

November 15, 2017

BY EMAIL TO pgmc@toronto.ca

Planning and Growth Management Committee
10th Floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen St. West
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2

Dear Chair and Committee members,

Re: Zoning By-law Amendments to Permit Short-term Rentals - Item PG24.8

We are writing to express our opposition to the proposal that property owners be permitted to remove secondary suites from the long-term rental market and rent them out for short-term, hotel-like use.

We support the policy direction that would permit owners and tenants alike to rent out all or part of their principal residence on a short-term basis through Airbnb and similar platforms. This accords with our view that people should be permitted to do what they like in their homes as long as it does not interfere with the rights of others. However, a secondary suite is NOT the home or principal residence of the property owner – that is why it is referred to as a secondary suite.

For a number of years, the primary policy by which the Province of Ontario has attempted to create affordable rental housing is through supporting the creation of secondary suites. The City of Toronto has embraced this policy through its Official Plan and zoning by-law and has promoted it as a way of meeting Toronto's affordable housing needs at little or no cost to the taxpayer. As there is virtually no other rental housing being created, secondary suites have found a ready market of moderate-income tenants and thus have gained the support of property owners in all areas of the City. This support has been gained in part because their occupation by long-term tenants assists in preserving the character of the community in which they are located – an important value in Toronto.

So, it is very concerning to us to learn that the maintenance of these units in the rental housing market and the future expansion of their numbers is being jeopardized by a proposal to permit them to be converted to short-term hotel-like use. This would do nothing to assist the City to meet its affordable housing goals and would put communities at risk of further change from a residential character to a commercial one.

We believe that the proposed regulatory framework, without the inclusion of secondary suites, provides sufficient latitude to permit people to make full use of their homes and for Airbnb to pursue its business interests. Affordable rental accommodation is a valuable commodity for City-building. In the absence of any real plans to create new rental housing, no matter how great the need, the accommodation that now provides homes for thousands of Toronto tenant households should not be squandered.

Yours very truly,

Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario

per:



Kenneth Hale

Director of Advocacy and Legal Services

