

SUBMISSION – NOREEN STEVENS

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE DATED OCTOBER 17, 2023 – ITEM 1 - REGULATING
SHORT-TERM RENTAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2023 11:55:58 AM

Personal information

Full name: Noreen Stevens

Email address:

Phone:

Job title:

Organization:

Address:

City: Winnipeg, Manitoba

Province or territory: Manitoba

Postal code:

Delegation information

Committee: Council

Committee - council: Opposed to the recommendations

Committee - other: N/A

Agenda item (number and title): 1. Regulating Short-Term Rental Accommodations

Service inquiry: Submit Comments in writing

Participation preference: N/A

Comments in writing: Dear Council,

To begin, I would like to commend Council and City staff for balancing the viability of existing and future Winnipeg STRAs with the best interests, safety and security of City residents and STRA guests as they work to regulate STRAs in Winnipeg. The process has been conducted thoughtfully, and revisions drafted in response to public consultation have made the proposed bylaws better. I support the idea of STRA regulation and look forward to becoming a licensed host and operating within the City's framework.

I hope Council will give careful consideration to my view that the proposed bylaw which would impose penalties for stays longer than 29 days is confusing to many STRA hosts, myself included. Unfortunately I can only speculate on the City's thinking on this point because, despite following the development of these regulations carefully and speaking to PP&D and Residential Tenancies staff on several occasions, I have neither found nor been offered any explanation for these penalties.

My wife, Jill Town, and I have provided shared space in our primary residence to guests through Airbnb since 2015. Our guests are travellers for pleasure and business, students, artists, performers, and those newly arrived in Winnipeg from every corner of Canada and the world. Some guests stay a night, others for a week or two, and a handful have stayed 30+ days. While we enjoy all our guests, it is especially rewarding to offer longer-term guests a type of temporary accommodation they would not find in a hotel, executive suite or apartment - safe, affordable, well-appointed and fully furnished rooms in our family home, with support from us as they get their bearings in a new city and often a new culture.

Many guests over the years have become dear friends, particularly those who have settled in Winnipeg permanently.

In 2022/2023 we have hosted (or will host) 131 stays. In the smaller of our listings, just two stays were 30+ days, however, they represent 21% of our total occupancy in that listing. In our other listing which is more suited to longer stays, we have had three 30+ day guests, representing 38% of total occupancy. Our longer stays have ranged from 31 nights to 65 nights. Of these five longer-term guests, four were women arriving in Winnipeg on their own in the process of immigrating to Canada, who stayed with us while they found permanent accommodations in the city (31 to 44 days). The fifth was a young woman in her early twenties, in Winnipeg from the US for a summer internship (65 days).

I understand that Winnipeg has defined STRs as stays of ?29 days for the purpose of licensing, distinct from tenancies which are ongoing, open-ended and regulated by the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA). If the City's proposed bylaws are passed as currently written, stays of 30+ days booked through a licensed STRA platform, with specific start and end dates, will fall through the cracks, neither meeting the City's definition of STRAs nor the definition of tenancies under the RTA. Most STRAs welcome stays of various lengths to serve a range of needs. By limiting stays to ?29 days, the City would be excluding guests, new to Winnipeg, who benefit from the temporary, safe, affordable and supported accommodations, vetted by an STRA platform, that we and other hosts offer.

Finally, I am concerned that the City's process to regulate STRAs has not adequately differentiated between STRAs in non-primary residences, entire suites in hosts' primary residences and private rooms in hosts' homes. Hosts like Jill and me, who share our homes with our guests, provide in-person oversight to our accommodations such that our guests are self-selecting - nobody comes to our house to party and our longer-term guests are stable and motivated to integrate into our neighbourhood and community. Nor are Jill and I contributing to the shortage of affordable housing because our listings would not be suitable as permanent accommodations. Guests love what we offer but they always move on.

With all of this in mind, I ask that you consider these questions:

1. What is the thinking behind imposing penalties on stays of 30+ days?
2. Why is the City asking STRA hosts to limit STRA stays to ?29 days?
3. What is the perceived risk or problem with 30+ day stays that warrants penalty?
4. Could STRAs be defined as temporary stays with a start and end date booked through a licensed STRA platform, rather than by length of stay?
5. Alternatively, could hosts be permitted, without penalty, to operate as STRAs with stays of ?29 days, and also host stays of 30+ days with a specified start and end date, booked through a licensed STRA platform?

It would be extremely helpful to STRA hosts if the City would explain its concerns and intentions regarding the definition of STRAs and the penalties proposed for 30+ night stays, to allow us to work with the City on a solution that better balances the needs of the City, Winnipeg residents and STRA hosts and guests.

Yours truly,
Noreen Stevens

File:

Public engagement preference: Yes