

Written Submission – Yaru Lin

I am submitting this written commentary to express support for the proposed Short-Term Rental By-law as a Kitchener resident with no stake in short-term rental (STR) properties.

I watched the June 2nd meeting and was struck by two recurring themes: STRs being viewed mainly as partying/noise problems, and the rental vacancy rate having improved enough that STR regulation would provide no additional benefit. There are currently ~1500 properties listed in Kitchener on MLS, while anywhere from 500-800 short term rentals can be found through Airbnb depending on the dates of stay. In other words, STRs represent a significant portion of the housing stock that is reserved for short-term rather than sale or long-term rent, even allowing for differences between ownership and rental markets.

The CMHC projects the purpose-built vacancy rate for the Waterloo region to be 3.8% in 2025 (<https://www.cornerstone.inc/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2025/03/CMHC-Rental-Market-Update-Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo.pdf>), an increase over the 3.6% from 2024; yet when the 2024 data is sliced by rent level, vacancy in the lowest quartile is just 0.8% (see slide 5). This indicates that new vacancies tend to be in luxury purpose-build rentals while ordinary households still face shortage of affordable rentals.

Conversations with neighbours and friends convey sentiments reflected by these numbers: few object to genuine home-sharing, but many worry about investors running multiple properties as hotels and removing long-term homes from the market.

In recent years, cities comparable in population to Kitchener such as Waterloo, London, and Hamilton have all opted for STR regulation, even going a step beyond to limit them to owner-occupied, principal residences only. More robust regulation of STRs in Kitchener, especially a dedicated by-law with clear definitions for owner-occupied vs commercial units, is a right step toward addressing shortages in the local housing stock.