From: Melanie Mitchell <
Sent: Thursday, April 14, 2022 5:33 PM
To: Poitras, Andrew
Subject: Attention Executive Policy Committee & Council

Dear Executive Policy Committee and Council,

Today, as you know, there was a snowstorm in Winnipeg. They were calling for it to be the “storm of the century”.

We were expecting guests at our short term rental on McMillan Avenue this afternoon. They were coming in for the weekend from Ottawa to see their family for Passover. This is a special occasion for these former Winnipeggers because they have missed the last two Passovers due to Covid 19 related travel restrictions. Their elderly parents have moved out of the family home in the past two years so they could not host the whole family there as they always did in the years before.

My guests were unsure where/how to hold this important family gathering now. A restaurant setting would be too impersonal but they thought maybe having catered food would be great. Fortunately my short term rental in Crescentwood has a large enough dining room to accommodate all of their extended family for this occasion.

Unfortunately due to the crazy storm raging on last night and today the back lane leading to our STR listing was knee deep in snow. The city crew is understandably still out working on the main routes. Because we have our own skid steer, and a plow on the front of our work truck we were able to clear the entire back lane between Stafford and Harrow to ensure our guests could access their accommodation safely by car if coming from either direction.

The eight or so families who share this back lane with us were thrilled it was handled so much quicker than they expected it to be. One neighbour even came out with some hot chocolate and warm cookies straight from the oven for us!
So when you think about "neighbourhood relations” and “neighbourhood liveability” please keep examples like this in mind. Obviously it was not our responsibility to clear a whole city block of back lane. We did it because it is not only good business (to keep our 5 star reviews coming in), but also because it was just another opportunity to make MM Properties visible in a positive way in that neighbourhood.

We seize every opportunity like that we can get because being well-known and well-liked on that street is important to us personally and professionally. Our special modus operandi on our little street in Crescentwood is not so unlike a city councillor who does everything they can to increase neighbourhood harmony in their ward. That positive influence similarly helps them to be well-known and well-liked, which in turn allows them to continue working at a job they enjoy that benefits the community…just like we do. Win/Win!

That particular listing we have on McMillan Ave is only six months old now but it is already something the neighbours on that block are familiar and comfortable with. I imagine after my STR has been there four or five years there will be even more goodwill built up for MM Properties over on McMillan.

Recently I noticed there was an ad on a Facebook forum where the Blue Bomber administration was seeking short term rental accommodations for the team. I guess the players do not want to stay in a hotel and eat in restaurants for the whole season? These athletes most likely need to cook their own healthy meals and sleep in a much quieter space in order to play their best. Go Bombers! Many of the Winnipeg Jets are also staying in furnished rentals right now.

Just a thought, could City Council not just grandfather in the current existing short term rental businesses? This could avoid the devastation of having a few hundred entrepreneurial Winnipeggers lose their jobs?
Some of the STR operators have already lost their job once in the past two years due to Covid 19 cutbacks, so to lose it again so soon would cause undue hardship.

I technically still have a day job but unfortunately the bottom has fallen right out of Automotive Sales now due to supply chain issues for the parts to build cars with and transportation issues to get the cars from the factory to the dealership. Alrhough I still show up at the dealership each day, the short term rental business now needs to provide/replace the income my household lives on.

You already know this I'm sure, but just a reminder that if short term rental activities were restricted in Winnipeg to primary residences only there would be well over 100 condos going up for sale all at once causing the already soft condo market in Winnipeg to crash due to oversupply flooding the market. That does not seem
fair to all of the condo owners in Winnipeg who are looking to sell their condos (whether they are residents upgrading or investors dumping an asset they can no longer use to generate income).

Going the "primary residence only" route takes a huge tourism draw and lucrative source of revenue for Winnipeg and turns it into just a little side hobby for a select few. Renting a room in somebody's home is for the extreme budget conscious traveller, so how much are they really spending in our restaurants, bars, etc? If each of my guests spend on average $200 per day in Winnipeg, how much do those sleeping on an air mattress in somebody's den spend? Maybe twenty five to fifty dollars a day going into our economy instead? Does a primary residence STR listing have the same volume of stays or do they just do it part time as their financial needs require?

I'm pretty sure our star Jet's player, Kyle Connor, does not want to stay in my spare bedroom or my rec room. I could ask him, but I'd say the likelihood of him laughing in my face is fairly high.

I am still thinking about a comment that was made to me recently by a city councillor that said "if we make short term rentals primary residence only, then they will just end up being self-regulating".

As someone who has had an income suite in the lower level of my primary residence for over 15 years, I have to respectfully and strongly disagree with that train of thought.

I have been to court through the Residential Tennancy Branch at least five or six times in n the past two decades for issues like damage to my suite, non-payment of rent, failure to vacate the suite after an eviction notice was served…and on and on. I challenge you to speak with the RTB about how many of their ongoing cases are to do with suites located within primary residences.

In my experience they are far, far, far from “self regulating” and anyone who thinks a short term rental in a primary residence is any different at all from a long term rental in a primary residence is in for a decent sized surprise.

Wherever you have people you have a potential for conflict. Long term rental, short term rental, permanent residents…there is nearly no difference. They all need regulation and they all need to continue to exist in our community to serve all of the needs of permanent residents, visitors and newcomers to Winnipeg.

I have used this analogy before and I will use it again, a short term rental is like a car and a hotel is like a transit bus. One is not better or worse than the other…they are different, yet equally important. Some do think transit buses are better due to fuel savings for the environment which is valid. Does that mean every one of us needs to give up all of our personal vehicles and just take buses everywhere from now on? Hardly! That argument is about as far fetched as banning short term rentals and forcing everyone in every situation (including private family religious holiday gatherings like Passover) to stay in a block of hotel rooms.

I will bring up the “few bad actors” again. I just want to draw attention to the fact that just last week Airbnb as a company took it upon themselves to shut down what was probably by far the worst STR host in the city. This host had 13 suites at Glasshouse and I think two or three suites on Market Avenue. With this negative element gone there should soon be a noticeable difference in the environment over at that building.

I can’t guarantee there will never be another bad host crop up in Winnipeg, but it can be dealt with. It could always be dealt with quickly and at no cost through the platform, but now it can also be dealt with locally through the regulations our city council is working on currently. I have also heard in passing that there are a few party houses scattered here and there in South West Winnipeg too. Why not let Airbnb help that neighbourhood out of that rut as well? I can definitely put anyone on council in touch with the right people within the inner workings of Airbnb to help make that happen. As they said in the famous line in one of my favourite movies, “Help me help YOU!”

I look forward to seeing the new regulations come out. I anticipate the Executive Committee and Council will come up with a fair, effective and workable solution to govern my industry for years to come. I enjoy being an integral part of the tourism landscape for my home town and a welcoming ambassador to my guests from other provinces and continents.



Melanie Mitchell
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