



Federation of Ontario Bed & Breakfast Accommodation



the bed & breakfast **voice**

Serving Hosts serving Guests

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Setting a new Standard *The direction of the industry*

At last fall's Annual General Meeting, the B&B industry was once again reminded that new government regulations are coming, whether we like it or not. The only real question now is, what are we going to do about it?

regulation

It seems obvious to say, but everything in the world runs on rules. There are accepted rules-of-the-road to maintain order. Governments enact laws, corporations have policies and sporting events have referees. Without rules, it's safe to say the world would be quite a disorderly place.

Every organized body needs to have some rules. Once people agree on that, the question becomes: what should they be?

Who sets them? How do they affect me? What are the exceptions?

These are precisely the kinds of questions that face the Bed & Breakfast industry in Ontario today. What began with drinking water regulations in a post-Walkerton age, has quickly expanded into other areas of safety and standards, including fire codes and accessibility.

And it's coming not only from the province. While some municipalities already control and license their B&Bs, municipal governments are increasingly getting into the act where they may previously have been silent.

The town of Wasaga Beach, for example—long a wasteland for wannabe Bed & Breakfast operators—has agreed to allow B&Bs to operate, but only after strict compliance with new rules. One of those rules includes mandatory membership in FOBBA.

While FOBBA is pleased that the Wasaga Beach Council has recognized and accepts our industry standards, the broad direction of things is not so heartening. While recent steps have seen some progress, there have been significant changes within the Ministry of Tourism, at both the Minister and Deputy Minister level, so FOBBA again faces the on-going challenge of engaging and educating the new team on the realities we face.

Add to this scenario the fact that B&B operators are still largely unorganized as an industry voice, and you have the possibility of waking up one day to a whole new set of rules that could potentially cripple the industry.

Don't think so? It almost happened with water, and it could well happen again.

FOBBA is doing some-

The danger in setting rules is that they could be dictated by others. We need to set the standards for our industry, ourselves.

...continued page 4



Communications

The Industry Message

We're looking at a great many things right now, and one of them is a two-pronged communications campaign; one targeted at B&B hosts and future FOBBA members; the other directed at the travelling public. The creative concepts pictured here have been developed using the talents of our own members, and we are currently evaluating how best to get the message out.

Due to cost factors, conventional advertising techniques are not really available to us, so for now we are reaching out to Ontario Associations and individual B&B hosts to try and open up the dialogue.

The message to B&B hosts (*at right*) is to bring to the forefront the threat we collectively face from new regulations—regulations that until now have been set by other bodies, without giving us a chance to provide input from our industry perspective.

With your help and support, we hope to present a strong voice to represent your needs and concerns, while speaking for all Ontario Bed & Breakfasts.

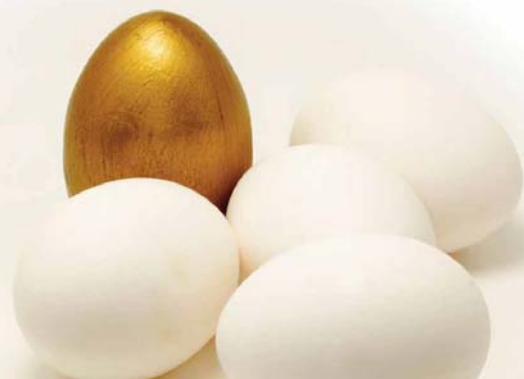
not every ontario bed & breakfast
is cracked up
to meet fobba standards

Our sign is your assurance of quality. For a list of properties, visit

f o b b a . c o m



THE FEDERATION OF ONTARIO BED & BREAKFAST ACCOMMODATION
Inspected & Approved



regulation is coming

THE QUESTION IS, WHAT WILL YOU DO?

WATER • FIRE • ACCESSIBILITY

New regulations are coming, and ignoring them only makes it worse.
We have a choice. We can have a say. We can choose
to regulate ourselves, or wait for government to tell us what to do.

Send regulators the message.
Join FOBBA today.

SelfRegulation.ca



THE FEDERATION OF ONTARIO BED & BREAKFAST ASSOCIATIONS
Your voice for your choice.



The Public Message

The public campaign will be focussed on marketing and awareness about FOBBA quality assurance. The message (*at left*) is that a FOBBA member is likely not to disappoint, because they meet the standards for membership, and have been inspected and approved by their peers (*see Peer Review, page 3*). Additional non-mandatory ratings can go even further to add value for the hosts, and credibility to the experience a host property provides.

We recognize that other local Associations also have standards—often rigorous ones—which their members are required to meet, and FOBBA does not pretend to be the only authority on what constitutes a great guest experience. For this reason, we are actively seeking out relationships with local Associations to consolidate and combine our efforts.

However, as a provincial association, we are in the broad-based position to assure tourists and visitors that no matter where they travel in Ontario, the FOBBA logo is their sign of Quality Assurance.

A fresh look and a new approach

Your voice for your choice

With this first issue of The Bed & Breakfast Voice, FOBBA is setting a new standard for communicating with both members and future members.

In past years, the Federation of Ontario Bed & Breakfast Accommodation has emailed quarterly newsletters to its members, helping to keep them informed about goings-on within the Association, and the industry.

With this new publication, we are setting a new standard, both in terms of content and style. We are also expanding our newsletter distribution list to all the Bed & Breakfasts in Ontario that we know about, in an effort to keep everyone informed.

This is an important first step toward strengthening our collective position when we advocate on your behalf. B&Bs in Ontario are a big part of the tourism industry, but because most properties are small by

hotel and motel standards, we often don't get the attention we need and deserve from government when it comes to setting policies and spending priorities.

We're doing our best to change all that. We have some new policies of our own, a re-energized executive, and the beginnings of an ambitious 5-year plan that will help B&B operators take more control of their future, and what happens to them as a result of changes in the tourism industry.

If you have questions, or would like to become a member, please visit our website at www.fobba.com. In the meantime, we hope you will read, enjoy and think about some of the issues raised in this newsletter. And let us know if there is something you're particularly interested in, or want to know more about.

The Federation of Ontario Bed & Breakfast Accommodation is Your Voice for Your Choice!

Peer Review

Part of becoming a FOBBA member is participating in an inspection process that involves you—the host—and two current FOBBA members in good standing. There is no additional cost for an inspection.

It's a simple and non-threatening Peer Review, designed to ensure that the basic standards for operating a B&B in Ontario are met. Criteria are specific to our Bed and Breakfast reality, which is quite different from a hotel or motel, where the owners do not live in residence. (*See definition of a B&B, page 4.*)

Some of the things we look for are safety-related, such as having GFI plugs where

required, flashlights and fire extinguishers. Other criteria relate to food safety and general hygiene, such as having sufficient cold storage, covered waste containers, and liquid or individually wrapped soaps in guest bathrooms.

Conditions for FOBBA membership are not onerous—they are mostly a matter of common sense.

Membership in FOBBA gives you and your guests the confidence and assurance that your property is "Inspected and Approved". To have a look at the inspection checklist, visit www.fobba.com and click on Join FOBBA.



Update on Drinking Water Regulations

Any B&B with a private well is probably aware of the requirements regarding water testing, as a result of Walkerton. Here's the latest news.

On April 21, the proposed new and transitional regulations were posted on the government of Ontario's Environmental Registry website.

The long and the short of it is that administration of the regulation is moving from the Ministry of Environment to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care—a position that FOBBA has long argued in favour of.

A Risk Assessment procedure will be put in place, in which a trained Public Health Inspector will visit your property and perform an objective, site-specific assessment. This is unlikely to reach the B&B industry until 2010, since the Ministry is likely to start with High Risk situations, which generally do not include B&Bs.

Until the Risk Assessment, existing procedures remain in effect. The law requires you to test your water every month that you are open as a B&B, and keep records of all your test results. If you have an adverse result, you are required to report it to the Public Health office immediately, and to take the prescribed remedial action.

Note that these regulations do not apply to B&Bs that obtain their drinking water from a Municipal system.

If you're not familiar with the regulations, you can visit the Ministry website at www.ebr.gov.on.ca/ERS-WEB-External/. (Enter registry number 010-3353.) For a layman's interpretation of this issue, a history of the regulation, and additional links, you can also visit: www.wellsafe.net.

Standards, continued from page 1...

thing about that. The Board of Directors has set itself the challenging task of developing a five-year strategic plan that we hope will result in a culture of “self-regulation” within the industry, as opposed to being regulated by outside forces. FOBBA is firmly opposed to regulation that is imposed on B&Bs in the province without consultation, and we are actively following a plan that hopes to have our standards recognized, both by operators and visitors, right across the province.

It’s a daunting task, but it has already begun. (See Ratings, below.)

Reaching out to local Associations

Local B&B Associations

have done much in their own right to champion the cause of self-governance. For this reason, FOBBA is reaching out to these organizations, and taking the step of declaring them *information members*.

Because we are a Federation of Associations, we see this as a needed and inevitable step. Our role is to provide support, and resources where possible, to the needs, issues and goals of B&Bs throughout the province.

Those resources, however, are currently somewhat limited. As an organization of volunteers, we face the same demands and

challenges that affect any not-for-profit, including all local B&B Associations and the members who comprise them.

Membership changes coming

One of the points in FOBBA’s five-year plan will be to evolve a membership strategy that makes it more affordable to join FOBBA, defines additional benefits, and increases financial revenue through membership growth. This plan is in its early stages, and more details will be announced soon.

As resources grow, one of our goals will be to recruit part-time staff support, which will help accelerate our advocacy and marketing initiatives beyond what our volunteer group currently has time to do.

Local B&B Associations have done much to champion the cause of self-governance. For this reason, FOBBA is reaching out to these organizations and making them members of FOBBA by definition.

The challenge starts now

This newsletter is just an initial snapshot of the issues we will continue to address with you in the coming months and years. We hope you find the information valuable, and that you consider getting involved by becoming a FOBBA member.

Whether or not you do right now, our approach will be the same—we will continue to reach out, and with your permission, communicate with you and the rest of the industry about our future.

This is a major victory for all B&Bs, because FOBBA criteria reflect the Bed & Breakfast reality. And as hosts and guests know, a Bed & Breakfast experience is purposefully different than what visitors would find in a hotel or motel.

Government has not yet made ratings mandatory, so completing the rating process remains a voluntary decision.

Marketing & Ratings

FOBBA has been recognized by BBCanada as the official rating organization for B&Bs in Ontario. This means that if you decide to rate your property, *your stars will be posted by BBCanada on your BBCanada subscriber page, provided that you are a FOBBA member and complete the rating process.*



Definition of a Bed & Breakfast

The following definition of a B&B has been adopted by a number of local Associations across Ontario, and is a central focus in our efforts to help government and tourism agencies understand our industry, and deal with us in an appropriate way.

FOBBA defines a Bed and Breakfast as:

“An owner-occupied private residential dwelling that is the owners’ principal residence and in which the owner has control of the environment. It provides temporary accommodation not exceeding 28 consecutive days, and amenities and services ancillary to guest accommodation, including the preparation and service of breakfast for an all inclusive fee.”



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