

## Ottawa Airbnb rentals set to rise sharply in 2017, company says

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/airbnb-report-ottawa-2017-1.3972410>

### **Local hotel association still voicing concerns as city takes 'wait-and-see' approach**

**By Trevor Pritchard, CBC News Posted: Feb 12, 2017 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Feb 12, 2017 5:00 AM ET**

The number of people using Airbnb to find short-term accommodations in the National Capital Region is expected to rise during Canada's 150th birthday year, the company says — all while local hoteliers voice concerns about Airbnb's rapid growth.

In 2016, there were approximately 82,000 "guest arrivals" to Ottawa, according to [the economic impact statement](#) prepared for Airbnb by Toronto-based marketing firm Urbanmetrics.

Airbnb defines "guest arrivals" as the number of people listed on each unique booking. So for example, if two guests stayed for two nights in Ottawa — and then those same two guests returned for another stay later in the year — that would count as four arrivals.

Those visitors generated an estimated \$24 million in revenue for local businesses, according to the report.

- [Airbnb changes have Ottawa hosts facing new tax reality](#)
- [Airbnb agrees to Ontario request to ask hosts to claim income](#)

"We expect to see [more visitors in 2017]," said Alex Dagg, Airbnb's public policy manager for Canada. "We don't normally make projections [but] this is such a special year, especially in Ottawa."

## 'Fair and equitable rules'

Big-name events like the Grey Cup, the Juno Awards, and the Red Bull Crashed Ice championships are all expected to draw thousands of tourists to the city in 2017.

This past week's report on Airbnb comes as many cities, including Ottawa, are trying to figure out how to best regulate those who use the platform to rent out property.

The Ottawa Gatineau Hotel Association has argued that some Airbnb hosts — particularly those who rent out multiple units rather than simply their own home, or those who rent their units 365 days a year — [should have to register for a licence](#) and pay similar fees to those in the hotel industry.

- [Ottawa hotels gearing up for busy 2017](#)

Last summer, the City of Ottawa's economic development branch reported a big rise in what it called "active" Airbnb listings, with the number doubling from 566 in January 2015 to 1,314 by the end of the year.

"The proliferation of people that want to be in the private hotel room business tells us that this industry is on a phenomenal growth path," Steve Ball, the association's president, told CBC News on Friday.

If you don't think [Airbnb's] going to have an impact on the current hotel model, somebody's got their head in the sand." - *Steve Ball, president of the Ottawa Gatineau Hotel Association*

"I think the challenge we're having is leveling the playing field, ensuring that there are fair and equitable rules and regulations in place."

The City of Ottawa is currently taking a "wait-and-see" approach to how it manages Airbnb, said Ball. Its eventual licensing regime will likely bear similarity to what the city of Toronto — which is currently [in the midst of its own review of its policy around Airbnb](#) — comes up with, he said.

Toronto could in turn take inspiration from Vancouver, which unveiled a plan last fall to only allow Airbnb rentals lasting fewer than 30 days to take place in a home that's also someone's principal residence.

Ball said Toronto is expected to release its recommendations in mid-2017, and local regulations can't come soon enough.

"Some of the smaller [operators] are seeing more impact from Airbnb. It's harder to determine what impact it may have on a larger brand," said Ball.

"But the huge growth curve that Airbnb is going through — if they continue on that path, they're certainly going to be the largest transient accommodator in the world. And if you don't think that's going to have an impact on the current hotel model, somebody's got their head in the sand."

While it's hard to say how Airbnb's growth is affecting major hotels like the Lord Elgin, smaller operators are already seeing revenues shrink, said Steve Ball, the president of the Ottawa Gatineau Hotel Association. (CBC)

## **Few full-time renters in Ottawa, Airbnb says**

According to the Urbanmetrics report, the number of Airbnb listings in Ottawa continued to rise last year, with approximately 2,300 properties listed on the site in 2016.

However, the vast majority of those properties were only rented out for a few nights every month, said Dagg — with the typical property only generating about \$3,800 in "supplemental" income each year, she added.

"Typically what we see — and this really holds true across the country — is that our hosts are listing and have bookings three to four nights a month," she said.

"It's true in Ottawa. It's true in Toronto. It's true in Vancouver. It's true in Montreal. It's true in rural areas."

Nevertheless, Dagg said the company welcomes regulation and would be happy to sit down with Ottawa municipal officials if and when they decide to craft their own plan.

"We do think we should be regulated," she said. "We think there should be sensible, smart, but easy-to-follow rules for homesharing, so that cities like Ottawa can benefit from the platform — but also make sure that there's responsible hosting behaviour."