I am an Airbnb host with two private bedrooms in my home in the Spence neighbourhood on Furby St. I am a single homeowner who decided to invest in the city by purchasing my first home here. I am writing today to voice my opposition to Winnipeg regulating short-term rentals, given the extreme and invasive proposal from April 5, 2022, Item 5. I believe that even in the most pared-down version of any regulation, the city will never recoup the cost of these proceedings and managing the bylaw. I also believe that the city will be losing out on an untold potential economic fortune, both by discouraging or preventing STR listings from being created in the first place and from lost business and tourism traffic. As other hosts have submitted already, the annual revenue generated by STR can be estimated in the millions or more and needs to be researched and findings presented before further action is taken. The Neighbourhood Livability Act and the Safer Communities Act already provide broad-spectrum powers for the city and province, and the need for further regulation is not necessary. Finally, hosts like me that share a home with newcomers and tourists are helping to reshape the city and its image, both by helping to settle people moving here, and by helping them to have the best visit they possibly can so that they can tell their friends and family good stories about Winnipeg.

My space and my STR

I am a full-time employee at the University of Manitoba. My 122-year-old home is my primary residence and has been lovingly renovated to be a warm and welcoming refuge. I have two private bedrooms that can be rented, which incidentally, is the same number of bedrooms that I can rent to individuals already without being considered a rooming house. I have STR insurance through Wawanesa which limits me to a maximum stay of 30 days per reservation. I have invested heavily into beautifying my home inside and out. My nightly rate is around $40. This rate makes travel accessible to lower- and middle-class incomes who simply cannot afford to travel and pay upwards of $160 per night in downtown hotels. Instead, my guests can use the money they save on accommodations to visit attractions and restaurants and spend their money directly on the local economy. Most of my guests are not tourists, either, which I will get to later.

I invested in the future of Winnipeg by purchasing my home and I rely on my STR income to make ends meet. I am distressed by several proposals that have been put forward in Item 5.

Informing neighbours and more than one listing per address

Speaking as a host of two private bedrooms in my primary residence, the requirement to inform all my immediate neighbours of the comings and goings of my guests is ridiculous and unwarranted. I have hosted over 1000 guests in my time and never had a single neighbourhood complaint.

This is because I live here, firstly, and so obviously would prevent bad behaviour. Secondly, when my two listings are occupied, the guests will *police* one another and

would tell me if something was wrong. This is because guests are rated in a very public way. A bad rating can haunt a guest for their lifetime, and if something wrong is happening, they do not want to be part of it. The ratings on platforms like Airbnb weed out undesirable travellers. The city has not given the public ratings of Airbnb (and the like) enough credit.

Further to the point of having two separate guests in my home at once, a move to limit the total number of listings per property to just one would remove this *dual policing* possibility and make things worse. Thirdly, there is skewed logic assuming that guests in one's home are such a nuisance that the neighbours must be informed. Many things are allowed that are also irritating to neighbours, such as noisy lawnmowers or the right to host an afternoon barbeque. I should have the right to have people over to my home without involving my neighbours, whether they are paying a nightly fee, a monthly rent, or just visiting. Since we are not required to inform neighbours when a roommate moves in or when a family member is visiting, I can plainly state that requiring it for guests staying a few days or weeks is overkill.

A better plan than informing neighbours or restricting the number of listings per address

Do not require hosts, especially ones that are renting out private rooms in their primary residence, to irritate their neighbours with updates about who is coming and going from their residence. Remind all residents that the Neighbourhood Livability By-Law already exists and use it. Remind residents of the Safer Communities Act, powerful legislation that prevents criminal activity on private property in Manitoba. Follow the provincial guidelines on rooming houses, which allows up to two households to rent rooms in a home in addition to the primary homeowner. Acknowledge that ratings on sites like Airbnb lead to more positive visitors than not.

Minimum or maximum stays and the absolute need for flexibility

There has been some talk of setting a minimum or a maximum number of days per stay. The largest broad group of guests that I host are immigrants who are arriving in Winnipeg for the first time. They typically stay with me for two weeks while they get a feel for the city and look for somewhere to live. This is a foundational time for new Manitobans and one of my greatest joys in hosting is that I can help to set the tone of their new life for years to come.

Most newcomers quite simply cannot afford to pay hundreds of dollars per night while they look for an apartment in a strange new city. The alternative is to pay for accommodations sight unseen before they have even arrived. I can't tell you how many of my guests have shared with me that they have been victims of apartment fraud and paid large sums of money for a rental that doesn't exist. This is a serious issue but it doesn't exist on reputable platforms like Airbnb which will bend over backwards to find a

guest accommodation if something doesn't work out. Airbnb and other sites protect a guest's payment. A restrictive regulation will be a gift to criminals taking advantage of newcomers.

I do not allow same-day bookings past noon, as I have found that guests that are making last-minute plans have not had enough time to thoroughly review the listing or care about where they book.

A better plan than imposing a minimum or maximum stay

Highlight the role that STR plays in immigration success stories. The city cannot add minimum or maximum times without hurting the middle and low-income class; in some cases, preventing their travel entirely. My insurance already restricts me to 30 days. Highlight that the city is fighting back against apartment fraud by encouraging STR with reputable companies that offer payment protection. Encourage STRs to have a cut-off time for bookings, as last-minute accommodation is better suited for hotels and motels.

Settling downtown

Winnipeg council might not be aware of the impact that a good host can have on a newcomer's life and trajectory in a new city. Many of my guests decide to stay downtown after their stay with me. They do so because, despite gossip they may have heard about the dangers of the downtown core, I have shown them our way of life and that, with a bit of common sense, these scary stories of downtown life can be avoided. Many have changed plans to move to 'safer' neighbourhoods and chosen to settle downtown. I'd like everyone to get into the headspace of a newcomer that has scrimped and saved for years for this move before they impose minimums or maximums on STR or any other regulation that would prevent us from operating this important service. This is just one example, but it should be clear that there is more at stake than regulating for regulation's sake. There are bigger issues than a neighbour complaining about an occasional backyard party or a strata that has not gotten its act together to manage STR in a condo.

A better plan than regulating STRs, especially private rooms

The city can recognize and celebrate the roles that hosts can play in welcoming newcomers to the city. STR can and should be a part of the Downtown Residential Development Strategy & Action Plan. The city can recommit to the Neighbourhood Livability By-Law and fine violators regardless of whether they are STR hosts or not.

In Conclusion

The city ought to stay out of regulating private homeowners' business in general, but especially when the discussion of regulating private bedrooms in someone's home is brought forward. There have been no negative submissions about shared accommodations such as mine. I truly don't believe that the city can do a better job than I already do in service to my guests, my neighbourhood, and my city. The overwhelming majority of complaints have been about Glasshouse and a single event space on Wellington Crescent. The truth is, the issues in Glasshouse have largely been ironed out in-house these past years, and the Wellington Crescent nuisance issue should be dealt with by pre-existing bylaws and powers, as can all other nuisance complaints. The city's desire to regulate STR is three years too late and past the point of necessity. I will reiterate that regulating STRs is an overreach that will produce more losers than winners, the biggest loser being Winnipeg itself.

However, this can be spun as a success story. Hosts can be celebrated as the third option for low and middle-income travellers and newcomers, the other two options being high-priced hotels or staying with family and friends. We are good neighbours who care about our properties and curb appeal. We can be recognized as having an important role in settling newcomers, especially today when refugees are flooding to our country and city on humanitarian visas. We are helping to increase the downtown residential population and helping to curtail apartment fraud. We cared enough to invest in this city and want our guests to have the best visit possible. We could be the only city that doesn't regulate STRs but instead celebrates them as another weave in the fabric of urban life.

Sincerely,
Michael Tires