

## 5.13 (q)

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

I am writing to you today in follow-up to the January 17th Planning Committee Meeting and ahead of the next Council Meeting scheduled for Wednesday January 25th, where Hamilton's STR bylaw will be debated. First of all, I would like to thank you on behalf of our Hosts in Hamilton for your decision to extend the definition of principal residence to include accessory dwelling units and remove the nightcap. This is a decision that will greatly support those residents relying on the supplemental income earned through home sharing to make ends meet, as will it be of great benefit to those visitors to Hamilton in need of a flexible, affordable accommodation option.

Ahead of the upcoming Council Meeting, I did however feel it necessary to raise a concern over fees. A low barrier to entry when it comes to registering with the municipality is integral to promoting host compliance. In some other jurisdictions high fees and significant restrictions have promoted hosts moving to unregulated and slum safe marketplaces like Craigslist or Facebook where there is no insurance or safety functionality provided. The proposed fee of \$800 + for applicants is simply not an amount that will be feasible for the majority of Hosts in Hamilton. The average Airbnb Host in Hamilton rents their home less than 60 days per year and if the City wants to promote a collaborative approach to home sharing, it is of key importance that the licensing costs remain affordable for those sharing their homes only a few weeks per year.

From the platform's perspective, we will happily collaborate with the City in their compliance efforts through the development of:

- Custom license fields for Hosts to input their license number
- Custom Host education campaigns
- Tailored Responsible Hosting Page
- Airbnb's City Portal which provides the city access to real time data and compliance functionality

However, it is imperative that, for our joint efforts to succeed in achieving the compliance objectives set by Council, the proposed licensing fees be lowered to the national average of \$150-250. As stated above, principal residence Hosts only rent their homes on an occasional basis and it is therefore essential that their financial investment into this program not make such a dent into that much needed supplemental income that it becomes financially unreasonable to apply for a license. Should the licensing fees remain as proposed, the City of Hamilton risks seeing a drop in compliance, with Hosts moving towards the underground market which none of us want to see.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss any of the points raised above prior to the Council Meeting January 25th, I would be happy to schedule a time to do so.

Kind regards,

Camille Boulais-Pretty