SUBMISSION – JASON PENNER

ITEM 1 OF THE REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE DATED FEBRUARY 14, 2023, REGARDING REGULATING SHORT-TERM RENTAL ACCOMMODATIONS

From: Jason Penner
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 11:51 AM
To: CLK-CityClerks
Subject: Submission for Short Term Rental regulations

Jason Penner
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Glasshouse resident

I wish to submit the following for City Council:

I would like to thank City Council for this opportunity.

Unfortunately, the Glasshouse condo tower serves as a study on how rogue industry—in this case ghost hotels—exploits economic opportunity to the detriment of communities and their residents. It's imperative that the city take action, limiting short term rentals to primary residence only.

The Glasshouse condo tower was completed in 2016, and until 2021, it was residents who held the majority of positions on its condo board.

Over the years, the number of ghost hotels in the tower increased, and the number of concerns and incidents involving ghost hotels increased as well.

Disturbances at all hours, partying, violence, and signs of criminal activity, including human trafficking…

These issues escalated further during the pandemic. The Glasshouse tower became an ideal venue for ghost hotel COVID parties. When a neighbour of mine asked a ghost hotel COVID party to quiet down, she was told, "everyone knows that you come to the Glasshouse to party," and then an intoxicated partier attempted to assault her.

Used condoms and empty liquor bottles disposed of on residents' balconies, knives thrown from balconies, men assaulting women, police raiding units…

Not a single operator of the 60-odd ghost hotels at Glasshouse lives there, and yet they make claims of knowing what it's like to live there, and that residents are exaggerating and fabricating their accounts. We live here. We know what we've witnessed happening in which units, and we know which units are ghost hotels. We're also very much aware of how unresponsive to incidents ghost hotel industry continues to be.

Condo boards are limited in their powers. Still, the resident-majority board tried to impose a 30-day minimum stay requirement, and install elevator FOBs to restrict movement throughout the tower; efforts to address concerns. The apartments at True North Square, for example, have FOBs on their elevators to provide security. Ghost hotels opposed both measures because they wanted to retain their business model, even if it was at the cost of resident safety and security, and if elevators were FOB'd, arrivals for ghost hotel bookings could not be remotely admitted.

This is where Glasshouse developer, Urban Capital, became involved. Urban Capital has retained significant voting power through their unsold units. Until the proposed measures, the developer was steadfast in remaining neutral on condo board matters. However, their unit sales had slowed, and what units were selling were to ghost hotel investors. Responding to a potential impact on sales, Urban Capital forced the 30-day minimum stay to be withdrawn, by threatening to overthrow the board. Then, come next election, Urban Capital and ghost hotels used their voting power to oust long-serving residents and install themselves as the new board. Safety and security initiatives were discarded, and none have been implemented since.

In response to the board takeover, Glasshouse's security provider prematurely canceled their contract. Their job providing residential security had become burdened and compromised by the commercial security demands of 60 ghost hotels. The security company's recommendations went ignored, problems continued, and their staff no longer wanted to work the building.

Glasshouse residents are also giving up, selling their units at significant loss, which in turn yields more ghost hotels. "Ask any realtor," one ghost hotel operator at Glasshouse told you. "The Winnipeg condo market is cold." Indeed, so why then would residents sell their homes at Glasshouse at losses up to $70,000? Several have taken this hit, and they've done so because ghost hotels ruined their dreams of downtown residential living.

Police check in with Glasshouse security regularly regarding their most wanted. Short term rentals are ideal for criminal conduct and evasion.

On August 13th, 2017, a man was tortured to death with batons and electrocution in a Fort Richmond ghost hotel.

On September 15th, 2019, two people were stabbed at a downtown condo ghost hotel party.

On November 4th, 2019, a young man was executed at a South Pointe ghost hotel in retaliation for a fatal gang shootout.

On October 21st, 2021, a man was invited to a COVID party at a Glasshouse ghost hotel. Upon arriving, he was held at gunpoint by a criminal organization, then abducted to another ghost hotel, where he was tortured for 4 days. The organization used ghost hotels as an important component in their plan; so they could remain anonymous and undisturbed.

Enough was enough a long time ago. Primary residence for short term rentals is the solution, and the only solution. Let's get this done. Thank you.