

# Norfolk COUNTY



## Guide to Starting and Operating an Alternative Accommodation Business in Norfolk County

January 2020



Guide to Starting and Operating an  
Alternative Accommodation Business in Norfolk County

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Acknowledgments

This guide was made possible with funding from Norfolk County, Haldimand County, Elgin County, Southwestern Ontario Tourism Corp., and the Government of Ontario. Special thanks to Mellor Murray Consulting and staff at all municipalities and SWOTC for making it a reality.

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# Introduction

## About Alternative Tourist Accommodations

Alternative Accommodations are alternatives to conventional roofed accommodations such as traditional bed and breakfast establishments, hotels, motels and inns.

Alternative accommodation can include short-term room rentals, cabins, homestays, vacation rentals, farm stays and camping (outside of campgrounds). Rentals are typically for less than 30 days. Many rentals are as short as just one or two days. These alternative accommodations may be listed with booking platforms such as Airbnb®, Vrbo® (formerly HomeAway), and many others<sup>1</sup>.

This handbook explores alternative accommodations' contributions to local tourism. It provides an outline of what you need to consider before operating an alternative tourist accommodation and provides some guidance on how to get started establishing and running an alternative accommodation business.

This handbook includes references to additional publications and websites, detailed in the Resources Section at the end of the document. All links were active at the time of publication but some may have changed since that time.

This handbook is intended to introduce you to alternatives tourist accommodations; the steps and responsibilities in operating an alternative accommodation business and the regulations and other requirements relating to establishing and operating alternative accommodations. It does not constitute legal or other professional advice. The guide is not an official policy of any government body. You are advised to seek specific legal or other professional advice before starting your business.

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed list is included in the Resources section.

## Types of Alternative Accommodations

There are a variety of alternative accommodations covered in this handbook. Here are some definitions of the most common types.

### ***Accessory residential dwelling units***

A residential unit located inside or behind an existing dwelling unit, designed to maximize the efficiency of the use of the space, with a private kitchen, bathroom facilities and sleeping areas within dwellings or within structures ancillary to a dwelling (e.g., above laneway garages). Also referred to as second units, accessory units, granny flats, in-law apartments or nanny suites.<sup>2</sup> These buildings must have stamped engineer drawings to confirm they meet Ontario Building Code guidelines. In Norfolk County, Accessory residential units are not permitted in vacation homes or other dwellings intended for vacation, seasonal or short-term accommodation purposes. More info at <https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/living/tiny-homes/>.

### ***Bed and breakfast establishments***

Also known as B&Bs, these overnight accommodations have become mainstream. B&Bs are usually in a private home or boarding house, with a full American-style or continental breakfast included in the rate, often without private bath facilities.<sup>3</sup> Not to be confused with Airbnb®, a booking platform also used to rent Accessory Residential Dwelling Units.

### ***Boatels***

A boat or ship with sleeping accommodations available for paying guests.

### ***Converted shipping containers homes***

Accommodations made from the steel shipping containers designed to carry goods on trains, trucks, and ships<sup>4</sup>.

### ***Cottages***

A small, typically modest, building, usually set in a rural, semi-rural or waterfront setting.

### ***Farm stays***

Lodgings available to paying guests on a working farm<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Defined by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page16444.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> Tourism Glossary Global Development Research Centre <http://www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/t-glossary.html>

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from <https://www.buildwithrise.com/stories/container-homes-are-exactly-what-they-sound-like-homes> (

<sup>5</sup> Farmstay: Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture; <https://www.misa.umn.edu/publications/farmstaymanual> (

### ***Glamping***

Camping with more glamorous accommodations and facilities than those typically associated with camping.

### ***Independent camping***

Campsites on private land used for short stays. Camping accommodations may include temporary structures such as **tents**, or semi-permanent structures including **yurts** (tents built on a collapsible framework), **cabanas** (a lightweight structure) and **Pods** (self-contained units) and **trailers** (An unpowered vehicle towed by another vehicle with sleeping accommodations).

### ***Repurposed commercial buildings***

Buildings previously used for a commercial purpose including office buildings, warehouses, or retail.

### ***Residence with guest room(s)***

Overnight accommodation in a private home where guests have their own private room for sleeping, not including breakfast.<sup>6</sup> This is comparable to a Bed & Breakfast or Accessory Residential Dwelling Unit.

### ***Secondary suites***

See Accessory Residential Dwelling Units.

### ***Tiny homes***

See Accessory Residential Dwelling Units.

### ***Upper storey accommodations***

Accommodations on a level above the first floor. A dwelling unit above another dwelling unit, commercial unit or other non-residential space.

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<sup>6</sup> Based on private room definition from Airbnb <https://www.airbnb.ca/help/article/317/what-do-the-different-home-types-mean>

## Tourism and the Opportunities for Alternative Accommodations

The market for alternative accommodations and vacation rentals has grown with the introduction of rental platforms such as Airbnb, VRBO and others. They reflect the growing popularity of unique, creative properties that reflect the local community and culture.

Small population centres and rural areas around the world are encouraging alternative accommodation businesses to increase tourism visits and the related economic benefits. Many small centres do not have sufficient numbers of tourists or year-round tourist demand for accommodation to make investment in conventional roofed accommodation financially feasible.

Alternative Accommodations are more likely to be spread around the municipality, thereby spreading the economic opportunity and promoting more sustainable travel. A recent study from Airbnb reported that “at least two-thirds of all guest arrivals on Airbnb take place outside of traditional tourist areas”<sup>7</sup>.

Airbnb reports that home sharing guests “stay longer than traditional tourists, spend more on local businesses, and are more likely to be return guests to the market as a result of their experience.”<sup>8</sup> The average economic impact of a same day visitor in Southwest Ontario is \$73, while the economic impact of an overnight visitor increases to \$171 per day<sup>9</sup>.

Some municipalities are attempting to limit home-sharing citing its impact on the housing supply. Larger centres such as Vancouver and Toronto have reported significant decreases in their affordable housing stock as property owners are making higher returns with home sharing businesses. There have been some concerns that these alternative accommodations have an unfair competitive advantage because they are not subject to the same regulatory obligations, related costs or taxes for conventional accommodations. Some municipalities are working with the home-sharing platforms to apply municipal accommodation tax to the accommodation fee.

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<sup>7</sup>Airbnb Helps Fight Mass Tourism, Promotes Sustainable Travel, <https://press.airbnb.com/airbnb-helps-fight-mass-tourism-promotes-sustainable-travel/>

<sup>8</sup> Shared Opportunity: How Airbnb Benefits Communities, [https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/public\\_comments/2015/05/01740-96152.pdf](https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/public_comments/2015/05/01740-96152.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Source: Ministry of Tourism & Culture Regional Tourism Profile RTO 1, Statistics Canada Travel Survey of Residents & International Travel Survey 2011

## Is an Alternative Accommodation Business for you?<sup>10</sup>

There are a number of options to consider before establishing an alternative accommodation business. Here's a list of some of the items that will help you to define how you operate your business:

### ***Your Goals***

Business owner goals can vary from making occasional extra income, creating reliable and consistent secondary income, replacing the income from previous employment or business or establishing a short-term rental enterprise. Each of these goals will require varying degrees of investment, time and risk by the alternative accommodation operator. Operators should also consider how many weeks per year they plan to make their accommodation available to travelers.

### ***Hosting Strangers***

Operating an alternative accommodation means inviting people you've never met onto your property. In many cases you will be spending nights under the same roof with them. Alternative accommodation business owners must be comfortable communicating with and hosting complete strangers.

### ***Time Commitment***

Operating an alternative accommodation business will involve a significant investment in time to establish your business and the business processes. Managing bookings and maintaining the property will require regular and sustained efforts. In addition, you will need to be on call for emergencies and other guest needs throughout their stay. Some private operators manage their alternative accommodation by themselves while others hire a property manager or a vacation rental service.

### ***Marketing***

Alternative accommodation businesses need to establish a compelling offering to compete with other accommodations and locations. Marketing efforts will include the amenities or product offering, price relative to other comparable properties, and promotion including photos, written description and marketing tools such as brochures, website and social media.

### ***Renters***

Alternative accommodation operators are strongly advised to consult with their landlord before establishing an alternative accommodation business. Some leases prohibit home

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<sup>10</sup> Adapted from 10 Things to Consider before Hosting on Airbnb <https://learnairbnb.com/10-things-to-consider-before-hosting-on-airbnb/> (accessed June 3, 2019).



sharing. An open discussion with the landlord is essential to ensure a continued positive relationship.

### ***Neighbours***

Operators will be responsible for the behaviour of their guests and impact they may have on their neighbours' enjoyment of their property. Will the neighbours be subjected to additional noise or traffic as a result of the alternative accommodation business? Some condominium boards prohibit home sharing.

### ***Municipal Regulations***

Some municipalities have established regulations on limiting short term rentals to principal residences, establishing a maximum number of consecutive days, days per year, or number of guests. Alternative accommodations are regulated by zoning (e.g. residential, agricultural and/or commercial zones), certain building types and business licensing. Other municipalities have established bylaws to prohibit home sharing altogether. Municipal regulations and approvals are detailed later in this handbook.

### ***Risk & Liability***

There are a number of risks to consider when establishing an alternative accommodation business. There is risk to personal safety, risk of theft and the remote risk of renting to a squatter. Liability risks include the risk if the guests are injured, damage or injury to the operator or the property and damage or injury to the neighbours. Many insurance policies do not cover the additional risk of an alternative accommodation business. Operating an alternative accommodation business may void the home insurance policy altogether.

### ***Pricing***

Many home sharing platforms encourage creating variable pricing to reflect variations in demand for weekdays and weekends, high and low season and community special events. It will also be important to monitor pricing at competitive accommodations.

### ***Guest needs***

The alternative accommodation amenities and services can vary depending on the type of guests and the activities they are planning for their visit. It will be important to monitor guests' requests and the seasonal activities and special events that could influence the type of guests likely to visit the operation and the type of amenities they will need.

### ***Life Interruptions***

As the host of an alternative accommodation, you will need to arrange to check guests in and out, clean the accommodation, restock and respond to guest inquiries, lockouts and neighbourhood complaints. Hosts will need to have the flexibility or capacity to respond to unanticipated guests needs.

## **Taxes**

Income generated from home sharing is considered rental income by the Canada Revenue Agency. Alternative Accommodation operators will need to record and report the revenue and expenses for operating the alternative accommodation. Income from the operation of the alternative accommodation business must be reported in addition to any other employment income.

If the property is the principal residence, the operator be able to claim be a portion of the mortgage, property taxes, insurance repairs, landscaping and depreciation on fixed assets. The full cost of advertising and office expenses, professional fees, management fees and salaries are also eligible expenses.

Rental income and business income are taxed and reported differently. The CRA considers the number and types of services provided in determining whether it is considered rental or business income. In addition, host much charge and remit GST for short-term housing rentals for less than 30 days.

A tax professional can assist with reporting income, claiming expenses and tax collection requirements.

# Establishing an Alternative Accommodation

## Your Business Concept

The following checklist from Venture Norfolk provides the steps to successfully launching the Alternative Tourist Accommodation Business. More information is available at [www.venturenorfolk.ca](http://www.venturenorfolk.ca)

1. Write your [Business Plan](#) or a [Business Model Canvas](#)
2. Complete the applicable, necessary registrations:
  - Register your Business Name through the [Service Ontario One Website](#)
  - Register for [HST](#)
  - Register for [Payroll](#)
  - Register with [WSIB](#)
3. Arrange to finance if required. Talk to investors, your bank and Venture Norfolk
4. Secure your business location with a lease, if operating outside of the home.
  - Check zoning, home occupation permits, building permits with [Norfolk County Building Department](#)
  - Check with the [Haldimand Norfolk Health Unit](#) if your business involves food preparation or a related activity
  - Explore business incentives for redevelopment of commercial properties, contact [Norfolk County Tourism & Economic Development](#)
5. Arrange insurance as required and acquire a Business Licence
6. If hiring employees, contact the Employment Centre (Community Career and Employment Services for wage subsidy applications and apprentice support applications.
7. Open a business bank account

## Business Plans

Your business plan will help determine if the business idea is viable. It will include startup costs, financing sources and forecasted profits to assist in your decision-making process. The business plan should include the following elements:

### ***Executive Summary***

A general overview of the business plan including business objectives, projected sales and profits, marketing strategy, action plan, ownership structure and management team, financing requirements, and personal investment in the business.

### ***Business Profile***

The basic business structure for the business (sole proprietor, partnership or corporation), number of employees, business classification and date of registration or incorporation.

### ***Market analysis***

Description of overall market, average sale, status of the market (steady, growing, declining), competitive analysis, market research, suppliers.

### ***Customers***

Customer profile, buying habits, psychographics, customer base.

### ***Competition***

List of competitors, competitive offerings, competitive advantages and disadvantages.

### ***Costs and Pricing***

Competitor pricing, variable and fixed costs, breakeven analysis, pricing strategy

### ***Market and Promotion***

Business image, advertising, networking, location

### ***Operating requirements***

Facilities, equipment, regulations, insurance, industry alliances and advisors, skills and employees

### ***Start-up Costs and Funding***

Start-up costs and expenses, reserves, sources of funding and terms

### ***Cash Flow Forecast***

Money coming into the business and flowing out of the business each month, allowing for seasonal variations in expenses and revenue.

### ***Venture Norfolk***

A business consultant at Venture Norfolk would be happy to assist you with your business plan and cash flow forecast. For more information, see the Contacts section.

# Regulations

## Zoning

Municipal Zoning By-Laws divide a municipality into a variety of land use zones including residential, commercial, agricultural, institutional and industrial zones. A zoning bylaw controls the use of land in a community and outlines:

- how land may be used
- where buildings and other structures can be located
- the types of buildings that are permitted and how they may be used
- the lot sizes and dimensions, parking requirements, building heights and setbacks from the street

The Norfolk County Zoning By-Law includes provisions for Bed and Breakfast establishments and are permitted within certain residential zones.

Boarding and Lodging units for more than four people have specific building requirements in the Ontario Building Code (OBC) with limits on the building size (maximum 6,000 sq. ft and under 3 stories).

Norfolk County Zoning By-Law: <http://www.norfolkcounty.ca/government/planning/new-zoning-by-law/>

## Site Plan Control

Site plan control is a tool that is used by a municipality to ensure that land development is designed appropriately, safe, functional and minimizes potential impacts on neighbouring properties. It also makes sure that the municipal standards for developing land are respected.

Legislation for Site Plan Control is identified under the Ontario *Planning Act* R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER P.13.

In Norfolk County most single detached, duplexes or semi-detached dwellings, and most agriculturally-related buildings do not require site plan approval.

For more information, contact the Norfolk County Planning Department. See the Contacts section.

## Permitted Uses for Accommodations by Zones

Zone <sup>11</sup>	Permitted Accommodation Uses
Urban Residential Type 1 and 2 (R1) (R2)	Dwelling, single detached; bed and breakfast, accessory residential dwelling unit
Residential Type 3 (R3)	Dwelling, boarding or lodging house, bed and breakfast, accessory residential dwelling unit
Urban Residential Type 4 (R4)	Townhouse, and Semi-Detached, duplex, tri-plex and four-plex dwellings located on the same lot, accessory residential dwelling unit
Urban Residential Type 5 (R5)	Apartment
Urban Residential Type 6 (R6)	Apartment
Hamlet Residential Zone (RH)	Dwelling, single detached, bed and breakfast, accessory residential dwelling unit
Resort Residential (RR)	Vacation home, and a legally existing single detached dwelling used for permanent occupancy
Central Business District Zone (CBD)	Hotel, apartment
Shopping Centre Commercial Zone (CSC)	Hotel
Service Commercial Zone (CS)	Hotel
Residential Commercial Business Zone (CRB)	Bed & breakfast, boarding or lodging house, dwelling
Neighbourhood Commercial Zone (CN)	Dwelling, single-detached, semi-detached and duplex
Hamlet Commercial (CHA) Zone	Bed & breakfast
Rural Commercial (CR)	Bed & Breakfast
Rural Industrial Zone	Dwelling, single detached
Community Institutional zone (IC)	Dwelling, single-detached, semi-detached and duplex in a permitted building
Neighbourhood Institutional Zone (IN)	Dwelling, single-detached, semi-detached and duplex in a permitted building
Rural Institutional Zone	Dwelling, single detached
Open space Zone (OS)	Campground, Dwelling, single detached
Open Space (Tent and Trailer) Zone (OST)	Campground, Tent and Trailer Park; Dwelling, single detached
Agricultural Zone (A)	Bed & breakfast, farm experience activity, dwelling, single detached, accessory residential dwelling unit
Development Zone (D)	Dwelling, single detached

<sup>11</sup> All permitted uses are subject to specific zoning provisions. See the Norfolk County Zoning By-law for detailed requirements.

## **Definitions**

“DWELLING” shall mean a building containing one (1) or more dwelling units. A dwelling may include an attached private garage. – Norfolk County Zoning By-Law.

Bed and Breakfasts are subject to the following requirements: Any bed & breakfast shall be subject to the following provisions:

- a) the operator shall live in the dwelling unit;
- b) up to three (3) bedrooms may be made available for guests;
- c) no parking for guests shall be permitted within the front yard.

“BED & BREAKFAST” shall mean a single detached dwelling containing, as an accessory use, one (1) or more rooms provided, for gain, with or without meals, for the travelling or vacationing public as temporary accommodation. Such rooms shall contain no cooking facilities. A bed & breakfast does not include a restaurant, boarding or lodging house, rooming house, group home or hotel.

ACCESSORY RESIDENTIAL DWELLING UNITS (ARDUs), also known as “TINY HOMES”, are subject to the following requirements, subject to approval.

- Separate exterior entrance to the primary dwelling unit (not visible from the public or private roadway)
- Maximum size of 45% of the primary dwelling unit square footage
- 50% of the front yard must be maintained for landscaped open space
- One off-street parking space required on addition to the required parking spaces for the primary dwelling
- Accessory residential units are not permitted in vacation homes or other dwellings intended for vacation, seasonal or short-term accommodation purposes.

Update: Norfolk County recently approved Accessory Residential Dwelling Units. More information at <https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/living/tiny-homes/>. The Ontario Government published a “Build a Tiny Home Guide” at <https://www.ontario.ca/document/build-or-buy-tiny-home>.

## **Building Permits**

The Ontario Building Code is a set of regulations established by the Province of Ontario and enforced by the municipality setting out minimum standards of safety for any work on a new building, addition or significant alternation to an existing building. For more information about the Norfolk County Building Department, go to <https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/business/building/>

Building permits are normally required for:

- Construction of a new home
- Demolish any part of a residential structure
- Addition of a carport, garage, porch or room(s) to an existing home.

- Any structural work, including alterations to interior partitions or the installation of new skylights, windows or doors.
- New openings for, or changes to the size of doors and windows
- Addition of dormer(s).
- Enclosing a porch or deck.
- Retaining Walls over 1.0 meters in height
- Addition of a deck to an existing home.
- Raising a house to provide a full basement.
- Constructing or installing detached accessory buildings larger than 108 square feet (10 square metres). For example, a carport, garage, shed, playhouse, etc.
- Installation of fireplaces and woodstoves and chimneys.
- Installation of above ground, on-ground or in-ground pools.
- Installation of insulation, air/vapour barrier and drywall.
- Replacing or installing new plumbing.
- Damp-proofing or waterproofing foundation walls including installation of weeping tile.
- Installing a ramp or elevating device.

Building permits are not typically required for:

- Repair or renovations that have no impact on structure
- Replacement of windows
- Re-shingle a roof with no structural changes
- Erection of a fence, (except for swimming pools that may require a fence).

### **Accessibility**

The Province of Ontario has established mandatory accessibility standards through the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (AODA) that identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. The regulations include customer service requirements, employment and workplace standards for businesses with one or more employees.

### **Fire Safety**

The Ontario Fire Code Regulations set out the minimum requirements for landlords and their responsibilities for fire safety within and around existing buildings and facilities. Alternative Tourist Accommodation operators are considered landlords. These regulations for landlords are administered locally by the Norfolk County Fire Department:

The Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General provides guidelines for smoke alarm installation and maintenance, carbon monoxide alarm installation and maintenance and emergency planning and home escape planning. The Ontario Fire Code guidelines for landlords are included in the resources section.



Contact the Norfolk County Fire Department (<https://norfolkcountyfire.ca/>) for assistance with application of Ontario Fire Code requirements to your building.

### **Parking Requirements**

The following table outlines the required parking for each form of accommodation in Norfolk County:

Hotel	1 parking space for each hotel room
Bed and Breakfasts	1 Parking Space per guest room. Guest parking is not permitted in the front yard
Accessory Residential Dwelling Unit (Tiny Home)	1 parking space in addition to the parking required for the primary dwelling
Boarding or lodging house	2 parking space for each dwelling unit plus 1 parking space for each room for boarders

### **Food Safety**

Alternative Accommodations that serve food also need to follow Ontario food safety guidelines. Public Health Inspectors (PHIs) in Haldimand and Norfolk Counties routinely visit food premises to conduct routine inspections and follow-up on complaints and suspected foodborne illnesses. PHIs conduct annual risk assessments are completed at every food premises in Haldimand and Norfolk Counties. Inspections include:

- Food storage temperatures, hot and cold
- Cooking, reheating and cooling times and temperatures of food
- Personal hygiene of employees, including good hand hygiene
- Food production methods and procedures
- Flow of food through receiving, storage, preparation, and service
- Dish and equipment washing and sanitizing procedures
- Food sources
- Pest control
- Methods of garbage collection, holding and disposal
- Cleanliness of floors, walls, ceilings, equipment and other surfaces
- If staff hold a food handler training certificate.

The Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit offers food handler certification courses and exams in Haldimand and Norfolk counties to help promote safe food handling within the food service industry. See <https://hnhu.org/clinics-classes/food-handler-certification-program/> for more information.

### **Business Licensing**

Norfolk County's Harmonized Business Licensing By-Law regulates businesses for matters of public interest, health, well-being and nuisance prevention. Peddlers, auctioneers, amusements, hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, mobile food premises,

food premises, tow trucks, pawn brokers, salvage yards, personal aesthetic services and taxicabs are among the businesses licensed.

A “bed and breakfast” for the purposes of business licensing means any premises in which two (2) or more rooms are designated for overnight accommodation of the travelling public. A “hotel” includes a motel and means any premises in which is provided four (4) or more rooms for overnight accommodation of the traveling public.

There is an annual fee payable to Norfolk County to apply for or renew a business licence.

Anyone renting two (2) rooms or more to the travelling public and promoting them on a platform such as Airbnb® must apply for a business licence.

For more information on Business Licensing, visit the Norfolk County website:  
<https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/government/clerk-council-services/business-licensing/>

## **Insurance**

Insurance is a key consideration for a new Alternative Accommodation Operation to protect your property and business.

Personal property insurance provides protection for damages to the building itself and the contents during the rental period. Many hosting sites such as Airbnb offer some form of insurance coverage but it typically excludes the owner’s personal property.

Liability insurance covers bodily injury and property damage sustained by your guests or a third party as a result of your guest’s stay. Many hosting sites also provide this insurance during the duration of a rental period. Alternative accommodation operators should confirm they have adequate liability insurance with an insurer who understand the alternative accommodation business and is willing to insure its participants.

Alternative accommodation operators in apartment or condominiums will need to extend the property and liability insurance to include the building owner or condominium corporation in the property and liability insurance. You should also be aware of the rules of your complex regarding alternative accommodation operations and any insurance limitations for your condominium corporation.

Operators that are not affiliated with a hosting site will need to rely on their individual insurance as their source of protection and are advised to consult with their insurance professional before proceeding. Failure to consult with the home insurance provider may be considered a change in the terms of the insurance contract and could result in voiding the insurance policy.

There are a number of insurers that offer coverage for alternative accommodations including homeownership policies for those wishing to operate using a hosting site.

Consultation with a trusted insurance professional will ensure you are adequately protected.

# Operating an Alternative Accommodation<sup>12</sup>

## Cleaning

Cleaning should be scheduled at a minimum after each guest departure. Operators can choose to clean the room or unit themselves or hire a cleaning service. An established cleaning company will likely have a standard checklist of services. A sample cleaning checklist is included in the appendix. There are also turnover cleaner apps for iPhone and Android to coordinate cleaning between property owners and cleaners.

Here are examples of cleaning apps for vacation rental businesses which will help you easily find experienced cleaning staff for your property.

- TurnoverBnb <https://turnoverbnb.com/>
- Properly <https://www.getproperly.com/>
- MaidThis <https://www.handy.com/>
- Airhosta <https://www.airhosta.com/>

All of these cleaning companies have their own app, from where you may book and customize all of the cleaning services you need for your vacation rental property. Note: some services may not be available in Norfolk County.

## Maintenance

Regular maintenance will ensure the safety and security of the alternative accommodation guests. A checklist of seasonal maintenance tasks is included in the appendix. Many alternative accommodation operators complete property maintenance themselves. Others hire maintenance companies to oversee their property on an ongoing basis and provide on-call service for urgent maintenance matters.

## Preparing for Guests

In addition to ensuring the property is well maintained and clean, other preparations are required to make guests feel welcome. Alternative accommodations are typically expected to provide all the amenities and supplies that are standard in any hotel room. A checklist of amenities for an alternative tourist accommodation is included in the appendix.

Any personal items that do not contribute to your guest's experience should be removed. The property should have ample seating and good lighting. It is also advisable

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<sup>12</sup> This section is adapted from *Evolve Vacation Rental: Ultimate Vacation Rental Success Guide*, <https://www.evolvevrn.com>

to remove any items that are personal and irreplaceable and ensure nothing contains the owners' personal information.

A Welcome Book is one of the most helpful items operators can provide for their guests to familiarize them with the property, the community and the amenities as well as popular things to do. A checklist of the recommended Welcome Book contents is included in the appendix.

Some operators provide additional special touches to create an exceptional guest experience including single-use toiletries, common food items (coffee, tea, and condiments), a welcome note and flowers or other treats.

# Marketing and Promoting Alternative Accommodation

There are a multitude of vacation property listing sites to assist in marketing the property. (A detailed list is included in the appendix). Some property owners prefer to market their properties privately. Whether you list with a property listing site or market it independently, you will need to prepare a property listing to promote the property. The listing should be as detailed as possible to provide an accurate and complete picture of what the property has to offer.

## Property Listing and Description

The headline is the most important component on your listing. It should highlight any unique features that differentiate your property from others, the community name, property type and number of bedrooms.

The property description should focus on the property instead of the surrounding areas. It should include information on the types of travelers that are best fitted for the property. It should provide specific information on the number of beds and their sizes. It should describe the location, views, décor and amenities which make the property unique and include a detailed list of the amenities available at the site.

## Photography and Video

Good photography is critical to the success of the alternative accommodation. For best results a professional photographer can ensure the property is shown at its best. Property listing sites recommend providing a minimum of 24 photos for each listing. Photos and videos help draw attention to your property, especially on social media.

The photos and videos should include the following areas

- Exterior – to demonstrate the location, size and style of the property, include unique features such as pool, views, deck.
- Kitchen – clean and clutter free
- Dining room – fully set dining table
- Living room – capture as much of the space as possible to show the layout of the room
- Bedrooms – include a minimum of one picture of each bedroom and more of the master bedroom. Show as many amenities as possible
- Unique amenities – include photos of hot tubs, wine cellars, pool tables or other items that make the property unique.

## Booking Rules and Policies

Include a few essential booking rules with the property listing including minimum age requirements, occupancy requirements, smoking policy, pet policy. Other policies such

as subdivision, condominium rules, rules regarding the hot tub or pool and departure requirements are better suited for a rental agreement or check-in instructions.

## Availability Calendar

The calendar lets travelers know when your property is available. Operators much make sure to keep the calendar updated to avoid disappointing prospective guests.

## Setting Your Rates

The rates are a key component in your success of your alternative accommodation. If the rates are too high, fewer travelers will book your property. If they are too low revenues are not being optimized and may encourage irresponsible guests.

The best way to determine the appropriate rate is to review listings for similar properties. Most operators adjust the rates depending on traveler demand, charging higher fees during peak season, holidays and weekends. It can also be beneficial to offer discounted rates for longer stays. Any additional fees for taxes and cleaning should be clearly outlined on the property listing.

## Promotion

There are a variety of ways to promote the listing. A simple website with plenty of professional photographs and a guest book where past renters can share their photos and testimonials is a good start. Many operators promote their properties on multiple vacation rental listing websites. Local websites such as the Norfolk Tourism website [norfolktourism.ca](http://norfolktourism.ca) will promote the property listing.

Email newsletters are an excellent way to follow up with travelers who have previously inquired about or booked the alternative accommodation. Social media; especially Facebook and Instagram are effective ways to share new photos, travel information and special on your property. The Norfolk County Marketing Partner Program (including the website at <https://www.norfolktourism.ca> and annual Experience Guide and Map<sup>13</sup> and other local media are other ways of promoting your property in print publications.

## Networking

Get involved with your local tourism office in Norfolk County, bed and breakfast association, or local business association (chamber of commerce). Networking with other businesses will help spread the word about your venture. Partner and collaborate with other businesses to raise awareness.

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<sup>13</sup> Norfolk County Tourism and Economic Development:  
<https://www.norfolktourism.ca/partners>

## Renting your Property

With the property ready and marketing underway, the operator is ready to start responding to inquiries and communicating with travelers. Operators should respond to inquiries as soon as possible each day to avoid missing out on an opportunity. Providing immediate responses allows the operator to sell travelers on your property before they hear back from any competitors.

The response to traveler inquiries should include a quote for their trip including all taxes and fees. It should confirm the specific dates and provide a phone number to allow travelers to follow up.

Reservations are considered confirmed with a traveler agrees to the rental terms and provides initial payment. Upon receiving the up-front payment, operators will update the listing calendar and send a confirmation email to their guest.

## Rental Agreements

The vacation rental agreement should outline the expectation of your guests and provide some security for you and the traveler. The rental agreement should be provided when you confirm a booking. The rental agreement should include the following:

- Parties entering into the agreement
- Rental dates
- Payment terms
- Maximum occupancy
- Cancellation policy
- House rules
- Check-in and check-out procedures
- Damage policy.

Many of the vacation rental listing sites provide template rental agreements to help you get started.

## Collecting Payment

The most popular way of payment are through secure methods such as credit cards, debit cards or PayPal. A detailed review of traveler payment preferences is included here <https://skift.com/2016/10/05/global-travelers-are-embracing-alternative-payment-methods/>

Many of the vacation rental listing sites recommend a 30% payment to confirm a reservation with the remaining balance collected 30 days prior to the arrival date. Bookings made within 30 days of the rental date typically call for full payment at the time of booking.



## Security Deposits

Security deposits or damage insurance can help protect against property damage. Security deposits are typically around \$200 or 10% of the rental rate although you are allowed to charge up to half the total rental amount. Rental damage insurance is a non-refundable fee ranging from \$50 to \$75 in exchange for an average of \$1,500 of protection against accidental damages.

## Check-in / Check-out

Check-in and check-out times are up to the operator. Check-in times usually range from 3:00 to 5:00 pm and check-out times are typically between 10:00 and noon. Operators should make sure to leave enough time for a thorough cleaning of the property between check-out and check-in. Guests should be advised when the property will be available and that they must make arrangements in advance if they will be arriving outside of those hours.

## Pre-stay Email

A pre-stay email is typically sent one or two weeks prior to the rental will ensure guests have everything they need for a successful stay. This email should go out after the full payment has been received.

The pre-stay email includes:

- Check-in and check-out times
- Check-in check-out procedures
- Lockbox does or key exchange information
- Local contact information
- Specific policies and instructions
- Parking instructions
- Driving directions to the property

## Property Access

Property access should be convenient for both the operator and the guests. Lockboxes are popular and inexpensive but it can be difficult to change the access code and also include the risk of travelers forgetting to return the keys to the lockbox. Keyless entries are more expensive but eliminate the need for keys and allow you to update the code easily. Some operators prefer to meet the traveler personally or arrange for a local contact to exchange the keys.

## **Post-trip Inspection**

The property will need to be inspected and cleaned after each visit. Some alternative accommodation operators require travelers to do some tasks as part of the check-out procedures such as turning down the heat and taking out the trash and putting dirty dishes in the dishwasher. These details should be included in the pre-stay email and the Welcome Book.

## **Requesting Reviews**

Traveler's reviews are one of the most important marketing tools for your alternative accommodation. The best way to secure great reviews is by providing travelers with an outstanding vacation rental experience. Email guests after their departure to thank them for choosing your home, explain how important reviews are to the success of your operation and tell them how much you would appreciate a quick review of their stay. Always include a link to the review page to make it easy for them. You can also mail travelers a handwritten note thanking them for their stay and asking for a review. Don't forget to include the web address to your review page.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Do I need a municipal business licence to operate an alternative tourist accommodation?

Yes. Norfolk County requires hotels, motels and bed and breakfasts to be licensed<sup>14</sup>. Anyone renting two (2) rooms or more to the travelling public, regardless of whether or not they offer breakfast or live on the property, must apply for a business license. This includes anyone using AirBnB or other booking platforms to promote their rental property.

### How can I register a business name?

Ontario businesses can learn more about registering their business name and obtaining a Master Business License at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/registering-your-business-name>.

### Are there any restrictions on the use of the site or the type of building used for an alternative tourist accommodation?

The Norfolk County Zoning By-law outlines the permitted uses in each zone: Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs) are permitted in Residential (R1 & R2) and Agricultural zones. B&Bs and residences can provide up to a maximum of 3 guest rooms. Any accommodation offering more than three guest rooms is defined as a hotel. Also, for zoning purposes, the operator of the B&B shall live in the dwelling unit. Accessory Residential Dwelling Units (ARDUs) or “tiny homes” are restricted to specific zones, including R1, R2, R3, R4, RH, and A Zones. ARDUs are not permitted in Resort Residential or Vacation Home zones.

### How do I find out what zone my property is in?

Buyer beware. Before you purchase a property or embark on a project, the Norfolk County Zoning Administrator can advise you on the zoning and permitted uses for the property. Call 519-426-5870 ext. 1839.

### What zoning, approvals and permits are required?

A **Zoning Amendment** will be required if your planned use is not included in the list of permitted uses for the existing zoning on your property.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.norfolkcounty.ca/government/clerk-council-services/business-licensing/>

A **Conservation Authority Permit** may be required if you plan to build near wetlands, shorelines or watercourses and/or perform any grading, filling and excavating to the landscape. In the Long Point watershed of Norfolk County, contact the Long Point Region Conservation Authority at 519-842-4242 or email [conservation@lprca.on.ca](mailto:conservation@lprca.on.ca). Website: <https://www.lprca.on.ca/pages/1372333972/Regulation-Services>.

An **Entrance Permit** may be required if you are planning to build new entrances to a property or modify existing ones. The permit will allow for work to occur on the County road allowance. For more information, contact Public Works, email: [PWCustomerService@norfolkcounty.ca](mailto:PWCustomerService@norfolkcounty.ca).

A **Demolition Permit** may be needed if you plan to demolish an existing building. A professional engineer will be needed if the building exceeds 3 storeys in height, exceeds 600 square metres (6,458 square feet), contains pre-tensioned or post-tensioned members, if the demolition extends below the level of the footings of an adjacent building, and if explosives or lasers are being used. An application form is available from the Building Department.

A **Septic Permit** may be needed for structural additions or for new or replacement infrastructure. An application form is available from the Building Department.

A **Building Permit** will be required for any new building, addition or significant alternation to an existing building.

An **Occupancy Permit** (from the Building Department) is required for commercial or multi-unit residential buildings including the creation of new spaces, major renovations, changes to the proposed use of the space and any case where a sprinkler permit is issued.

**Tents** are subject to the following approvals:

<b>Tent Size</b>	<b>Fire Department Approval</b>	<b>Building Permit Required</b>	<b>Professional Engineer Stamp Required</b>
> 30 m <sup>2</sup> (323 sq. ft.)	Yes	No	No
> 60 m <sup>2</sup> (645 sq. ft.)	Yes	Yes	No
>225 m <sup>2</sup> (2420 sq. ft.)	Yes	Yes	Yes

**Mobile homes/ house trailers** require planning department approval and a building permit or professional engineer stamped drawings.

**Boarding and lodging houses** of up to 600 m<sup>2</sup> or 6,000 sq. feet allows up to 10 individuals including the principal resident. These buildings are subject to the Ontario Building Code and Ontario Fire Code guidelines.

**Directional Signage:** To install Directional Signage on County Roads, contact the Tourism & Economic Development Department at 519-426-9497 or visit <http://www.norfolkcounty.ca/business/advertising-and-sponsorship-opportunities/directional-signage-program/>. A fee per sign for the rental period must be paid before signage is installed.

Finally, don't forget to apply for a **Business Licence**.

## **What is the maximum floor area/ bedrooms / space the accommodation can occupy in the building?**

Alternative accommodations providing more than three guest rooms are considered hotels and must meet the zoning and building guidelines for hotels.

## **Can the alternative accommodation operate outside the main building? (e.g. Garden suites, bunk houses, trailers, etc.)?**

Separate buildings are subject to the Accessory Dwelling Unit guidelines and all the provisions of the zoning and permitted uses for that property.

- **Yurts, gazebos, glamping tents and cabanas** under 10 m<sup>2</sup> without plumbing facilities are not considered buildings and are not subject to building code regulations while buildings with plumbing facilities and structures over 10 m<sup>2</sup> must adhere to the building code.
- **Boatels** do not require building permits although docks in excess of 10m<sup>2</sup> are considered a building and require building permits. Any new dock construction would also be subject to Ministry of Fisheries and the Ministries of Natural Resources regulations. Boats in marinas will be subject to marina rules.
- Farm experience activities providing temporary accommodation will be subject to the accessory residential unit guidelines. On lands zoned Agricultural, accessory residential units are permitted as-of-right (no Zoning Amendment required). However, you must apply for a Building Permit.
- Licensed vehicles such as **trailers and campers** are subject to the Ministry of Transportation guidelines and CSA Standards.
- Repurposed **shipping containers** or sea containers would be considered buildings and would require a 3<sup>rd</sup> party engineer stamped drawings for approval.
- **Bunkhouses** are intended for seasonal farm workers and are not permitted for use as alternative tourist accommodations. They are only permitted on land zoned Agricultural.
- **Tiny Homes** or "Accessory Residential Dwelling Units" have special rules. Please see "Regulations" section.

## **Can I have employees in the building?**

A home occupation allows for two additional employees in addition to the proprietor.

## **Is there a restriction on the number of guests, number of consecutive days, maximum days per year?**

Dwellings are limited to three guest rooms in addition to the principal resident. There are no restrictions on the number of consecutive days or the maximum number of days per year.

## **What kinds of accommodations can be run from my property?**

The type of permitted accommodations varies depending on the property zoning. Check with the Norfolk Planning Department at (519) 426-5870 or [planning@norfolkcounty.ca](mailto:planning@norfolkcounty.ca) to confirm the zoning and permitted uses of your property or call the Zoning Administrator at 519-426-5870 ext 1839.

## **What are the parking requirements?**

The parking requirements vary depending upon the type of accommodation. See the Section about Parking Requirements under “Regulation”.

## **I want to renovate / build to accommodate my alternative accommodation business. Will I need a permit?**

Any work on a new building, addition over 100 m<sup>2</sup> or significant alternation to an existing building will require a building permit. Other permits may be required. See the table on page 12 for a detailed list of projects that will require a building permit or contact the building department at (519) 426-5870 ext. 6016.

## **Are there requirements that the building is my primary residence?**

Bed and breakfasts, dwellings with guest rooms and accessory dwelling residences require the presence of the principal resident. Short-term rentals of vacation homes and tourist cabins do not require the presence of a principal resident. Bed and breakfasts require that the “operator” lives in the dwelling (for zoning purposes), and does not specify that the operator is the owner of the property.

## **What are the legal, liability and financial considerations for Alternative Accommodation businesses?**

Alternative accommodation businesses are responsible for following Ontario business registrations, tax collection and remittance, payroll, employer and accessibility requirements. The property owner/ operator is responsible for ensuring their property meets all zoning, fire and building code requirements. Bed and breakfasts that serve food are also subject to health regulations.

Operating an alternative tourist accommodation business may void some residential insurance policies. Tourist accommodations should ensure they have sufficient liability insurance to cover personal and property risk for the host family and property, guests and neighbours.

The income generated through your alternative accommodation business may not be recognized by your mortgage holder as income and could result in a reclassification of your property to an investment property resulting in higher mortgage rates.

## **What are the municipal policies for home-sharing services such as AirBnb, VRBO and others?**

In Norfolk County, home-sharing services are regulated by Business Licensing. If you rent two (2) or more rooms to the travelling public for overnight accommodation, you must apply for a Business Licence. For more information on Business Licensing, visit the Norfolk County website:

<https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/government/clerk-council-services/business-licensing/>

## **What marketing supports are available to assist me in marketing my Alternative Tourist Accommodation?**

Norfolk County's Tourism & Economic Development Department can advise operators of Alternative Accommodations of opportunities to market and promote the business locally, regionally and provincially. Call 519-426-9497 or visit <https://www.norfolktourism.ca/partners>.

The Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation (SWOTC) can help market alternative accommodations. Visit the 'Marketing Resources' section of SWOTC.ca to learn more about the opportunities below:

- Learn how you can participate in co-op photo and video development.
- Free listing on Ontariosouthwest.com.
- Submit your travel offers to be included on Ontariosouthwest.com and featured in email blasts to the 48,000 qualified email subscribers.

- Send your content to 48,000 qualified email subscribers through the paid sponsored content email program.
- Participate in co-op ad campaigns.
- Learn more about opportunities to host travel media/bloggers.

Destination Ontario also provides the following marketing supports:

- Submit new business listings and tourism packages on OntarioTravel.net for FREE.
- Learn how to engage with Ontario Travel on social media.



# Resources for Operators of Alternative Accommodation

## General Checklist

- Determine the type of Alternative Accommodation you want to operate.
- Make sure operating an Alternative Accommodation is right for you.
- Prepare your business plan
- Confirm your business meets the requirements for:
  - Zoning and permitted use
  - Site Plan Approval
  - Building Permit
  - Accessibility
  - Fire Code
  - Parking
  - Food Safety
  - Business Licensing
  - Insurance
- Establish your operations plan
  - Accommodation amenities and supplies
  - Cleaning plan
  - Maintenance plan
  - Welcome book
- Develop your marketing materials and program
  - Property listing and description
  - Photography and videos
  - Booking rules and policies
  - Availability calendar
  - Rates
  - Promotion
  - Networking
  - Directional Signage
- Establish your rental procedures
  - Rental agreement
  - Collecting payment
  - Security deposits
  - Check in and check out procedures
  - Pre-stay communications
  - Property access
  - Post-trip inspections
  - Guest reviews

# Cleaning Checklist

Source: Evolve Vacation Rental: Ultimate Vacation Rental Success Guide, <https://www.evolvevrn.com>

## ***Exteriors (if applicable)***

- Wipe down and clean patio furniture including chairs, tables and BBQ
- Sweep entrances and deck
- Replace any burned-out light bulbs

## ***Kitchen***

- Load, run and empty the dishwasher
- Clean and sanitize all surfaces including countertops, tables, cabinets, etc.
- Clean and sanitize all appliances including phone, toaster and coffee maker
- Clean and sanitize the inside and outside of the microwave
- Remove all food left in the refrigerator; clean and sanitize
- Replenish supplies including soap, dish detergent, trash bags, and paper towels
- Sweep and mop floors
- Remove trash; clean and sanitize trash can
- Clean and polish windows and windowsills, if needed
- Replace any burned-out light bulbs

## ***Living Areas***

- Dust all surfaces including end-tables, coffee tables, television and shelves
- Dust all appliances and knick-knacks, including lamps, ceiling fans, blinds and picture frames
- Sweep/mop or vacuum floors
- Remove trash; clean and sanitize trash can, if needed
- Clean and polish windows and windowsills, if needed
- Replace any burned-out light bulbs

## ***Bedrooms***

- Dust and clean all surfaces, including dresser, bedside table, headboard, computer screen, and television
- Dust all appliances and knick-knacks, including lamps, ceiling fans, blinds and picture frames
- Wash and change linens
- Sweep/mop or vacuum floors, including underneath the bed
- Remove trash; clean and sanitize trash can
- Clean and polish windows and windowsills
- Replace any burned-out light bulbs

## **Bathrooms**

- Clean and sanitize all surfaces, including countertops, sink, and faucets
- Clean and sanitize the toilet
- Clean and polish the mirror
- Wash and change towels
- Replenish amenities, including soap, shampoo and conditioner
- Sweep and mop the floor
- Remove trash; clean and sanitize trash can
- Clean and polish windows and windowsills
- Replace any burned-out light bulbs

## **Laundry Area (if applicable)**

- Make sure the washer and dryer are empty
- Remove lint from dryer
- Replenish amenities, including laundry detergent and softener sheets
- Sweep/mop or vacuum floors
- Remove trash; clean and sanitize trash can
- Replace any burned-out light bulbs

## **Amenities and Supplies**

Source: Evolve Vacation Rental Ultimate Vacation Rental Success Guide,  
<https://www.evolvevrn.com>

## **Bedrooms**

- Bed Linens: At least 2 sets of sheets, pillows and blankets for each bed.
- Iron/Ironing Board
- Pack-N-Play
- Alarm Clock
- Hangers

## **Living Areas**

- TV, DVD player and stereo. Be sure to include instructions for TV remotes, etc.
- Cable, Satellite, or a Netflix subscription
- High-speed internet with WiFi is recommended! If you have a password, make sure it is easy to find.
- Collection of books, magazines, music, DVDs, and board games.
- Door mat and coat rack at entrance
- Fans — If you don't have ceiling fans, provide at least one fan
- Emergency Kit — Include at least a standard first-aid kit and a flashlight with extra batteries.

- Phone book or list of important contact numbers for local maintenance, medical clinics, emergency services, etc.
- Local tourist guides and maps with nearby attractions
- Welcome Book — Important property information in one central location

### **Outside Amenities**

- BBQ Grill (make sure you meet the Fire Code, if applicable)
- Pool or Beach Accessories if you're near water
- Snow Shovel

### **Kitchen**

- Cookware: Basic items such as pots, pans, knives and ovenware should be provided
- Plates, Bowls, Glasses, and Flatware
- Additional kitchenware: Large serving bowls and plates for family-style meals, ice trays, etc.
- Coffee Pot
- Can Opener
- Wine Bottle Opener
- Wine Glasses
- Kitchen Linens
- Seasonings & Spices
- Coffee, Teas & Hot Cocoa
- Paper Towels & Trash Bags
- Fire Extinguisher
- Dish Soap
- Sippy cups, children's dinnerware, and a high-chair will put your home on the map for families traveling with little ones.

### **Bathrooms**

- Bath Linens: At least 2 bath towels, one hand towel and one wash cloth per guest
- Hand Soap, Body Wash, Shampoo & Conditioner
- Cleaning Supplies & Toilet Plunger
- Toilet Paper and Tissues
- Hair Dryer
- Sunscreen: Whether your home is near a beach, lake or ski mountain, providing guests with a mini sunscreen will really make an impression

## **Maintenance Checklist**

### **Exterior**

- Remove leaves and debris from gutters and downspouts.

- Pressure-wash wood siding to prevent mold.
- Check the exterior paint for bare spots.
- Inspect and replace exterior caulk.
- Check window and door sills for leaks and caulk where necessary.
- Clean air-conditioning unit.
- Check the foundation.
- Trim trees and bushes.
- Check the sprinkler system.
- Check all decks for loose boards, railings, and stairs.
- Inspect the condition of the roof.
- Check window screens.
- Check fences and gates.
- Check the automatic garage door opener.
- Examine the septic system for flooding or unusual odor.
- Check the latches on storm windows.
- Inspect the grading around house to make sure that water drains away from the house on all sides.
- Check outside walls for termite tubes and damaged wood.
- Check exterior doors and windows.
- Check the roof for missing shingles.
- Check the condition of the patio furniture.
- Trim/prune your trees.
- Remove leaves from around the house.
- Clean or replace door mats.
- Clean barbeque grill.

### **Bedrooms**

- Check the condition of the bedding (linens, pillows, comforters, mattress pads, etc.). Does anything need to be replaced?
- Wash the pillows, comforters, mattress pads, etc.
- Rotate and flip the mattresses.
- Vacuum under the beds and furniture.
- Wipe down walls and clean baseboards.

### **Kitchen**

- Clean and seal tile and grout.
- Check and fix leaky faucets.
- Deep clean the oven and stove tops.
- Clean out the refrigerator, freezer, pantry, and cabinets.
- Clean the refrigerator condenser coils.
- Check your inventory of spices and condiments (if you provide them) and restock where necessary.
- Wipe down the appliances.
- Clean the drains.

- Wash the inside of the garbage can. If it's really gross (and was inexpensive), throw it out and pick up a new one.

### ***Bathroom***

- Clean and seal tile and grout.
- Make sure that all toilets are properly secured to the floor.
- Check and fix leaky faucets and toilets.
- Check the condition of the towels and wash clothes. Do any need to be replaced?
- Wash fabric shower curtains.
- Replace the shower curtain liner.
- Wash bathroom rugs.
- Clean the drains.
- Vacuum underneath the sink and in the drawers.
- Wash the liquid soap container or soap dish.
- Replace the toilet brush.
- Clean shower doors.
- Replace toilet flappers.
- Check your toilet bowl brushes, and replace if they look dirty.

### ***Living Area***

- Steam clean upholstered furniture.
- Wash and fluff throw pillows.
- Clean or replace area rugs

## **Welcome Book for Guests: Content Checklist**

### ***The Welcome Page***

- Welcome note
- Parking Information
- Access Code Needed for the Front Gate
- Guest Wi-Fi Password
- Your Contact Info
- Emergency Services Contact Info
- Check-out Information

### ***House Rules***

- Quiet hours,
- Condominium rules,
- Pool use rules

### ***Local Transportation Information***

- Taxi & Airport Shuttle Services
- Bus and Train Schedules

- Maps of the Local Areas

### **Local Resources**

- Local contact info
- Nearest grocery store
- Health services

### **Things to Do**

Include a wide variety of activities that can appeal to all types of guests. Include the website, address, and phone numbers of each of the recommended places or activities

- Restaurants
- Tourists Attractions (local parks, museums, historical places)
- Shopping
- Tours (bar crawl, ghost tour, trolley tour)
- Fairs and Festivals (Sunday street fair, farmers' markets, annual events)
- Nightlife (bars, breweries, clubs, playhouse, live music)
- Your favourites

### **How-to Instructions for Appliances and Electronics**

- Thermostat
- The entry process for property (front-gate entry method, how to use smart locks)
- Washer and Dryer
- Kitchen Appliances
- Wi-Fi
- TV Remote, DVD, Cable, Netflix

## **Guidelines for Home Sharing in Ontario**

As an owner, you have obligations under the Ontario Fire Code for ensuring the fire safety of persons who rent your home or part of your home whether this is on a short term or long term basis. (Source: Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General<sup>15</sup>)

### **Ontario Fire Code Fire and Life Safety Requirements**

The Ontario Fire Code contains specific requirements for the installation and maintenance of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms. As an owner, it is your responsibility to ensure that your listing meets those safety requirements. When utilizing your home for Home Sharing, you will be considered a landlord and are subject to landlord responsibilities under the Ontario Fire Code.

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<sup>15</sup> Home Sharing in Ontario: Fire and Life Safety Requirements  
<https://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/OfficeFireMarshal/FireSafetyandPublicEducation/HomeSharingOntarioFireandLifeSafetyRequirements.html> (Accessed June 4, 2019)

- You should contact your local fire service to determine how these regulations apply to your listing.
- The authority having jurisdiction over Ontario Fire Code enforcement matters in a municipality is the local fire department. For more information, contact your local fire department.
- For specific details regarding Ontario Fire Code requirements for smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, and fire safety planning visit e-Laws at <https://www.ontario.ca/laws>.

### ***Smoke Alarm Installation and Maintenance Requirements***

Every home in Ontario must have a working smoke alarm on every storey and outside all sleeping areas.

- **Responsibilities:** Homeowners and landlords must install and maintain smoke alarms on every storey of their home and outside all sleeping areas.
- **Landlords:** Landlords are responsible for ensuring working smoke alarms are installed and maintained in their rental properties. The law requires landlords to test smoke alarms in rental units annually and when the battery is replaced, changes are made to the electric circuit or a change in tenancy occurs. Smoke alarms must be tested by pressing the test button. The law requires landlords to provide smoke alarm manufacturer's maintenance instructions to tenants. The owner of a condominium suite is responsible for the installation and maintenance of smoke alarms in the suite. In a situation where the condominium owner rents out the suite to a tenant, the owner takes on the role of the landlord and is responsible for the installation and maintenance of the smoke alarms.
- **Tenants:** Tenants are required by law to notify the landlord if the smoke alarm is inoperable. It is against the law for tenants to remove the batteries or tamper with the smoke alarm in any way. Tenants should contact their landlord immediately if they do not have the required number of smoke alarms.

### ***Carbon Monoxide Alarm Installation and Maintenance Requirements***

**Houses:** Any house containing a fuel burning appliance, fireplace or an attached garage requires a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm installed adjacent to each sleeping area in the house. (Fuel-burning appliances include furnaces, hot water heaters, gas or wood fireplaces, portable fuel-burning heaters and generators, barbeques, stoves and vehicles.)

**Apartments and Condominiums:** If there is a fuel-burning appliance in a condo/apartment, a carbon monoxide alarm must be installed adjacent to each sleeping area. If the building has a service room, carbon monoxide alarms must be installed in the service room and adjacent to each sleeping area of all condos/apartments above,



below and beside the service room. If the building has a garage, carbon monoxide alarms must be installed adjacent to each sleeping area of all condos/apartments above, below and beside the garage. (In general, “adjacent to each sleeping area” means the hallway serving or area outside the sleeping area. For instance, a CO alarm must be installed in the hallway adjacent to multiple bedrooms in a house or apartment. However, there may be situations where “adjacent to each sleeping area” refers to the area around the bed, within the bedroom or sleeping area itself.)

### **Responsibilities:**

Homeowners and landlords must install and maintain carbon monoxide alarms as outlined above.

- **Landlords:** Landlords are responsible to ensure working carbon monoxide alarms are installed and maintained in their rental properties. The law requires landlords to test CO alarms in rental units annually and when the battery is replaced, changes are made to the electric circuit or a change in tenancy occurs. CO alarms must be tested by pressing the test button. The law requires landlords to provide CO alarm manufacturer’s maintenance instructions to tenants. The owner of the condominium suite is responsible for the installation and maintenance of CO alarms in the suite. Often, there are agreements between the owner and the condominium corporation in which the corporation takes on this responsibility on behalf of the owner. In a situation where the condominium owner rents out the suite to a tenant, the owner takes on the role of the landlord and is responsible for the installation and maintenance of the CO alarms. Again, there are often agreements between the owner/landlord and the condominium corporation, in which the corporation takes on this responsibility on behalf of the owner/landlord.
- **Tenants:** Tenants are required by law to notify the landlord if the CO alarm is inoperable. It is against the law for tenants to remove the batteries or tamper with the CO alarm in any way.

### ***Emergency Planning and Home Escape Planning***

**Apartments and Condominiums:** Building owners are to instruct occupants on the emergency procedures to be followed when the fire alarm sounds. Tenants should be aware of the procedures outlined in the building’s fire safety plan.

**Houses:** Occupants should develop a home escape plan and know what to do when the smoke or CO alarm sounds. Sit down with everyone in the household and discuss how each person will get out of the home in an emergency. Practice the escape plan with everyone in the home. Make sure everyone can get out quickly. Make sure everyone knows two ways out of each room, if possible. If the door of a room is blocked by smoke or fire, discuss an alternate escape route such as a window. Make sure all windows open easily. Security bars on windows should have quick-releasing devices so they can be easily removed. Help those who need it.

Determine who will be responsible for helping young children, older adults, people with disabilities or anyone else who may need assistance. Get low and go under the smoke to the nearest safe exit. Most fire deaths are the result of smoke inhalation. Choose a meeting place outside, a safe distance from the home. A tree, street light or a neighbour’s home are all good choices. In case of fire, everyone should go directly to this meeting place to be accounted for. Get out, stay out. Never re-enter a burning building. After safely escaping, call the fire department from outside the home using a cell phone or from a neighbour’s home.

**Other Considerations**

**Construction:** If you are considering undertaking construction or renovation to facilitate home sharing, please contact your local building department to determine requirements under the Ontario Building Code that may apply. Your municipality may also have requirements relating to licensing, zoning or safety that may apply to short term rentals. Please contact them directly for more information.

**Apartments and Condominiums considered as hotels:** Consult your building management or condominium board prior to utilizing your unit for Home Sharing. Building management, condominium boards and landlords should familiarize themselves with the requirements of the Ontario Fire Code and understand that multiple Home Sharing units in a building may result in your building (or portion of your building) being classified as a hotel when it provides sleeping accommodation for the travelling public or for recreational purposes. Contact the Norfolk County Fire Department for assistance with application of Ontario Fire Code requirements to your building.

**Home-sharing Booking Websites**

Company	Website
9flats	9flats.com
Airbnb	Airbnb.ca
Booking.com	Booking.com
Flipkey	Flipkey.com
HomeAway	HomeAway.ca
Homestay	Homestay.com
HouseTrip	Housetrip.com
onfinestay	Onfinestay.com
TripAdvisor	Tripadvisor.ca
VRBO	Vrbo.com
Wimdu	Wimdu.com

## Additional Reading

- Airbnb in Canada, Hotel Association of Canada, <http://www.hotelassociation.ca/airbnb-in-canada/>
- Before Renting Your Property on Short-Term Rental Websites: Some Things You Should Know, Lauren M Randall, <https://boyneclarke.com/blogs/before-renting-your-property-on-short-term-rental-website-some-things-you-should-know/>, June 26, 2019, (accessed June 5, 2019)
- Developing a Modern Approach to Short-Term Rentals in a Digital Economy, Hotel Association of Canada, July 2018, <https://hnl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/STR-Framework-Paper-FINAL-HACHNL.pdf>
- Evolve Vacation Rental: Ultimate Vacation Rental Success Guide, <https://www.evolvevrn.com>
- Home-sharing Services – Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewinternet.org/2016/05/19/shared-home-sharing-services/>
- <https://www.ontario.ca/page/home-sharing-guide-ontario-municipalities>
- Sharing Economy Implications for the Insurance Industry in Canada <http://bit.ly/insurancesharingeconomy>
- Short Term Accommodation Rental Guidelines, Travel Industry Council of Ontario, June 2019 <https://tico.ca/files/GuidelinesShortTermAccommodation-FinalJune42019.pdf>
- Tax Considerations for Airbnb Hosts <https://www.bdo.ca/en-ca/insights/tax/tax-articles/tax-considerations-airbnb-hosts/>
- Tax Considerations for Airbnb Hosts, September 12, 2018, <https://www.bdo.ca/en-ca/insights/tax/tax-articles/tax-considerations-airbnb-hosts/> (accessed June 5, 2019).
- The Home-Sharing Guide for Ontario Municipalities
- The Rise of the Sharing Economy, The Public Policy and Governance Review <https://ppgreview.ca/2018/02/05/the-rise-of-the-sharing-economy/>
- Tiny Homes in Norfolk County <https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/living/tiny-homes/>

## Contacts

### **Employment Centre**

Phone: 519-428-1135 x230

Website: <https://www.fanshawec.ca/student-life/campus-services/employment/simcoe-campus/jobs>

### **Long Point Region Conservation Authority**

Phone: 519-842-4242

Email: [conservation@lprca.on.ca](mailto:conservation@lprca.on.ca)

Website: <https://www.lprca.on.ca>

### **Norfolk County Building Department**

Phone: 519-426-5870 ext. 6016

Website: <http://www.norfolkcounty.ca/business/building/>

### **Norfolk County Fire Department**

Phone: (519) 426-5870 ext. 2402

Website: <http://www.norfolkcountyfire.ca>

### **Norfolk County Health Unit**

Phone: 519-426-6170 Ext. 3231

Email: [environmentalhealth@hnhss.ca](mailto:environmentalhealth@hnhss.ca)

Website: <http://hnhu.org/>

### **Norfolk County Licensing (Council Services Department)**

Phone: (519) 426-5870 ext. 1357

Email: [clerks@norfolkcounty.ca](mailto:clerks@norfolkcounty.ca)

Website: <https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/government/clerk-council-services/business-licensing/>

### **Norfolk County Planning Department**

Phone: (519) 426-5870, press 2

Email: [planning@norfolkcounty.ca](mailto:planning@norfolkcounty.ca)

Website: <https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/government/planning/>

### **Norfolk County Tourism and Economic Development Department**

Phone: 519-426-9497; 1-800-699-9038

Email: [business@norfolkcounty.ca](mailto:business@norfolkcounty.ca)

Economic Development Website: <https://www.norfolkbusiness.ca>

Tourism Website: <https://www.norfolktourism.ca/partners>

**Province of Ontario - Accessibility for Businesses**

Phone: 416-849-8276

Email: [accessibility@ontario.ca](mailto:accessibility@ontario.ca)

Website: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-ontario-information-businesses>

**Southwest Ontario Tourism Corp.**

Phone: 519-290-8687

Email: [admin@swotc.ca](mailto:admin@swotc.ca)

Website: <http://www.swotc.ca>

**Venture Norfolk**

Phone: 519-426-2323

Website: <http://www.venturenorfolk.ca>