SUBMISSION – MELANIE MITCHELL

Item 5 of the Report of the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development dated April 5, 2022 regarding Regulating Short-Term Rentals

Good Morning council,

I'm Melanie Mitchell: long time citizen of Winnipeg and the hardworking owner, manager, gardener, plumber, janitor…of a few short term rental suites right here in Winnipeg. It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to you again!

It looks like we have just taken some solid strides together these past few months in crafting legislation that will help Winnipeg continue to be the beating heart of the continent, *no matter what Toronto says. I think Winnipeg truly is THE place to be in 2022!

My fellow hosts and I are embracing some of the proposed new rules. For example,

We've established our willingness to pay a 5% hospitality tax, and look forward to benefitting accordingly from Winnipeg and Manitoba Tourism programs.

Unfortunately, all 700 of our short term suites were recently left out in the cold from the current $100.00 T.R.I.P provincial hospitality rebate promotion, -but that's okay: I think all of us have been picked last for a sports team before. Next time around, right? Right! Our new equitably taxed and regulated position in the tourism sector means we will be a part of the next marketing incentive from Day One. Can't wait!

* We are encouraged to learn about proposed fines or a demerit system for unsafe operators. WELL DONE, council, this benefits us all! By the way I hear some local STR's have recently been removed from the platform due to concerns in their management. This is just the beginning of better times ahead.

An Airbnb representative for Eastern Canada has spent some time in meetings recently with area residents directly to go over the procedures to help them get things handled quicker if anything like this ever crops up again. I don't know the out come of these meetings so far, but I think just that it happened is impressive. Not many global enterprises are this hands on.

* Something I disagree strongly with in the report is the prospect of notifying all of my neighbours when I have guests, and what the guest's schedules may be. Council I can't do that, -any more than you'd post "gone to Florida for two weeks, house is empty, there's beer in the fridge!" on your Facebook profile. (In fact, did you know that can sometimes get your insurance cancelled in the case of a break in.)

* There is still space for some real improvement in this rough draft though. To just cut and paste a Toronto square peg solution to a Winnipeg round hole opportunity simply does not work. Toronto does not have a balanced set of bylaws but they are in a unique housing situation so I can kind of understand why they went that hardcore. Where it concerns Winnipeg through, we feel that whole sections of the Toronto model are overreaching for a property planning/development landscape like Winnipeg and would create unfortunate and substantial local job losses.

I'm proud of my super star cleaning and maintenance team. It consists of a newcomer who is working on her English language skills, two single Mom's who love the flexibility, and a bright ambitious young nursing student. She will be great at keeping things sterile in an O.R one day (after I've seen what all she can do with a messy kitchen)! It's tough for me to think about their jobs being at risk if Winnipeg goes with anything at all resembling the Toronto model. These key people I have hired thoughtfully and have tried to select individuals who lost their income due to the Covid 19 storm.

What DOES work? : There are roughly 700 Short Term Rental listings in Winnipeg, 214 are within private homes. So STR's that are not located within a primary residence represent 0.15% of the total housing supply here in Winnipeg, so less than a quarter of one percent. We've yet to see studies in any market that point to short-term rentals as a large factor in affordable housing issues.

Affordable housing is a decades-old issue, particularly in urban areas, and many factors affect it. In all of these cities, the number of short-term rentals is so minute that it's really hard to look at a couple of hundred short-term rentals in a market and say this is having a meaningful impact on the hundreds of thousands of homes that make up that inventory. The current vacancy rate for locations like mine that rent in the "$2000 per month and up" category (when they were offered unfurnished) are sitting at 13.7% in Winnipeg so they aren't, and never will be, part of any affordable housing offering. The local vacancy rate in the first quarter of 2022 in "purpose built apartments" is actually a healthy 5% in Winnipeg.

It is my opinion, and that of many other private citizens and hosts in our city that restrictions on short-term rentals actually are more about protecting the hotel industry than they are about protecting urban neighbourhoods. However, that is a topic for another day.

* There will be a net increase in city revenue when we follow our prairie neighbours down the natural path of registering and licensing each STR listing. That might look like 700 listings at $200.00 each, for a gain of $140,000 in revenue, (*That could mean the repair of quite a few potholes! Yay!!!) The City of Winnipeg will soon know where our listings are, and how to reach their owners. All valuable information for public safety!

In closing, I grew up in the Interlake, to say my teenaged single-parent household was poor is an understatement. I have worked my socks off to be where I am today. As the saying goes "I didn't come this far to only get this far!" I have a 5 ☆☆☆☆☆

Hospitality rating and there’s not much I won’t do to keep these visitors to Winnipeg safe, happy, and comfortable. I love our town, and I especially love my business which I built out of nothing but raw relentless determination.

The short term rental owners community and I look forward to our developing partnership. We trust you will do the right thing and continue to work in tandem with some of your best and brightest entrepreneurs. I am hoping the only “prickly” issue I will be dealing with this summer are the rose bushes in my garden.