

From: [Abraham Zebian](#)
To: [Deanna Snair](#)
Subject: Fwd: Marketing Levy | Concerns re: Valley REN Presentation on 1.13.26
Date: January 20, 2026 8:42:08 AM
Attachments: [Valley REN Presentation - 1.13.26 Concerns.pdf](#)

From: Tricia Slobogian-Sanford [REDACTED]
Date: January 19, 2026 at 4:36:55 PM AST
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Cc: Luke [REDACTED]
Subject: Marketing Levy | Concerns re: Valley REN Presentation on 1.13.26

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Hi everyone,

My husband and I are local STR owners in West Hants and have been following the discussions around the marketing levy proposal. We were out of the country during the Valley RENs presentation last week. Upon viewing the recording of the Committee of the Whole meeting and listening to their presentation, we have several concerns regarding some of the information presented. See summary attached outlining these concerns that can be included in your next meeting package.

We would like to know if council would host a meeting or town hall with local STR operators in the area for feedback before moving forward so that an informed decision can be made. We do not feel that this proposal

has been well communicated to this community and this would be a true opportunity to hear from the collective group.

Thank you
Tricia & Luke

Concerns About the Proposed 3% Marketing Levy on Small Short-Term Rentals (STRs) in West Hants based on the Valley REN presentation on January 13, 2026.

1. Financial Impact on Small Rural STR Operators

Recording timestamp - 1:03 | **“Marketing Levy will not have any direct financial impact on any west hants residents or businesses”**

- The claim that the levy won't affect West Hants residents/businesses is misleading. Many small STR owners live locally and will be financially impacted. A uniform levy disproportionately burdens small rural hosts, effectively subsidizing larger accommodations.
- A 3% levy will raise rental prices, making West Hants less competitive versus neighboring areas without a levy or other forms of accommodation that don't pass on costs.
- Small operators with tight margins may see profits shrink, discouraging part-time hosts and reducing local tourism capacity. We have seen this happen with the implementation of the provincial registration requirements.
- Without small STRs, accommodation options would shrink significantly, as hotels are limited. Unique rural experiences (cottages, lake access) can't be replicated by hotels. Risk of reduced rural rental supply would hurt the local economy and small businesses that see an uptick in traffic from STR guests.

Important to note: without small STR operators that use platforms like airbnb / VRBO - accommodation availability within West Hants would significantly shrink as roughly **~96% of listings use Airbnb either exclusively or alongside Vrbo** — showing Airbnb dominates the STR marketplace in this region.

2. Administrative Burden and Enforcement Issues

Recording timestamp - 1:09 | **“Administrative burden - recommendation to address that is a third party platform that really simplifies the process of remitting a marketing levy”**

- Valley REN's suggested third-party platform solution lacks clear details and won't eliminate the administrative burden for small hosts.

- If platforms like Airbnb don't automatically collect/remit the levy, hosts face extra reporting, compliance, and potential penalties.
- Airbnb already collects and remits a similar levy in Halifax, easing burden for hosts there.

SOURCE: <https://www.airbnb.ca/help/article/2283>

3. Existing Marketing Through Airbnb and Social Media

Recording Timestamp - 1:35 | “What part of a DMMO does is try to spread the visitors out and get them to the hidden gems that people don't really know about and have a hard time marketing themselves because they have no marketing dollars to do so”

- Small STRs already benefit from powerful, low-cost marketing via Airbnb and social media:
 - Airbnb offers global reach, SEO, targeted exposure, trust features (reviews, verification), and algorithm-driven discovery—even for “hidden gems” in rural areas.
 - Social media platforms provide free or low-cost promotion, direct guest engagement, and organic user-generated content. Platforms like **Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and local tourism groups** allow STR owners to: share photos and stories of their property, promote local experiences and attractions, build repeat guest relationships and encourage referrals and word-of-mouth.

Example: Nova Scotia Staycation 2026 group on Facebook has ~84,000 members where local businesses, STRs, accommodations, etc. all advertise, exchange and share Nova Scotia tourism information at **no cost**.

Example: There is a small tik tok account that runs out of the Kempt Shore that has already received over 22,000 views on its content in the last 6 months (@by.the.c.cheverie)

- Municipal marketing levy duplicates services hosts already pay for, with little added benefit.

4. Tourism Nova Scotia Offers Free Listing and Marketing

Recording Timestamp - 1:37:57 | “Madeleine islands is a really good example of how - you can actually go to their DMMO site and see all of the available bookings including things like airbnbs”

- Tourism Nova Scotia's official website already provides free accommodation listings with high traffic and strong SEO.

- This service reduces the need for paid marketing campaigns and supports small operators in reaching travelers. See direct messaging that came from their tourism development advisor:

“As the official trip planning website for visitors to Nova Scotia, this website sees some 10 million+ unique hits on an annual basis, so it’s a great place to have an online profile. The website also has very strong search engine optimization (SEO), so listing may also help to improve your business’ SEO. Additionally, for the majority of Tourism Nova Scotia programs, it is a requirement to be listed on the website. You can learn more about Tourism Nova Scotia programs and resources on our industry resource website: tourismns.ca. It’s totally free to list! To get started with a listing, you can confirm your eligibility [HERE](#), then:

- Complete an [accommodation listing application form](#). We recommend developing the description for your business in a separate document, so you have more room to work. If you’d like coaching or feedback provided on your listing description, please let me know, I’d be happy to assist.
- Send your business listing application form, business description, and at least one (up to 10) photo(s) to Digital Marketing Coordinator Stephanie at Stephanie.Wadden@novascotia.ca. Photos that are landscape/horizontal and at least 800kb up to 5mb work best on listings.
- Accommodation businesses are also required to complete monthly [accommodation occupancy reporting](#) to be listed on NovaScotia.com.”

5. Direct Booking Challenges for Small Rural STRs

Recording Timestamp - 1:38:13 | “it might actually take away the need to be on things like Booking.com and some of these platforms that charge pretty high fees to book through and by the way, the best way to book is book direct and don’t book through Booking.com because they will take sometimes 15%”

- Valley REN’s suggestion that a marketing levy could replace booking platforms ignores:
 - Costs and complexity of setting up and maintaining direct booking systems
 - Higher insurance requirements for direct bookings (and sometimes will not cover bookings unless inside of a platform depending on the type of property)
 - Traveler trust built into platforms (reviews, secure payments, dispute resolution)

- Need for payment processing, fraud prevention, multi-language support, currency conversion, time-zone communication, etc.
- Platforms absorb these burdens and risks, making them more practical for small operators. The wheel does not need to be reinvented.