From: Jason Penner
Sent: Monday, May 17, 2021 1:24 PM
To: CLK-CityClerks <CityClerks@winnipeg.ca>
Subject: Attention: Executive Policy Committee - Short-term rental concerns in condos

To whom it may concern,

After purchasing and living in a condo since Fall 2016, I have come to grow increasingly concerned about the effects that the AirBnB business model and practices have had on my safety and security, and what they might mean for all decision making and the re-purposing of condominium living in Winnipeg.

I believe we are now at a critical juncture. I have had my own experiences but I believe they are relatable to all condominium owners who are invested in having their property contribute to community building, and being a safe and secure place to live; a place where one would want to live in peace.

For brevity's sake, I will list some of my concerns and experiences. They are in no particular order, and all are concerning.

- I'm a resident in the Glasshouse tower at 311 Hargrave, and while I will provide examples related to my experiences and knowledge, I want to stress that these matters are concerning to all condominiums in Winnipeg.
- My building is being taken over by investors and turned into a ghost hotel. A ghost hotel that is not owned and operated by one company but by many businesses. A ghost hotel that doesn't pay taxes as a hotel would, does not provide 24 hour services and security as a hotel would, and who's ownership and contact information is not made known to those living there.
- Condominiums that are being taken over as ghost hotels have become desirable for partying and criminal activity. In my case, I live at the Glasshouse. It has become a popular place for people to get wild after a concert or game during pre-pandemic times, and during the pandemic it has been very popular for COVID parties and for travellers to utilize, shirking all consideration for COVID isolation and grouping protocols.
- Let this sink in. Toronto has banned short term rentals at times during the pandemic. It has just been announced in the media that Manitoba has the worst rate of COVID infection per capita in the country right now. There has been no clamp down on individuals renting AirBnB units.
- While other cities, such as Toronto, has recognized and taken measures to regulate and in some cases ban AirBnB, real estate in Winnipeg remains a Wild West. It seems that our economy is so eager for growth that we're lacking in taking measures to ensure that economic growth and building projects need to be guided and regulated so that they contribute to communities. When people are presented the opportunity to live downtown and consider downtown Winnipeg their home, they are creating for Winnipeg the possibility of change and further renewal in this community. People who want to make downtown living and downtown condominium living a part of their life's journey are now finding themselves in a place where downtown development doesn't seem to have much regard for them. Communities thrive on people living there, shopping there, sleeping there, not just by patronizing bars and venues in the area a few nights a week, or treating a condominium as a place where they can escape their homes and party or act irresponsibly without any consideration for those who might want to live and lead their everyday lives there.
- Although I speak of downtown development and community building (which I think is critical to this city if it wants to modernize and revitalize itself), these concerns can be relatable to people and situations all over this city.
- At a recent meet-the-board meeting, the owner of a unit shared his frustrations. He's a doctor himself, and purchased a unit to rent to individuals who were studying and launching their professional medical careers. Medical students, doctors in residency. And these are the people who rented his unit, and they contributed not only to our community as residents, but also to the pandemic. Can you imagine what it would be like to be a medical professional working 12-hour shifts, and to have time and again wild parties and unruly behaviour keep you up while you're trying to sleep? Can you imagine being a

woman living alone and having a drunken male hammering on your door in the middle of the night, demanding to get let in? This doctor claimed that he was fed up, that his fellow colleagues and medical students no longer wanted to rent such a place, and that he was forced to sell with an asking price tens of thousands of dollars under his purchase price.

- This brings us to another matter. Articles in the paper tell of our hot housing market, of asking prices skyrocketing. What once was a desirable and stylish new condominium has now become something—I don't know what—that is well on its way to becoming a ghost hotel, and property value has plummeted well below purchase prices when it was built in 2016.
- At this recent meet-the-board meeting, AirBnB businesses claimed that they are taking action, that they are putting together a ban list. There are many problems with this and there has been no suggestion to me that my concerns above have been or will be addressed. Whatever an AirBnB business might claim, without regulation there is no obligation for them to provide proof of their claims (ban lists for example, which are useless and ineffective in a business model that has groups of people partying, where guests can be let in, with the business and the building unaware of who they are). Even if an individual is banned, a friend can rent the next time. As well, these AirBnBs are not obligated to join in on this claim of unity and joint AirBnB action, nor would they be obligated to remain committed to measures even if they had any hint of resolving issues, nor are AirBnB businesses obligated to share information between themselves and their clients unless they are legally compelled to.
- This next is perhaps the most critical. AirBnB businesses have been urging patience as my condominium board has been trying to address this matter, which has hit a critical juncture. AirBnB unit owners, along with the developer (who still has units to sell) have handcuffed the condominium board with their voting power. One unit of ownership equals one vote. More and more units are being sold and purposed as short term rentals. More and more voting power in having say as to how my condominium is operated is being given to business initiatives. Businesses and individuals who do not live downtown, who do not live in the city, who do not live in the province, who do not even live in the country. While urging patience, a group of investors, enabled by the developer and their voting power, is trying to take over the condo board by forcing an election. There is now a limited number of people who own units and live here, or who are otherwise invested in owning a unit and have it contribute to community living, not profit-making. This voting power is unconcerned with what people living here have to experience. They are not invested in our safety and security, they do not care if we can't sleep at night or have to wonder if it's going to be safe to walk certain parts of our building at certain times of the day, or at any time.
- I am very concerned that soon, the building will be taken over not just by unruly conduct, by the shirking of businesses' responsibilities onto condo security and maintenance staff, but by having our building entirely repurposed, with me having bought a unit and trapped here and subjected to the continued and unhindered trajectory of this outcome. Is this going to turn into a horror story? It kind of already is.

It's time to regulate predatory AirBnB business practices. They ruin buildings purposed for community living, and in turn they are also a detriment to building and fostering healthy and vibrant communities. People invested in owning and residing at a condominium should retain voting power and not have theirs overpowered by developers desperate for a sale so that they can pursue their next development, or entrepreneurs such as AirBnB businesses, who want to duck taxes, regulations.

I find myself now in the position where months from now, or maybe in a year or two, my condominium board might not be filled with the new neighbours that I have, but by representatives of distant investors, and of AirBnB owners. I might find myself living in a place that has secured itself as a ghost hotel, with my condo fees paying for their operations, subsidizing their property damages, their business plans.

We need to ban short term rentals during pandemics, we need to ban short term rentals in condos that don't have owner residing there, and we need to give owners residing in their condos more voting power, and investors not a part of that building and neighborhood community less voting power so that they can't take over condo boards or vote down community-intent initiatives.

Thank you for your time,
Jason