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ASSOCIATION OF
INTERIOR REALTORS®

Unlocking Flexibility

**Rethinking Short-Term Rental (STR)
Regulations in British Columbia's Interior**

Policy recommendations to strengthen
BC's STR regulatory framework

Contents

Introduction: Short-Term Rentals and Canada's Housing Crisis	04
About the Association of Interior REALTORS®	06
The Problem: Short-Term Thinking on Short-Term Rentals	07
Community Benefits: How STRs Help	10
Economic Impact of STRs	12
Recommendations	14
1 Return Zoning Autonomy to Local Governments	16
2 Enable STR Flexibility Near Essential Worksites	18
3 Align STR Regulations with Seasonal Tourism Needs	22
4 Expand the Strata Hotel and Fractional Ownership Exemption	24
Conclusion	26
Appendix A - Municipal STR Regulations and Bylaws across Interior BC	28
References	32



Introduction

Short-Term Rentals and Canada's Housing Crisis

British Columbia ("BC"), like many other parts of Canada, is in the middle of a historic housing affordability crisis. Driven by surging demand and a constrained supply of new homes, B.C. home prices and rents have witnessed annual price increases that have consistently outpaced incomes, putting the dream of home ownership or finding an attainable home further and further out of reach for many families. In response, governments at all levels have introduced a series of policy measures aimed at boosting housing supply, curbing demand and lowering costs for consumers.

As part of its broader plan to tackle B.C.'s housing crisis, the province passed the *Short-Term Rental Accommodations Act, 2023* ("the Act"). The Act, which introduced sweeping, province-wide short-term rental ("STR") regulations and prohibited the use of most non-principal residences (like investment properties) for STR purposes, signalled the government's pivot towards targeting industries that they felt were limiting long-term housing supply from entering the market. The province has suggested that STRs have been "[driving up the cost of housing for British Columbians](#)," by removing housing supply from the market. While some municipalities are exempt from the principal residence restriction due to their [population size or proximity to popular tourism sites](#), regulations set out in the Act apply to a vast majority of the province. Of B.C.'s [161](#) municipalities, 10 of those that are located in the BC interior fall under the new regulatory framework. As a result, smaller tourism-dependent communities are now subject to the same regulations applied to STR regulation in B.C.'s urban centres.

Since its introduction, B.C.'s STR regulations have had a number of negative consequences for seasonable economies, student renters and essential service delivery by medical and industry professionals. By making it more challenging for STRs to operate, B.C. is hurting the economies of

tourism-dependent parts of the province, as well as areas (e.g. resource developments) of the B.C. interior that rely on STRs to house workers.

New research from the Conference Board of Canada has shown that STRs have had almost no impact on the affordability or supply of rental housing in B.C., undermining the province's argument in favour of the heavy-handed treatment of short-term rentals.

By making it more challenging for STRs to operate, BC is hurting the economies of tourism dependent parts of the province as well as areas (e.g. resource developments) of the BC interior that rely on STRs to house workers.

The province should also consider unlocking more flexibility with its STR regulations as part of its larger effort to make B.C. more economically resilient in the face of U.S. tariffs and trade disruption.

Given the importance that STRs play in seasonal and resource-dependent economies, changes to the province's regulatory framework are needed.

With that in mind, this report provides a series of recommendations related to mitigating the impact of the province's STR regulations on regions that are most impacted, offering four targeted recommendations to better align provincial legislation with local economic realities, housing needs, tourism and workforce priorities. Using case studies, academic research and municipal examples from B.C. and other jurisdictions, the recommendations are:

Policy Recommendations

1 Return Zoning Autonomy to Local Governments

The province should permit municipalities to formally designate tourism zones, areas within communities that are exempt from the principal residence requirement based on local municipal needs and land-use planning.

2 Enable STR Flexibility Near Essential Worksites

To reduce risk of healthcare and essential service disruptions to regions that depend on temporary workers, the province should allow exemptions or flexible provisions under its STR legislation. These provisions should specifically support the use of STRs for essential workers near critical worksites, specifically in regions with limited rental supply or hotel infrastructure.

3 Align STR Regulations with Seasonal Tourism Needs

To continue supporting tourism-dependent economies, the province should significantly shorten the implementation timelines for municipalities that meet the criteria for a principal residence opt-out exemption, allowing exemptions to take effect immediately upon approval.

4 Expand the Strata Hotel and Fractional Ownership Exemption

The province should update its strata hotel and fractional ownership regulations to exempt purpose-built STR properties and allow them to operate as originally intended.

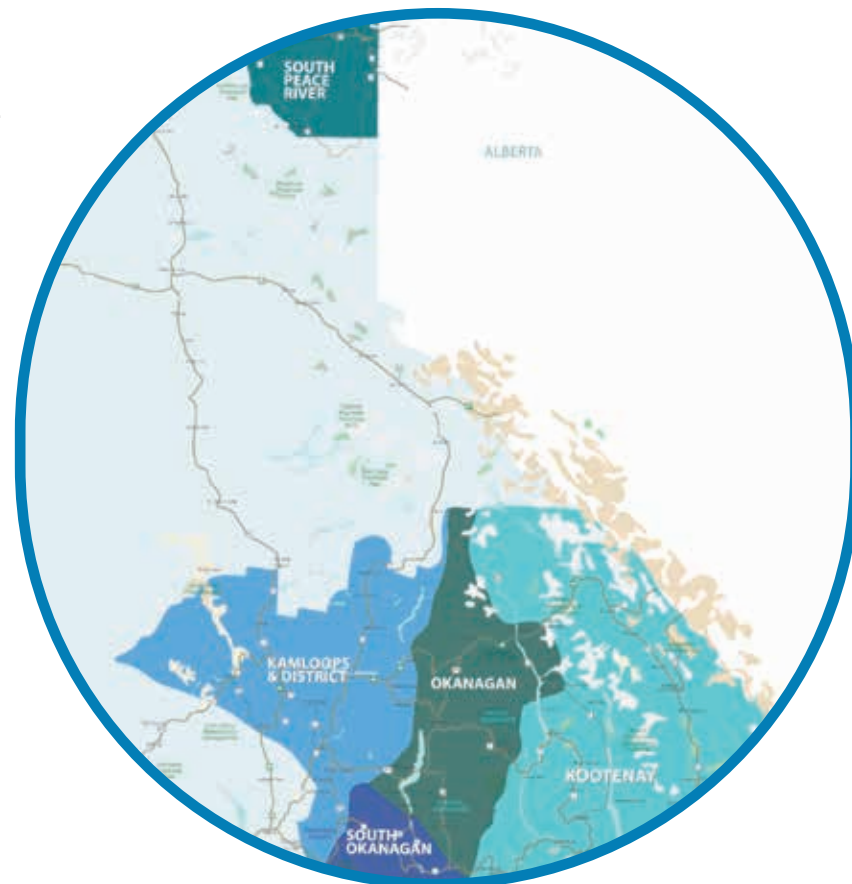
About the Association of Interior REALTORS®

The Association of Interior REALTORS® (AoIR) represents approximately 2,600 professional REALTORS® across the interior of the province. Our members are located in communities across the region from Kamloops to the Okanagan, to the Kootenay and to the South Peace River region. Our REALTOR® members are proud of the work they do and their contributions to the local economy. Our Association strives to bring excellence to real estate through leadership, education, technology and advocacy. Our members are passionate about improving the communities they live and work in.

The Association of Interior REALTORS® was formed on January 1, 2021, through the amalgamation of the Okanagan Mainline Real Estate Board and the South Okanagan Real Estate Board. In 2022, the Association also amalgamated with the Kamloops & District Real Estate Association and the Kootenay Association of REALTORS® to become the ninth largest REALTOR® Association in Canada, and third largest in British Columbia.

See where we are

- South Peace River
- Kamloops & District
- Okanagan
- South Okanagan
- Kootenay



The Problem

Short-Term Thinking on Short-Term Rentals

While the intent behind B.C.'s new STR legislation is to return housing units to the long-term rental market, there is [limited evidence](#) that these measures have significantly increased the amount of affordable housing supply, particularly in rural or tourism-dependent communities. In fact, new research demonstrates that there is almost no causal relationship between STRs and higher rents in Canada.

[Canada's housing crisis](#) and the [rise in popularity](#) of platforms like Airbnb used by travellers, tourists and professionals have evolved in parallel, with 2007-2008 marking a key shift: the beginning of a sharp climb in Canadian home price-to-income ratio and the launch of Airbnb as a mainstream platform. Considering this evolution, it was only a matter of time until residents and elected leaders began to find ways to attribute rising rent and home prices to the introduction of more short-term rentals into communities.

While STRs like Airbnb do take rental units off the market, they have a small impact on the cost of housing. According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) B.C. must build between [500,000 and 700,000](#) housing units by 2030 to go back to 2003 and 2004 levels of affordability. The B.C. government estimates that there are [28,000 active STR listings](#) in the province or only about 4 per cent of the total units needed to bring affordability back to B.C. home prices.

Recent research from the Conference Board of Canada has shown that Airbnb activity and rent increases are [not causally linked](#). The Board tested the link between 2016 and 2022 across 330 neighbourhoods in 19 municipalities across Canada. Of the 30 per cent increase in rents observed over the study period, less than one percentage point ([equivalent to under \\$10](#)) was attributable to increased Airbnb activity. Considering the average rent in B.C. for a one-bedroom apartment increased by approximately [4.4 per cent](#) to more than \$1,600 from 2023 to 2024, the possibility remains that other [more significant and urgent factors](#) are driving rent inflation, including slow government approvals, significant cost increases and other market conditions.

<1%

Increase in rents between 2016 and 2020 in Canada was attributable to STRs.

Source: [Conference Board of Canada 2025](#)



Similarly, a study published by the [U.S. National Bureau of Economic Research](#) found that Airbnb listings made up less than 1 per cent of total housing units in most metropolitan areas, limiting their effect on the overall housing stock. The same study concluded that STR platforms generated significant value for both guests and hosts, saving guests an average of \$41 per night and providing a host surplus of \$26 per night. The study addressed the hotel industry, noting that Airbnb had a minimal impact on hotel profits, lowering them on average by a modest 3.7 per cent. Although the data reflect conditions in 2014, the authors [adjusted their findings to inflation](#), estimating that by 2024, the consumer benefit had increased to approximately \$91 per Airbnb booking per night. These savings are often reinvested into the local economy, through longer stays, increased spending at restaurants, events and tourist attractions, and encouraging more frequent future travel.

While STRs support local spending, tourism and workforce housing, their concentration in certain municipalities may have a more noticeable impact on local housing markets. In areas where STRs make up a larger share of the housing stock, the impact on rents and availability may be more pronounced. As a response, some states and provinces have introduced blanket STR bans. Unfortunately, these broad measures [often have the opposite of their intended effect](#), through increasing hotel prices, limiting accommodations for workers and reducing housing affordability for hosts who rely on STR income to offset rising living costs. In the B.C. Interior, the accommodation of tourists, professionals, students and owners who want or need to live in these communities on a part-time basis is essential to maintaining local economies and public service delivery in these municipalities. In fact, almost every interior municipality has implemented bylaws to support the operation and oversight of STRs before provincial legislation came into effect, adjusting their own local rules based on community need and response. Rather than forcing compliance with a one-size-fits all approach, this report demonstrates the need for more flexibility around STR management at the local level.

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Community Benefits

How STRs Help

The tourism economy is a pillar of B.C.'s economic well-being. B.C.'s natural attractions and thriving cultural offerings position the province as one of the most well-travelled in Canada, welcoming over [25 million](#) passengers to Vancouver International Airport in 2023 alone. Residents appreciate the contribution tourism brings to local economies, with [71 per cent agreeing](#) that tourism positively impacts the quality of life of their community.

Beyond tourism, smaller municipalities that lack hotel infrastructure rely on STRs to house travelling workers, seasonal visitors or those who require temporary housing due to climate crises. In areas where economic opportunities are limited, STRs provide residents with a way to generate extra income or offset the effects of economic uncertainty on fluctuating mortgage rates and job stability.

“*In areas where economic opportunities are limited, STRs provide residents with a way to generate extra income or offset the effects of economic uncertainty on fluctuating mortgage rates and job stability.*”

From tourism to short-term housing options for highly skilled labour, STRs respond to local community needs and make up an important part of the overall housing spectrum:






Community Benefit	How STRs Help
Tourism, Events and Seasonality	<p>Events, seasonality, conferences and holidays make demand for tourist accommodations highly variable in municipalities across the province. While hotels have a fixed capacity of available units that are relatively stable, increased demand can result in high prices when many travellers are competing for a limited number of rooms.</p> <p>When tourists have the option of renting STRs, accommodation choice is doubled, resulting in lower prices for hotel rooms and more tailored stay options for tourists.</p> <p>In communities with few or no formal tourist accommodations, periods of high tourist demand are satisfied through the existence of STRs, allowing individuals to travel more affordably and book stays that meet their needs.</p>
Short- and Mid-Term Workforce Housing	<p>Short- and mid-term workforces require safe, comfortable housing close to work placements.</p> <p>Airbnb, Vrbo and other STR platforms have partnered with broader property listing companies that connect hosts with travelling professionals, like nurses and physicians, who require furnished housing in remote or rural communities. STRs offer good affordable housing options to workers many B.C. communities need.</p>
Real Estate Market Support	<p>Real estate transactions often require temporary housing between closing dates, during renovations or while waiting for possession of a new home. These periods can be stressful and disruptive for individuals and families (who may have pets or other needs not traditionally supported by hotels) facing limited housing options.</p> <p>STRs provide the flexible, furnished housing options needed to support buyers, sellers and renters through transitions, contributing to a more flexible and responsive real estate market.</p>
Emergency Housing Options	<p>Traditional rentals and hotels are often too small and lack the necessary amenities to support larger households over extended periods.</p> <p>When family homes are damaged or destroyed by wildfires or other natural disasters, residents must secure suitable housing immediately, often in communities with limited hotel capacity. These shortages are compounded by the simultaneous demand from emergency responders and aid workers, further straining local resources.</p> <p>STRs can serve as an option to prevent further displacement of community members who require temporary accommodations while waiting on insurance claims, home repairs or complete rebuilds following a disaster.</p>

Economic Impact of STRs

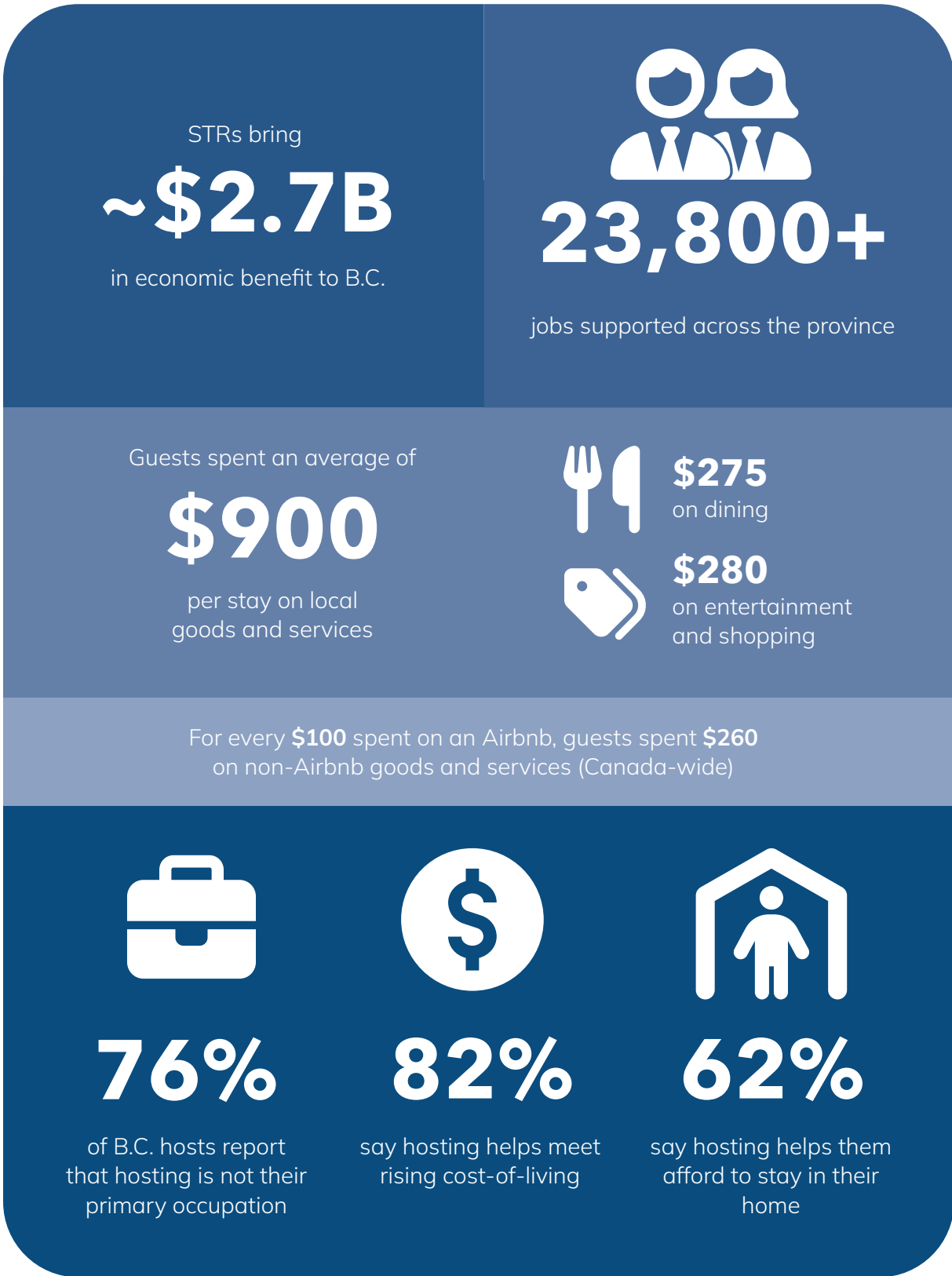
The broader economic contribution of STRs in B.C. extends beyond providing accommodation alone. STR activity supports local jobs, tourism spending and household affordability for both hosts and guests. The following figures, based on 2024 data collected through Airbnb, illustrate the scale and impact of STRs on provincial operations:

B.C. Regional Tourism Breakdown

Interior regions drive seasonal tourism but face year-round restrictions. The Thompson Okanagan and Kootenay Rockies alone generate more than \$3.7 billion in tourism spending annually, more than 20 per cent of BC's total, yet many of the region's communities face the same STR restrictions as urban centres.

 Region	 Number of Tourism Businesses	 Number of Tourism Employees	 Tourism Gross Spending per Region	 Percentage of B.C.'s Total Overnight Spending
Thompson Okanagan	2,100	30,800	\$2.6B	14.6%
Kootenay Rockies	760	7,300	\$1.1B	6.2%
Northern B.C.	920	8,400	\$1B	5.6%

Source: Destination British Columbia Regional Tourism Profile, March 2025.



(Source: Airbnb platform data, 2024)



Recommendations

1 Return Zoning Autonomy to Local Governments

Where the province chose to enforce blanket STR regulations on municipalities with more than 10,000 residents, some municipalities were granted exemptions from the principal residence requirement under the Short-Term Rental Accommodations Act. Whistler, a designated resort municipality with unique status under the Act, took a progressive approach to regulating STRs to maintain its essential tourism industry prior to provincial legislation. Since 2017, Whistler required STR operators to obtain a [Tourist Accommodation Licence](#) to be able to market, manage and provide paid accommodation to tourists. When a property is in an area that is zoned for residential use – and not tourism accommodations – the municipality has made it clear that owners cannot offer tourist rentals for any length of time. Considering these longstanding municipal bylaws, the province recognized that Whistler had successfully managed STR rules for over eight years in a way that supports their tourism industry while protecting residential housing, allowing them to maintain existing systems to support their local economy.

A similar approach should be available in other communities that have adopted bylaws to manage STR activity. There are four elements that are essential to supporting a “tourism zone” model, similar to that successfully implemented in Whistler. This includes:

- Allowing more STRs where tourism is a key economic driver;
- Prioritizing long-term rentals in areas zoned for residential use;
- Empowering municipalities to have autonomy over their own land-use;
- Housing needs and balancing both tourism and housing for permanent populations.

Although the Act recognizes this and provides a mechanism when it comes to tourism-heavy cities like Tofino and Nelson to apply for exemptions from the principal residence requirement, the process is limited and administratively burdensome. Communities must prove their vacancy rate has remained above 3 per cent for two consecutive years and reapply annually to maintain their exemption. This formal exemption overlooks the significant work that many municipalities have already undertaken to regulate STRs through zoning, licensing and enforcement mechanisms tailored to their local housing and tourism dynamics.

To improve alignment between local needs and provincial oversight, the province should formalize a municipal tourism zone exemption pathway to download zoning and exemptions back to local governments. Under this model, communities could apply for STR exemptions based on existing zoning and housing strategy plans, designated areas or buildings where STRs may operate outside of the principal residence restriction (i.e., tourism zones through local bylaws). Where the province has made a carve-out for some municipalities that are defined by tourism, it should go a step further, offering municipalities across B.C. a streamlined or simplified renewal process for exemptions that demonstrate long-standing housing and tourism dynamics. Municipalities that maintain designated tourism zones or have comprehensive bylaws in place to limit STRs in residential areas should be permitted to renew their exemptions on a multi-year basis, subject to periodic audits or reviews, rather than facing the unnecessary administrative burden of annual reapplication.

🔍 Case Study | Summerland

The District of Summerland provides a clear example of the thoughtful and proactive steps that some interior municipalities have taken to regulation STRs in ways that reflect local needs. In response to the province's STR legislation, Summerland promptly developed and implemented its own bylaws, including a detailed guide for current and prospective operators. The guide outlines where STRs are allowed to exist based on local zoning, specifies eligible dwelling types and limits occupancy to a maximum of four bedrooms or eight guests. It also establishes an Agri-Tourism Accommodation Business Licence, allowing owners of agricultural land to operate RV or campground sites separately from STR regulations. Summerland clearly defines the provincial requirements around STRs in their locally tailored guide, demonstrating their capacity as a municipality to manage STRs responsibly. This case illustrates the importance of recognizing and respecting the regulatory tools that many municipalities have already developed to govern STRs in their own communities, using zoning as one of the main mechanisms for managing tourism. Further examples of STR regulation at the local level can be found in Appendix A, which outlines zoning bylaws, occupancy limits and licensing categories implemented by municipalities to address their individual housing and tourism needs.

🛡️ Recommendation

The province should permit municipalities to formally designate tourism zones, areas within communities that are exempt from the principal residence requirement based on local municipal needs and land-use planning. In the interim, the province should work to reduce the administrative burden of the annual exemption application requirement on smaller municipalities by allowing multi-year renewals for communities that demonstrate consistent housing and tourism management.



2 Enable STR Flexibility Near Essential Worksites

Travelling workers use STRs to meet their housing needs that are particular to their assignments – whether short-term or for extended placements. STRs offer greater flexibility than traditional rentals and often provide more affordable, home-like environments than hotels, making them particularly well-suited to the needs of essential and rotating workers. Currently, BC's STR law offers

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Recent academic research underscores the importance of maintaining STR flexibility near essential worksites, particularly where traditional rental housing is scarce or unsuitable for temporary workers. As Cui and Attard (2024) explain, STRs offer a uniquely affordable and flexible housing option for those requiring short- or medium-term accommodations. These properties are often more adaptable to the needs of travelling professionals, providing fully furnished, home-like environments that differ significantly from hotel rooms. This is especially relevant for essential workers, such as travelling nurses, infrastructure crews or technicians on rotational contracts, who require privacy, access to kitchens and extended stay options that STRs can often provide more affordably than hotels.

Similarly, Canadian research focused on housing of medical professionals confirms that flexible and temporary accommodations are essential to the recruitment and retention of those working in the care economy, particularly in rural and remote areas. A [2024 study](#) by McMaster Health Forum highlights that the permissance and existence of short-term housing options was an import-

ant strategy used to address acute worker shortages, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidence from the study suggests that temporary, flexible accommodations, including those ranging from one to four months, are crucial to sustaining rural placements for both health-care trainees and rotating staff. These findings reinforce the need for municipal STR policies to accommodate essential-worker housing, as such accommodations play a key role in supporting mobility and preventing staffing shortages of critical services.

This need goes beyond research, having a huge impact on the reality of service provision in B.C.'s interior. In August 2024, there were 54 emergency-room closures

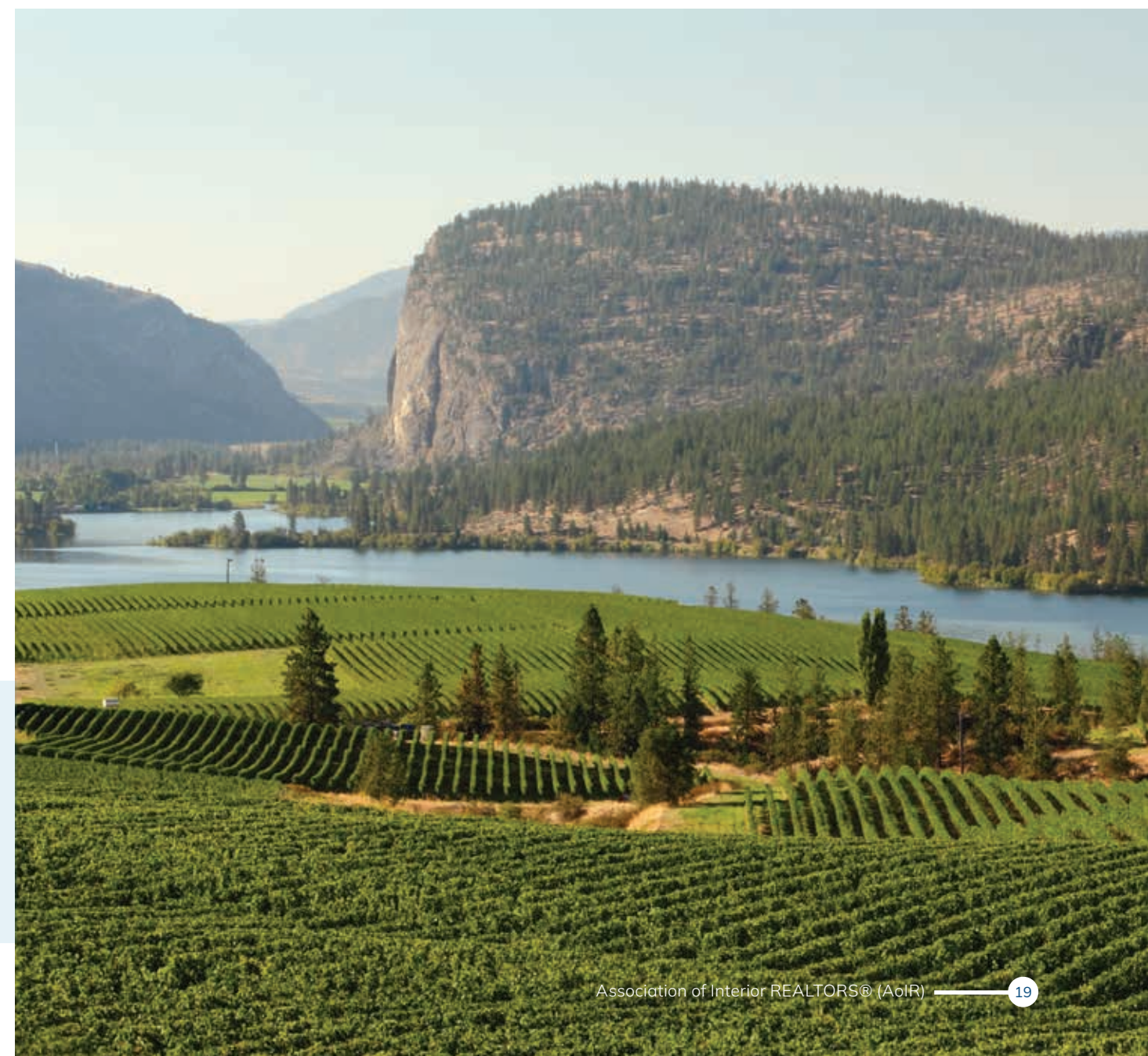
54

Emergency Room Closures

between Interior Health and Northern Health due to staffing shortages. The province's response – to streamline licensing for internationally and domestically trained medical professionals – is commendable. But to accommodate increased healthcare licensing and get those professionals to the parts of the province where they are needed, parallel reforms in STR housing must exist to support these workers. To ensure healthcare staffing strategies are successful, provincial STR legislation must create exemptions from the principal residence requirement for STRs used as essential-worker housing, allowing municipalities to respond to healthcare service gaps with the flexibility they need.

“But to accommodate increased healthcare licensing and get those professionals to the parts of the province where they are needed, parallel reforms in STR housing must exist to support these workers.”

To support housing needs near critical services, the province should look to the Transit-Oriented Area (TOA) framework introduced under the *Housing Statutes (Transit-Oriented Areas) Amendment Act, 2023*. The legislation enabled specific land use flexibilities within a defined distance of current and future transit stations. The government could use this model to define exemption zones around, for example, major healthcare facilities located in interior B.C. communities, allowing municipalities to permit STRs for essential workforce accommodation in proximity to those services. By providing geographically defined exemptions for STR use, municipal governments would be better equipped to respond to urgent staffing and housing challenges, particularly in regions that serve as healthcare hubs for surrounding rural areas. The implementation of a similar model in the STR context would ensure that housing and STR regulations do not undermine essential service provision to rural and remote residents.





Case Study: Short-Term Worker Accommodation in Australia

As documented in a 2024 research paper examining worker accommodation needs in Australia's New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), flexible short-term housing is critical to supporting infrastructure delivery in regions facing temporary population surges. The authors highlight that construction-phase workers often require housing for durations ranging from six to 12 months, while operations and maintenance staff may need accommodations spanning several years.

Without proactive planning for such accommodation needs, the report warns of significant risks to project timelines and delivery, noting that limited housing options can delay construction and strain local rental markets. While local governments have expressed concerns about STRs reducing long-term rental stock, the report acknowledges that in low-vacancy rural areas, STRs can play a vital role in absorbing temporary workforce demands that hotels and traditional rentals cannot accommodate. The authors also note that previous efforts to meet workforce housing needs, like isolated worker camps, often lacked community integration and were implemented without consideration of broader land-use planning objectives. These findings underscore the importance of maintaining regulatory flexibility for STRs near essential worksites, particularly in areas where infrastructure projects coincide with limited rental supply and the need for adaptable, community-compatible housing options.



Case Study: Site C Work Camp

In 2016, a \$470 million taxpayer-funded camp opened near Fort St. John. The camp, which was more like a small town, was equipped with a movie theatre, gym, cafeteria and dormitory-style accommodations for workers supporting the Site C hydroelectric dam construction project. B.C. Hydro began looking for a buyer for the camp two years ago and are currently in the process of winding down the project. The camp's 665,000 square-foot facility was offered to public and private sector partners, non-profits, local governments and First Nations to see if there was any interest in its transition for alternative uses. Facing a lack of interest from potential buyers, B.C. Hydro is currently facing a choice of either putting each dormitory structure up for sale individually or demolishing the structure and sending it to a landfill.

Perhaps not at the scale of the Site C Work Camp, the construction of dormitory-style housing to support temporary workers can result in mega-projects that are unable to be repurposed. Comparatively, flexible models, like using vetted STRs near essential worksites, allow for temporary accommodation that can be scaled, community-integrated and easier to transition when there are changes in workforce or industry needs.



Recommendation

To reduce risk of healthcare and essential service disruptions in regions that rely on temporary workers, the province should allow exemptions or flexible provisions under its STR legislation. Using the government's recently passed transit-oriented development area framework as a model, a geographic radius exemption could be established around critical worksites to permit STR use by essential workers. Specifically, the government should apply this exemption to areas with limited rental supply or hotel infrastructure, where STRs are essential to supporting temporary workforce needs.

3 Align STR Regulations with Seasonal Tourism Needs

The new provincial regulations have considered the importance of tourism to some municipalities in B.C., offering them exemptions from the broad enforcement of the principal residence framework. Designated resort regions and mountain resort areas are among those that allow hosts to continue their STR operations to support the local economies that depend on them. Municipalities like Whistler and Revelstoke are a part of this category in their capacities as year-round resort destinations, where hosts can continue operating their STRs without being subject to the same restrictions applied elsewhere in B.C.

Interior communities like Kelowna, Penticton, Nelson and Salmon Arm also experience sustained year-round tourism, but do not fall under categories that designate them as eligible for exemption from provincial STR rules. As a result, these municipalities continue to be regulated by the same regulations and STR restrictions that govern large municipalities, despite having their own housing needs.

The new regulations have considered this, carving out an option for municipalities to apply for an exemption,

“When administrative timelines delay implementation by six months, communities like Tofino are forced into a regulatory limbo, missing an entire summer tourism season despite qualifying for an exemption.

based on criteria set out by the government. The opt-out mechanism, discussed under Recommendation 1 (Empower Municipalities to Designate Short-Term Rental Tourism Zones) allows municipalities to [opt-out of the principal residence requirement](#) if they can demonstrate a rental vacancy rate of 3 per cent or more for two consecutive years, and pass an annual resolution at the municipal level for the opt-out.

The main issue with this rule is that municipalities are required to [submit their resolutions](#) to the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs by March 31 for changes effective on November 1. As a result, communities are forced to uphold restrictive STR rules throughout

128.2 %

Increase in median rent prices for one-bedroom units in Kamloops between 2005 and 2023, outpacing government student loan funding and other sources of student income.

the summer months, even if they qualify for an exemption. The District of Tofino applied for, and was granted, an exemption. Along with the exemption, the city also asked that the changes related to STR rules [take effect immediately](#), a provision that the province ultimately denied, enforcing the November 1 start date. When administrative timelines delay implementation by six months, tourism-dependent communities like Tofino are forced into a regulatory limbo, missing an entire summer tourism season despite qualifying for an exemption. While it is important that municipalities can demonstrate that they have vacancy rates that support both housing goals and STRs, this administrative gap undermines the purpose of local flexibility and deprives municipalities and their citizens of revenue during their busiest months.

In addition to supporting traditional tourism towns, a seasonal exemption model could help address student housing affordability. In municipalities with post-secondary institutions, permitting seasonal STRs outside of the principal residence requirement could serve a dual purpose: improving rental affordability for students during the academic year and supporting local tourism during peak summer months.

For example, at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, undergraduate and law programs typically run for eight months, from September to April, during which many students rely on off-campus housing. For students, the cost of accommodations has risen sharply, with median rent prices for one-bedroom units in Kamloops increasing by [128 per cent](#) between 2005 and 2023, outpacing government student loan funding and other sources of student income. While the impact on students is clear, this dramatically steep increase in rent prices over an 18-year period demonstrates a broader affordability challenge for renters across the interior.

In another example, Okanagan College has more than 500 students per year who require rental accommodations in the community, and only [two residence buildings](#) that can provide housing to the student population. A lack of affordable accommodations can deter prospective students, with [anecdotal evidence](#) suggesting that housing shortages are influencing decisions to attend institutions like Okanagan College.

While the provincial STR regulations do exempt student and employee housing [operated by post-secondary institutions](#) from the principal residence requirement, the exemption is too narrow. If the provincial government implemented a seasonal exemption allowing all STRs between May through August, individual homeowners could rent their secondary units to students during the school year and legally list those same units as STRs during the summer tourism season. This model would support housing stability for students in the academic months while allowing property owners to participate in the tourism economy, particularly in interior cities where both seasonal visitor demand and student housing needs are high.



Recommendation

To continue supporting tourism-dependent economies, the province should significantly shorten the implementation timelines for municipalities that meet the criteria for a principal residence opt-out exemption, allowing exemptions to take effect immediately upon approval. In addition, the province can offer a seasonal STR exemption framework that permits STR activity in non-principal residences during defined tourism months. This would allow municipalities with student populations, high numbers of seasonal workers and tourism-based local economies to balance the needs of many temporary, longer-term renters with STRs that support individuals travelling to these communities.

4 Expand the Strata Hotel and Fractional Ownership Exemption

Strata hotels and fractional ownership properties, that are purpose-built STR developments, are an integral part of B.C.'s tourism economy. In tourism-focused regions in B.C.'s interior, these properties are specifically designed for short-term use, often featuring limited storage, compact kitchens and a lack of amenities that full-time residents typically require. While the design and functionality of some strata hotels can technically accommodate renters, as opposed to tourists or temporary workers, these units were [not built](#) to contribute to the overall long-term housing supply. When the province included strata hotels as part of STR legislation, property owners, REALTORS® and potential buyers were forced to navigate [confusing exemption rules](#).

These exemption rules were the province's attempt at removing the principal residence requirement from certain strata hotels and fractional ownership units. Although logical, the [government's criteria](#) for exemption qualification, including centralized front-desk services, restrictive covenants and management agreements, do not cover the full scope of models used by this type of development. These inconsistencies lead to uneven outcomes across communities and limit local governments' ability to manage their tourism-related housing supply effectively.

Case Study: Nelson and the Strata Hotel Gap

Nelson is one of several municipalities that does not qualify for an exemption from the province's principal residence requirement, as it has a population greater than 10,000 residents and is not designated as a resort municipality under the legislation. Despite meeting key criteria, like requiring STR businesses to collect the Municipal, Regional and District Tax and having a thriving tourism sector.

As a result, some strata hotel operators in Nelson are now subject to the same restrictions as individual residential hosts, despite operating under entirely different business models. These regulations apply even in cases where the properties were designed and zoned for commercial use, creating confusion and concern among businessowners in the downtown core. Many of the buildings in Nelson that buyers would classify as "[purpose-built STRs](#)" lack essential aspects, like on-site waste-disposal services, that are important parts of a building that supports long-term tenants. If an owner wants to abide by the rules for strata hotels, the conversion of existing properties to a hotel classification would subject them to significantly higher [commercial property tax rates](#).

Residents are feeling the pressure of the legislation on the current market, forcing some to consider shutting down or relocating their business completely. Policies like permitting exemptions for individually owned commercial units (that are located in a commercially-zoned building); removing the front-desk requirement to ease financial burden on small strata hotel operators; taking a grandfathering approach to exempting commercial STR units that were legally operating before the introduction of the legislation to remain exempt for a period; and allowing municipalities to have a larger role in nominating certain strata hotels, commercial units or fractional ownership units for exemption using their community knowledge, are all feasible adjustments that could be made to support small businesses in cities across the province.

Municipalities across B.C. continue to struggle with the province's rigid approach to strata hotel exemptions. Purpose-built STRs, like those seen in [two buildings in Kelowna](#), were denied their request to remain exempt from the provincial regulations. These developments were constructed to serve tourists, not long-term tenants, and like other examples included in this section, lack the amenities and services necessary for permanent residency. The dismissal of their exemption application has left local governments and [REALTORS®](#) concerned about the consistency of the exemption framework, given the financial pressure these regulations could place on commercial STR owners. While the province has indicated it remains in ongoing discussions with local municipal councils around strata hotel exemptions and expansions, a more clearly defined (or expanded) exemption process and criteria that consider a building's original purpose, design and municipal zoning rules must be prioritized.

Recommendation

The province should update its strata hotel and fractional ownership regulations to exempt purpose-built STR properties and allow them to operate as originally intended. Exemptions should be based on factors like zoning, marketing and building functionality, as opposed to limited criteria such as front-desk service.

Conclusion

The primary aim of B.C.'s Short-Term Rental Accommodations Act, 2023 was to curb the growth of STRs and return those units back to the long-term rental market. By making it more difficult to operate an STR in B.C., the province sought to boost rental housing supply and make rents more affordable for residents.

Unfortunately, since the legislation was introduced, rent prices across the province have continued to rise significantly, demonstrating a lack of noticeable impact on overall housing affordability.

This disconnect raises important questions about the effectiveness of blanket STR restrictions in addressing B.C.'s broader housing crisis—and highlights why supply-side measures, such as increasing housing construction and reducing regulatory barriers, are more likely to deliver meaningful, long-term improvements to vacancy rates and affordability.

In particular, the impact of these restrictions on B.C.'s interior communities warrants closer attention. In many of these regions, there is little evidence that the new rules have improved rental supply or reduced housing costs. Meanwhile, the economic consequences have been real: small businesses, tourism operators, and travelling healthcare and infrastructure workers—many of whom rely on STRs—are facing growing challenges. In communities where hotel capacity is limited and seasonal tourism is essential, the availability of STRs can mean the difference between a thriving local economy and one that struggles to support both visitors and residents.

Where they are permitted to operate, STRs continue to provide real and necessary benefits—particularly in B.C.'s smaller interior municipalities. These include supporting tourism, accommodating rotating workforces, providing emergency housing during natural disasters, and offering supplemental income that helps families remain housed in high-cost regions. A more flexible approach is needed—one that recognizes the unique needs of B.C.'s diverse communities and avoids one-size-fits-all restrictions that may do more harm than good.



Appendix A

Region	STR Fees	Application Process	Renewal Process
Coldstream	<p>Coldstream does not permit STR accommodations in the District</p> <p>Coldstream is working on a more formal approach to STRs as part of their Official Community Plan review</p> <p>Bed-and- breakfasts are currently permitted</p> <p>Bed-and-breakfast business licenses have a fee of \$60, with an additional fee of \$4 per bed</p>	<p>Bed-and- breakfast owners must apply for a business license</p> <p><i>Note:</i> Coldstream council reports that the District generates less than \$500 a year from business license fees for permitted bed-and-breakfasts on serviced residential properties</p>	<p>Payment due February 15th of each year</p>
Cranbrook	<p>Note: Cranbrook does not have regulations or restrictions on STRs in bylaws BUT the Regional District of East Kootenay adopted a Short-Term Rental Temporary Use Permit Policy in 2023</p> <p>STR Licenses have a fee of \$1500 for a delegated application, \$3000 for a non-delegated application (this is up to the discretion of staff)</p>	<p>STR operators must apply for a Short-Term Rental Temporary Use Permit (TUP) license</p> <p>Non-delegated applicants can request to present to the RDEK Board regarding their application</p> <p>STR TUP Permits must be completed in addition to the Province's registration requirement</p>	<p>Issued permits are valid for up to 3 years from the date of issuance</p> <p>Renewal of permits is possible for an additional 3 years and will be considered under the same criteria that they were initially (delegated or non-delegated)</p>
Kamloops	<p>A business license is required for STR accommodation at a cost of \$67.20 annually per unit</p>	<p>Application process requires proof of ownership and principal residence, approval from a strata corporation if applicable, the completion of a good neighbour agreement and an inspection</p>	<p>Business license and good neighbour agreement must be signed yearly as part of the renewal process</p>
Kelowna	<p>There is a \$50 application fee</p>	<p>If approval of application is issued, owners are required to pay a \$345 annual license fee</p>	<p>Renewals are processed annually</p>

License Limitations	Rental Limitations	Penalties for Non-Compliance
<p>Bed-and-breakfasts are only permitted on fully serviced lots previously zoned under Bylaw No. 1726</p> <p>Must be operated from the registered owner's primary residence and the property must be a permanent fixed address</p> <p>Must be operated within a single-detached dwelling with no additional units (eg. no duplex, triplex, fourplex, detached ADU or secondary suite on the lot).</p> <p>For a secondary suite use, a long-term rental must be a minimum of 90 consecutive days or 3 months in tenure in accordance with the <i>Short-Term Rental Accommodations Act</i></p>	<p>No signage advertising is permitted on the lot</p> <p>Use of ADU for rental purposes is not permitted</p> <p>Maximum 2 bedrooms can be rented</p>	<p>Various fire safety non-compliance penalties</p>
<p>If property used for STR is in the Agricultural Land Reserve, approval from the Agriculture Land Commission may be required</p> <p>If zoning does not allow for commercial use, then a TUP is required to offer an STR on a property</p> <p>STR TUPs may only be issued for one dwelling unit per parcel and are not permitted in boats, RVs, tents, yurts, or other non-permanent dwellings</p>	<p>STRs may offer a maximum occupancy of 10 guests at any time</p> <p>Minimum parking based on guest count: 1 space (1–4 guests), 2 (5–8), 3 (9–10)</p> <p>Maximum occupancy tied to unit size, combined occupancy for all STRs on a parcel must comply with Section 4.1.h</p>	<p>Failure to adhere to the requirements may face enforcement action including fines or cancelation of TUP</p> <p>RDEK has a 24-hour hotline and webform to allow residents to report non-compliant STRs (including noise, poor guest behaviour, violations of a permit or non-permitted operation of STRs)</p>
<p>The property used for an STR must be the owner's principal residence</p> <p>Only one STR booking is permitted at a time per unit</p> <p>STRs are not allowed in conjunction with home-based daycares, residential care homes or where a home-based business permits customer/client visits</p>	<p>The number of STR guests is limited based on the total number of people living in the dwelling long-term</p> <p>The total number of people in the entire dwelling unit cannot exceed five unrelated individuals</p> <p>For families of three or more, the combined total number of boarders, lodgers and STR guests is limited to two</p>	<p>Operating without a business license can result in fines between \$200 and \$10,000</p> <p>Failure to display a business license number on listings may result in a \$50 fine</p> <p>Kamloops can request the removal of non-compliant listings from STR platforms</p>
<p>Operators must reside at the property for a minimum period of 240 days in each calendar year to be eligible for a STR rental business license</p> <p>Operators must advise if they are providing parking or not for guests and include it in online marketing, as well as the business license number and the number of permitted sleeping units</p>	<p>No more than one booking or reservation is permitted in each dwelling unit at one time</p> <p>No more than two adults may occupy a sleeping unit</p> <p>A maximum of 3 bedrooms can be used for short-term rental accommodation per dwelling unit</p> <p>Where a lot contains a single detached</p>	<p>Kelowna operates an online complaint filing system for STR oversight</p> <p>Operators may face municipal fines of up to \$500 per day per offence, more if compliance efforts need to be escalated</p>

Appendix A

Region	STR Fees	Application Process	Renewal Process
Lake Country	\$100 application fee is required to begin business license application process	STRs must be located within a zone that permits their use under the District Zoning Bylaw No 561 The STR must be located within the operator's primary residence and not in a secondary suite	Annual business license fee is \$350
Nelson	31-day licenses cost \$160 Four-month licenses cost \$110 (one guest room) to \$400 (guest home or suite) Annual licenses range from \$200 to \$1,709	The property must be an applicant's principal residence Local contacts who will be able to respond to calls and inquiries during the duration of a guest stay must be identified as part of the application process There are three types of licenses: 31-day, four-month (four periods of 31 consecutive days) and annual	Renewed annually
Penticton	STR operators must pay the business license which has an annual cost to the applicant of \$540\ per year	The application process requires a safety inspection conducted by the city's Licensing and Property Use Inspector. The inspection specifically looks at emergency safety and sleeping room plans, if units contain fire safety mechanisms, stairs and handrails and electrical and gas systems, among others.	A renewal fee (amount depends on the fee schedule) is charged annually
Salmon Arm	Fees for business licenses to operate STRs vary TUP application fees are \$1,150, including a \$150 Land Title Office registration fee	Owners must determine if their property is zoned to permit STRs If not, owners must use a TUP	A TUP is valid for up to three years and can be renewed once for an additional three years

License Limitations	Rental Limitations	Penalties for Non-Compliance
Operators must reside in the property for most of the year The STR must be located in the operator's primary residence and use of secondary suites is not permitted	All guest vehicles must be parked on the property Only four sleeping units may be rented out at the same time	No specific fines, but operating without valid license or violating zoning or residency conditions may result in enforcement action by Lake Country under local and provincial STR regulations
Nelson only permits the licensing of 110 STR properties per year Nelson only permits 40 four-month permits to be granted a year A maximum of three STRs are permitted within one block (defined in city bylaws) Guests must maintain a daily guest registry which can be requested by the city at any point	2 adult guests are permitted per room, and four per suite No more than 6 adult guests shall be accommodated per guest house License number must be included in all advertisements Parking requirements vary based on STR type	Failure to display license information can result in the revocation of an operator's license If an operator's license is revoked, they are barred from holding a STR operator's license for a minimum of two years Operating without a valid business license can result in fines of \$500 per day
If there are two dwellings on a property (ex. Single-detached and secondary suite) only one may be used for the purpose of a STR A must be posted in a visible location from the street for a home rental or from public areas in a multi-unit building and include contact numbers and maximum overnight occupant load	No signage advertising is permitted on the lot Penticton offers STR operators a comprehensive digital guide outlining strict upgrades and improvements that are mandatory in order to pass the safety inspection required to be able to operate an STR Penticton is currently aligning their bylaws to reflect an 8-person occupancy maximum on all STRs	Bylaw enforcement officers actively enforce STR regulations, with enforcement being largely complaint-based Property owners operating without a business license or against the regulations will be liable for daily fines for an ongoing offence
If zoning does not permit an STR, a TUP is required The STR should be operated within an existing dwelling unit The season of use must be specified in the TUP STR use of more than one dwelling unit is discouraged An STR operator must identify a local contact person who will be available to address issues that may arise Where appropriate the owner/operator may be required to reside on the property	Occupancy for a TUP STR should not exceed 10 guests Quiet hours must be specified in the TUP A sign advertising the STR can be placed on the property	A complaint response plan detailing how concerns and complaints will be addressed shall be provided before a TUP is considered for issuance

Appendix A

Region	STR Fees	Application Process	Renewal Process
Summerland	STR business licenses cost \$500	<p>The property must be located in a zone that permits STRs</p> <p>The dwelling must be eligible per Summerland rules, and must meet the primary residence requirement</p> <p>Only dwellings authorized for residential use are eligible to apply for a business license to operate an STR</p>	Licenses are renewed annually
Vernon	<p>Vernon is in the process of developing their Business License By-law. This includes the creation of a new full-time position to oversee the STR licensing program</p> <p>As of now, Vernon complies with provincial regulations</p> <p>Vernon has brought forward Zoning bylaw 6000 which outlines some provisions for STR operation</p>		
Dawson Creek (Exempt)	<p><i>Note:</i> Dawson Creek successfully applied for an exemption from the province's STR regulations in 2024.</p> <p>Business licenses are charged per unit or room and cost \$235.08</p>	<p>The business license application can be found online</p> <p>Operators must confirm that the area that they are operating their STR is zoned for that purpose</p>	Business licenses are renewed annually
West Kelowna (Exempt)	<p>STR application fee is \$250 one-time</p> <p>STR Business License fee is \$500</p>	<p>Applicants must be the registered owner and principal resident of the property</p> <p>A safety inspection must be scheduled</p>	Business license fee is paid annually
Fort St. John (Exempt)	<p><i>Note:</i> Fort St. John successfully applied for an exemption from the province's STR regulations in 2024.</p> <p>A home occupation business license is \$125</p> <p>A temporary use permit costs \$1,500</p> <p>Fort St. John defines this as when business takes place within a dwelling unit or a building or structure accessory to that dwelling unit. A home occupation business includes a bed-and-breakfast</p>	<p>STRs require a valid business license to operate within city limits</p> <p>Zoning Bylaw No 2470 outlines land use regulations, including provisions related to STRs, or more specifically, residential and commercial use of properties depending on a property's zoning</p> <p>Fort St. John uses Temporary Use Permits to allow land uses not permitted under current zoning for a maximum of three years</p>	Temporary use permits are valid for a maximum of a three-year period, allowing land uses that are not permitted by existing municipal zoning

License Limitations	Rental Limitations	Penalties for Non-Compliance
<p>Only one STR is permitted per property, regardless of the number of dwellings on the lot</p> <p>STRs are permitted in specific dwelling types including single-detached dwellings, duplexes, multi-unit housing, townhouses, secondary suites, carriage houses</p>	<p>STRs are limited to a maximum of 4 bedrooms and 8 guests</p> <p>One additional parking spot must be provided for the STR</p>	Operating an STR without a valid business license or non-compliance with regulations may result in enforcement actions, including fines, warning letters and removal of listings from online platforms
<p>No more than one booking or reservation for STR accommodation is permitted in each dwelling unit at one time</p>	<p>The number</p> <p>No more than two adults may occupy a sleeping unit used for STR accommodation</p> <p>Parking must be provided, and operators cannot rely on visitor parking spaces</p>	
<p>STRs are permitted in all residential zones</p> <p>STRs are also permitted to adhere to all provincial regulations as applicable</p>		<p>Operating STRs without a license can result in a fine from \$100 per day up to \$10,000 total</p> <p>Complaints can be reported through the city's portal</p>
<p>STRs are only permitted in specific zones per West Kelowna's bylaws</p> <p>Operators must display the license prominently inside the home</p> <p>STRs are permitted on parcels that contain two dwellings – a single-family dwelling and a secondary suite or a single-family dwelling and a carriage house</p>	<p>A maximum of one STR operation is permitted per dwelling</p>	<p>Fines for operating without a license, exceeding approved bedroom limits or advertising without listing a license number range from \$100 to \$3,000 per day, per offence</p>
<p>If zoning does not allow for commercial use, then a TUP is required to offer an STR on a property</p>	<p>No specific mentions, but Fort St. John recommends contacting the Development Services Department to ensure your property meets the necessary regulations</p>	Operating an STR without a valid business license can result in a 10 per cent monthly fee increase for each month the business remains unlicensed

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