13 June 2022

DEAR EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE,

My name is Audrey Bessette. My spouse and I have been living in a condo downtown for four years at 311 Hargrave (The Glasshouse). I enjoy living downtown for the vibrant and thriving community, businesses, and recreational events that are all available just steps away from my building. However, when we purchased our condo, we did not anticipate some of the issues that my building has been experiencing due to short-term rentals.

Over the past four years, I have noticed a sharp increase in the number of short-term rentals in our building. At our last condo board AGM in summer of 2021, it was noted that only about one-fourth of the nearly 200 suites in our building are occupied by owners or long-term residents. This has severely impacted the sense of community in our building as most of the people coming and going do not live here, and activities taking place in the building by short-term rental guests are disruptive, abusive, and in some cases, criminal.

Short-term rentals have been the main contributor to my very serious concerns about personal and property safety and security in my building. While the condo board has always employed a security service, in the last two years, we have had to increase security to nearly full-time which is very costly. This, coupled with the costs of damages caused by short-term rental guests, has raised our condo fees by over 60% in the last three years. Even with security, the past two and a half years has also seen numerous incidents of theft, vandalism, assaults and raids by police services.

Thefts of bicycles, storage lockers contents and parcels have occurred multiple times where the perpetrators were caught and were determined to be short-term rental guests. Vandalism is a regular occurrence which includes damage to mail boxes, storage lockers, common areas, and fixtures. There are also regular incidences of false fire alarms – at least two or more per month, and sometimes several in a single week – which cause City emergency services to come out to our building to attend, and in the end, it is all for nothing. This is particularly sad, as these incidents divert critical services away from those who are truly in need of them.

Winnipeg Police Services are called to the building frequently to deal with disruptive short-term rental guests and to deal with assaults that have occurred between short-term rental guests. Also, police have

increasingly been called to serve warrants to short-term rental units where questionable activities have taken place. On my floor alone in the past year, there have been four police raids of three different short-term rental units, including one instance where police had to break down the door of the unit in question. These incidents are frightening and extremely worrisome. They significantly and adversely affect the mental and physical well-being of people who live here, myself included.

I would like to see a by-law where short-term rentals are restricted to people renting out their primary residence only, and that there be regulations, licensing, and fees for those who do choose to rent out their primary residence for short-term rentals. I would also like to see that any violations of the by-law be enforced with significant fines. Currently, the condo act only allows a maximum fine of $100 per month for violations, and this has not been enough to deter the overwhelming number of absentee short-term rental owners in our building.

I believe that regulation of short-term rentals will enable neighbourhoods, including condo buildings, to rebuild the sense of community that makes Winnipeg a special place to live. It will alleviate the drain on public and emergency services that short-term rental issues cause, and it will bring much needed relief from the mental and physical strain of living amidst these short-term rentals. I know that I want to continue living downtown, but something must be done to retain people, like myself, who want to stay in the downtown, or to attract those who want to relocate to downtown in the future. I have faith that the Committee and Council understands the negative impact that short-term rentals are inflicting on our downtown and that you will undertake the steps necessary to regulate short-term rentals and help to mitigate the damage that they have caused in our community.

SINCERELY,



AUDREY BESSETTE