Submission for Short Term Rental Business in Winnipeg

I am Elizabeth Oduntan, a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant here in Winnipeg. I also operate short term rentals using my rental properties to provide an alternative hosting experience for a unique collection of guests from within and outside the province of Manitoba. In this submission, I argue for the need to view the issue of regulating short term rental in Winnipeg from the perspective of mutual benefits and collective tackling of potential challenges, by the traditional hoteliers, the Winnipeg neighborhoods, and the evolving Short Term Rental community in Winnipeg.

My family and I travel frequently and have used hotels for accommodation during our travels. For my family summer trip in 2019, prior to the pandemic, we stayed at short term rentals in Stratford (England) and Glasgow (Scotland). The home-like neighborhood experience from the short-term rentals was uniquely memorable. For instance, while I did occasionally enjoy the local cuisine, I equally had the opportunity to cook the low-sodium meals I needed to eat to stay healthy while travelling, using local ingredients. On returning home to Winnipeg, I was inspired to offer a similar experience to families and guests looking to visit my home city (Winnipeg) as well. This is how my journey as a STR host began.

While there are varying perspectives about STR, I personally see STR as an evolving ecosystem consisting of multiple participants with varying roles and responsibilities. The participants in this ecosystem include: the **guests** that seek a unique neighborhood experience, the **hosts** (that offer their homes and rental properties), the hosts' **neighbor(s) (neighborhood)**, the **municipality,** and the **auxiliary workforce**. The STR platforms such as Airbnb and Vrbo are also part of the STR ecosystem as they provide the platform for the **hosts** and **guests** to operate.

While there are some regular travellers that would want to try STR, just for the sake of trying something new, I discovered that the accommodation needs of many STR guests are quite unique. Through my STR hosting, I have been able to provide a safe and comfortable home-like accommodation for people that could not use a hotel for their travel needs. It is a fact that I have hosted a number of guests (usually, quite elderly couples) that came from outside of Winnipeg for one treatment or the other at Health Sciences who were looking for a home-like scenery to retire to after the day's inevitable challenges. Many of these guests wanted a convenient, safe, and accessible space where they could cook meals for themselves, should they have any medical or dietary restrictions on meals. This is an example of the kind of experience that SRT provides to a unique collection of people using this form of accommodation which cannot be readily provided by a hotel. I can share with you many of my reviews which show how grateful the guests were to find a place such as my STR to stay while in Winnipeg.

Besides, its important to remember that during the peak of the pandemic, many STRs offered and hosted our front-line workers while most hotels were not able to do so at that time. If people can only operate STRs only in their homes, how many host do you think would have

been able to host those health workers during the pandemic? For my family and I, we are operating STRs not just because of the economic gains, but we love to be of help to people that may be needing those help and we have hosted so many people in our STR that have left many great reviews for us and these are the things that we value the most, not just the money; and I believe so many people operating STRs will also be able to affirm that the STR hosting business is not just a business but a community of different people helping one another and helping the host City to grow.

Also, I would like to draw attention to a subtle participant within the STR ecosystem – the auxiliary staff (cleaners). This are the people that the city council and decision makers should equally think about when making policies for STRs in Winnipeg. These are one the most important individuals that any drastic shutdown of STRs may significantly affect the most, if the City of Winnipeg limits the operations of STRs to only people's homes. We should think of how many cleaners have been empowered by cleaning STR units and even starting a cleaning business, and how many people have been able to put food on their family table with dignity by cleaning several STR units every day. We should think of how many of these people will hoteliers be able to employ, should the STR ecosystem be shut down or brought to bare minimum of its capability. In my opinion, this set of people are an important part of the STR ecosystem and I urge the councillors to take them into considering when formulating regulatory policies for the STRs in Winnipeg.

In an ideal ecosystem of this kind, every participant looks out for the other. For instance, I as a host put up many rules on my listing page that deters noisy or potential partying guests from booking my home – I clearly stated that any form of excessive noise that can disturb the quietness of the neighborhood would result in immediate eviction. However, in reality, since the participants in the STR ecosystem can have varying roles and involvements within the ecosystem, a harmonious collaboration amongst the participants is not a given. And should you ask about STR from these participants, the views can vary significantly from the extreme left of the spectrum that considers STRs to be completely bad and should never be allowed to continue to exist; to the extreme right that expects that all STRs are so great, and all tourists should be using it, forgetting that STRs only serve a micro subset of tourists seeking neighborhood experience while visiting the city. It is important to note that the municipality play a crucial role in balancing the extremes of the perspective spectrum such that the interests of all participants are well represented, and fundamental rights are protected accordingly – this would only further showcase Winnipeg as a progressive city.

The data to support the economic benefits of STR to Winnipeg's economy is in the public knowledge and I would not reiterate those in my submission, as I understand that such data has been submitted with previous submissions. I equally acknowledge that there can be challenges with some STRs and a balanced regulation would be needed to provide guiderails for operations of STRs to curtail excesses that could ruin the STR ecosystem. Similar to how most of the flourishing hotels in Winnipeg are supported to succeed and given a platform to succeed

notwithstanding some hotels with unbearable reputations, the STR ecosystem should be regulated and supported to succeed with the right regulation in place to contain bad participants.

In this submission, I clearly support a **balanced regulation** that would support the STR ecosystem to succeed and give the participants the right tool and support to evolve as a modest reference for other Canadian cities. While previous submissions have recommended studying the short-term rental by-law for the city of Toronto, I do submit that consideration should be given to a similar bylaw for the city of Edmonton, which seem to share far more similarity to Winnipeg than Toronto according to teleport.org (Winnipeg vs Toronto and Winnipeg vs Edmonton)

In conclusion, I encourage you to please critically examine the different participants interwoven in the STR business model and think about the effects on each of these participants and please make a balanced policy for every represented interest. Like I did mention in the beginning of my submission, it is a welcomed development to regulate the STR business in Winnipeg, but I think it is not okay is to go to the extreme when putting appropriate measure in place and wanting to do something like the measure adopted in Toronto. The metrics for Toronto city aren't similar to Winnipeg in many perspectives, instead, as a progressive city, Winnipeg can draw insight from Edmonton and not just consider Toronto's bylaw for regulating STRs. I hopeful that the councillors will consider all fronts to decide well on behalf of the people of Winnipeg to propel Winnipeggers (including STR hosts) forward and not backward.

Thank you

Elizabeth Oduntan