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Dear Mayor and Council members,

Thank you for considering my appeal of the refusal of my application for a short-term rental business license for the basement room in my house.

1. I bought my townhome in 2018 after explicitly reviewing the City of Victoria STR bylaws and concluding that a short-term rental in the basement room in my home would comply completely. In 2018 and 2019 I applied for and was granted a license. The occasional extra income has helped me to afford the significant cost of financing a home in Victoria, including ever increasing property taxes, insurance, and maintenance. The denial of my license renewal would significantly damage my dream and the hard work I have done to own a home in a city I love. If denied I will have to consider selling my home and/or taking legal action against the City of Victoria.
2. The room I would like to rent is one bedroom and a bathroom in the basement of my primary residence. There are two ways to access this room - through my laundry room and another through the basement. There are no kitchen or cooking facilities - no sink, cooking range, or cooking ventilation, which I (and other bylaws) would consider necessary to constitute a "kitchen." I used to provide a microwave and mini fridge as any reasonable person might expect to find in a vacation rental room, but I have since removed them (from both the room and the listing) to avoid confusion given the city's lack of definition of this term.
3. The bylaw office states that "One of the objectives of the City's regulations of the short-term rentals was to address the problem of self-contained dwelling units being diverted from the housing market to a vacation rental market. This is the rationale behind the provisions of the zoning bylaw which limit short-term rentals to bedrooms within self-contained units rather than entire self-contained units." The over-reaching interpretation of the bylaw to include any space with a door and where a microwave could be plugged in is ridiculous and invasive to homeowner's rights to their own homes.
4. The basement room in my home has never been available on the "regular" rental market as it is *not* a "self-contained dwelling unit" and is certainly not an appropriate space for long-term accommodation. It has not been lost to the regular rental market. I invite council members to visit or move in and test out this theory themselves.
5. I would submit that the City should not conflate their own vague definition of a self-contained dwelling with AirBnB's definition of "guest suite," which merely means that

the guest can expect a private space during their stay and does not imply that the available space comprises the elements necessary to make it a home for long-term occupation.

I applaud and support the City's efforts to make more long-term housing units available on the rental market. That said, the room in my basement does not meet the criteria without a stretch of the imagination and an over-reaching interpretation of the bylaws, which feels like a significant invasion of my property rights as a homeowner and lip service to the political issue of rental inventory in Victoria. The ability to rent out this room for short-term stays helps me afford my home and was a big part of the reason I bought it. I think it would be a shame to make living in Victoria unaffordable for some tax-paying, home-owning citizens in an effort to make it more affordable for others.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jessica Tatlow