number Thirteen Issue of the Bruce Peninsula Press, a Publisher's Opinion column titled, Short Term Accommodations – Do We Protect Investors or Quality of Life, arguing against the operation of Short Term Accommodations (STAs) in the municipality of North Bruce Peninsula, I find three faults: 1) said issues cannot be exclusively blamed on properties that accommodate rentals, 2) Bylaws already exist, additional regulations are redundant, and 3) they don't largely align with experiences in rural communities outside Tobermory.

Mr. Francis has outlined STA problems as cultural, physical, health/safety, and economic.

Cultural problems include loud parties, fireworks, oversized bonfires, and drunkenness according to Mr. Francis. In rural communities like mine, renters are mostly family vacationers often keeping to themselves and not causing the aforementioned disturbances.

It is short-sighted to say, "[there is a] tendency among people renting a property for a day or two to party hard" or inconsiderate landlords are "often a distant investor" because this is not the common case. Owners are usually present during rental season and go to great lengths to avoid renting to those who may "party hard".

Physical issues suggest damage to nearby land from overblown septic systems and parking "choking off the street". It's unreasonable to think owners allow their septic to be overused and consider it a "small cost" to have to fix. Maximum capacity rules exist and are regularly checked to ensure those rules aren't being abused. Outside of Tobermory and Lion's Head, properties have enough space to store more parking than would ever be required.

I disagree that operators are foregoing health and safety precautions (working smoke alarms, testing the water, and garbage disposal) as these are specifications renters look for (and provide reviews of properties post-stay) to ensure rentals are a safe space. Another argument states that "emergency management is complicated by STAs because no one knows who is in which dwelling at what time." Whether it is a STA, or the owner hosting friends and family, the number of occupants in any residence, can be fluent and can not be known by emergency services. However, most rental management services require the name and age of all guests, so these rental properties are arguably easier for emergency services to manage.

Mr. Francis' economic argument claims, "Short term accommodations tend to require an increased number of bylaw enforcement calls, first responder calls, and police calls". Without the included stats the jurisdiction of this data is unknown. Responsible publication should have included this with the article because it's important to show relevance and validity when including this data in public discourse.

The Bruce Peninsula Press and John Francis have distributed an article with arguments not exclusive to STA properties, already have bylaws but lack enforcement, and may be more prevalent in Tobermory but are being painted like a municipal-wide issue. When a column is written (even an op-ed) by the sole

publisher (as listed on the online 'contact us' page) of a publication, it holds more weight and should be especially cautious about the statements it publishes.

I am a property owner, rental operator, cottage cleaner (for other owners' rentals) and I'm affiliated with one of Ontario's official vacation rental companies. Renting my cottage makes it possible for me to continue to own property (and contribute to the local economy) in North Bruce Peninsula, and allows me the opportunity to share my property with responsible tourists who don't have a place of their own in NBP.

Reviewing the Government of Ontario's "Home Sharing Guide for Ontario Municipalities" there are multiple tactics recommended which would be a burden for the property owner, costly to owners and the municipality, promote a black-market system, and impact tourism and real estate. All without guaranteeing any real influence on the culprits of the issues being discussed. Those causing concerns will not likely follow new rules. Regulation will cause unnecessary duty to owners who are already handling rentals in a responsible manner.

I ask that the municipality finds a solution to penalize those who have infringed and not those who are responsibly sharing their homes. We maintain safe standards and care about our real estate investment, our neighbours, and the community.

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