



COVID-19 Emergency Measures Update

Wednesday, April 8th 2020

To all BBA Members and NOTL Short Term Rental owners,

Last weekend, there were a few STRs still receiving travelers in our town. As councilor Bisback mentioned during last Monday's special council meeting, it appeared to be some of the unlicensed properties around town who were not following the rules. I strongly invite you to listen to this short council meeting at:

<https://notl.org/content/livestream-broadcast>

*Lord Mayor Disero's introduction: 11:45

*Short Term Rental discussion: 42:25

*Concillors Cheropita and Bisback's comments are not to be missed.

Over the weekend and prior to the meeting, I had already pointed out and discussed with town's officials my concerns regarding our inability to reach the unlicensed locations directly, as they are not part of any email system coming from the town, BBA nor Chamber of Commerce. Also, the very fact of being unlicensed potentially expresses a general unwillingness to follow the rules. Fortunately, few problems arose that we know of last weekend regarding STRs and I ask everyone to keep doing the right thing. Please do not host anyone from outside Niagara-on-the-lake for the next few weeks. It is a critical time in the Covid-19 spread patterns and our ability to "close our town" is extremely important in controlling a possible outbreak in NOTL. As you probably know, the virus is already here.

A resolution about license revocation was already on the agenda, one more legal tool to use in a last resort situation. After the weekend's events and the internal discussions we had prior to the meeting, it became clear that it was in need of a quick update. Therefore, changes were made to give our town some legal ways, under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, to not only be able to give fines to unlicensed locations, but furthermore, not allowing them to even apply for a future license for a full year. Simply put, as long as we are under a declared provincial state of emergency, if a municipal bylaw officer can catch an unlicensed location hosting guests, they can now easily, promptly and legally shut them down. This was not possible under normal circumstances for various legal reasons. The pandemic related rules and new temporary powers given to municipalities combined with this latest resolution now all come together to allow fines and closure.

From what we know, all of us legally licensed STRs are in compliance and not operating right now. I thank you all for that. It now makes the possibility of identifying the unlicensed much easier...

If you still have a *Vacancy* signs in front of your place, please remove it for the time being as they project a negative message to the population. In its place, it would help if you could put the #StayHomeNotl sign below (print and plasticize somehow, get creative), sending a clear indication to your neighbours and the

community that your business is indeed compliant and not part of the problem, but rather an active player towards the solution. This small gesture would help greatly in improving the general image of the industry.

Note that, if you are caught with guests right now, you could lose your license. We, your BBA board, have to assume all of us are currently in compliance while we are trying to work with the town on the bigger picture. Let's use this opportunity to help town staff find, fine and close down some of the unlicensed locations who are not following the rules and putting our community in danger.

We are close to 400 licensed STRs scattered all around town; there is only a few bylaw officers... We can help protect our population at higher risk of developing Covid-19 complications while also protecting the STR Community's reputation from being soiled by anyone not respecting the rules.

Bylaw officers are currently working extra hours to cover the weekends more efficiently. Keep your eyes wide open, you already know what is happening around you. If you see an unlicensed location receiving guests, report them promptly and directly to the town, by sending a clear email at: covidcomplaints@notl.com

This email should be containing:

- *Your name
- *The address of the offender
- *The date and time of the occurrence
- *Any additional information that may be available (ie photos, licence plate numbers)

Once again, feel free to forward this letter to any STR owners in town who may not be members of our association. If they would like to be added to our distribution list during this time of crisis, have them reach out to us at info@bookyourstay.ca.

Stay home, stay healthy, stay united.

David Levesque
NOTL BBA President

#StayHomeNOT

