

For Immediate Release
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Home Sharing Program raises many questions

The Nova Scotia government's new province-wide Home Sharing Program raises significant concerns and could create a whole new series of additional problems as the province faces the affordable housing crisis.

"Nova Scotians should obviously welcome any effort to provide more affordable rental housing," said Kevin Russell, Executive Director of the Investment Property Owners Association of Nova Scotia. "It's great to invite people to provide homes using their empty rooms, but how will Nova Scotia's broken, unenforced Residential Tenancies system handle the potential increase in the number of new landlords and tenants? How will Halifax Regional Municipality be able to enforce its new Residential Rental Registry, which will apply to any HRM participants in the Home Sharing program?"

Under the Nova Scotia Residential Tenancies Act, as soon as someone pays rent to a homeowner, that person is considered a tenant according to provincial law, while the homeowner is considered a landlord under the law. With the Nova Scotia government stating that the Residential Tenancies Act will apply to the Home Sharing Program, this has the potential to create new demands on a system that both tenants and rental housing providers agree is not working.

"If there's one thing that rental housing providers and tenants can agree on, it's that Nova Scotia's Residential Tenancies system is broken. Residential Tenancy hearings are held in secret, there is no public record of Residential Tenancy decisions, Residential Tenancy hearings take too long to happen and then decisions are not enforced," noted Russell. "As new landlords and tenants are created by the Home Sharing Program, how will the province's broken system handle the expected increase in demand?"

Russell added that the new Halifax Regional Municipality Residential Rental Registry will apply to HRM participants in the Home Sharing Program. Participating hosts in the Home Sharing Program will need develop a maintenance plan and make it available upon request by HRM. Because of the added demands of the registry, HRM's inability to enforce existing By-Laws and HRM's refusal to compromise on implementation or allow a public hearing, IPOANS asked Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister John Lohr to nullify the Landlord Registry By-Law under the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

"Unless Minister Lohr provides a favourable response to our request, it's important that anyone in Halifax Regional Municipality who is participating as a host in the Home Sharing Program knows that they must register as a residential rental provider under the HRM Registry and develop an annual maintenance plan," said Russell.

“Participants in the Home Sharing Program will also be subject to inspection by HRM By-Law Enforcement officials, without notice, to ensure they are following the By-Law and complying with safe building By-Laws that didn’t previously apply to private homes with rentals.”

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