TORONTO

REPORT FOR ACTION

Towards Implementing a Maximum Indoor Temperature Requirement for Rental Units and Cooling Rooms

Date: November 25, 2025
To: Executive Committee
From:
Interim Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards
Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry
Medical Officer of Health
Wards: All

SUMMARY

Extreme heat is Toronto's most urgent climate threat, and excessive indoor temperatures are of particular concern for tenants in leased residential premises without cooling equipment like air conditioning (A/C) or heat pumps. Unlike heating, cooling is not considered a vital service[1] by the Government of Ontario.

This report responds to City Council's endorsement in December 2024 (2024.PH17.5) of a maximum indoor temperature standard of 26°C for leased residential premises and cooling rooms, and direction for staff to report back on implementation and next steps. In 2025, staff conducted comprehensive stakeholder engagement and procured C40 Cities to examine this topic in Toronto and other North American cities. Feedback and expertise suggest that a maximum indoor temperature will provide health and safety benefits for tenants. However, implementation costs and burdens to rental housing providers that do not currently provide A/C are a significant barrier, and costs are expected to be passed to tenants. Any new indoor temperature requirements must also consider relevant provincial legislation, such as the Building Code Act, 1992.

As a result, this report recommends that, in 2026, staff conduct a compliance analysis study of introducing a maximum temperature requirement across different rental unit/building types and the measured impact on tenants (e.g., rent increases). Staff will report back to City Council in 2027 with results of the study. The report back will include recommendations for potential implementation of a maximum indoor temperature requirement in rental units, considering varying building infrastructure, with exceptions to be informed by the compliance analysis study. To help protect tenants from

[1] Under Ontario's Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, "vital service" means hot and cold water, fuel, electricity, gas or, during the part of each year prescribed by regulations, heat.

excessive indoor temperature in the short term, staff recommend continuing the City's A/C Assistance Program to provide free A/Cs to low-income and vulnerable households. Staff also recommend bylaw amendments to require RentSafeTO apartment buildings cool an existing amenity space during the summer months, if they meet the requirements to comply, beginning June 1, 2026.

This report and the recommendations therein were developed by Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) Division in collaboration with Environment, Climate and Forestry (ECF), with input from Toronto Public Health.

Divisions and City agencies that supported the development of this report and that were consulted with include Housing Secretariat, Toronto Emergency Management, Social Development Division, Toronto Employment and Social Services Division, City Planning, Toronto Building, Seniors Services and Long-Term Care Division, People & Equity Division, Toronto Community Housing Corporation, and Toronto Hydro.

This report has been prepared in coordination with two other heat-related reports being presented at the same City Council meeting: Progress and Priorities for Enhancing Toronto's Climate Resilience (led by ECF) and Strengthening the Heat Relief Strategy (led by Toronto Emergency Management). Together, these reports contribute to a coordinated approach to enhancing heat resilience across Toronto.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Interim Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards and Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry, and the Medical Officer of Health recommend:

1. City Council repeal Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 497, Heating and replace it with the draft by-law attached as Attachment 1 to this report, effective June 1, 2026, and also make the following amendments to Chapter 497 that will come into force at the same time:

    a. include the requirement that the owner and operator of an apartment building, as defined by Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 354, Apartment Buildings, with an existing indoor amenity space must maintain a temperature of not more than 26 degrees Celsius from June 1 – September 30 of each year in at least one amenity space if cooling is not provided in all dwelling units, unless the owner or operator can establish that the only way to comply with the requirement is to undertake construction or demolition within the meaning of the Building Code Act, 1992.

2. City Council delete clause F from § 629-38 of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 629, Property Standards, effective on June 1, 2026.

3. City Council amend § 354-3.2. B(7) of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 354, Apartment Buildings to remove the words struck out and include the underlined words to come into effect on June 1, 2026:

    the location of ~~an air-conditioned place~~ a cooled amenity space, as defined in Chapter 497, Indoor Temperature Standards, in the building, including its daily hours of operation, and of other locations on the property that offer relief from uncomfortably warm indoor temperatures, including any other ~~cooling room or~~ shaded areas, if accessible to all tenants;

4. City Council direct the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards to report back to Council in 2027 with recommendations for potential implementation of a maximum indoor temperature requirement in rental units, considering varying building infrastructure, with exceptions to be informed by a compliance analysis study that will be conducted by City staff in 2026.

5. City Council direct the Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry or their designates, to continue to deliver an air conditioner assistance program aimed at providing access to air conditioning for low-income and vulnerable households in multi-unit residential buildings in Toronto, subject to the approval of the 2026 budget submission.

6. City Council request the City Manager, in consultation with relevant City Divisions and the Medical Officer of Health, to coordinate engagement with the Government of Ontario including the Ministry of Health to discuss the Government of Ontario's role in creating programs and allocating funding to mitigate the health impacts of extreme heat on vulnerable populations and the health-care system.

7. City Council reiterate its request to the Government of Ontario to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 to include cooling as a vital service and establish a maximum indoor temperature standard applicable to all rental units to ensure thermal safety protections are available to tenants.

8. City Council reiterate its request to the Government of Ontario to proclaim into force Bill 97, Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, 2023 to strengthen tenants' rights to install and use a window or portable air conditioner in a rental unit in leased residential premises and examine additional measures to support vulnerable and low-income tenants with associated cooling costs such as the Ontario Electricity Support Program and Low-Income Energy Program, and service disconnection bans.

9. City Council authorize the City Solicitor to make any necessary clarifications, refinements, minor modifications, technical amendments, or by-law amendments as may be identified by the City Solicitor and the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The report proposes to conduct a compliance analysis study across different types of leased residential buildings/dwellings, including impact on tenant costs, that will be initiated in 2026, and is intended to be conducted by a third-party vendor. The costs associated with the study will be managed within MLS' operating budget and there are no incremental budget impacts to the 2026 budget submission.

The report proposes to continue to deliver an A/C assistance program aimed at providing access to A/C for low-income and vulnerable households in multi-unit residential buildings in Toronto. The continuation of this initiative will be brought forward through the City's 2026 budget process, and prioritized against other City priorities, as well as the City's financial and resource capacity. City staff are evaluating the extent of the incremental financial impacts.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has been advised of the financial impacts associated with this program to be considered along with other priorities in 2026 budget process.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Climate-related risks in Toronto such as heat are not experienced evenly. Everyone is vulnerable to the effects of excessive heat, but certain groups are at higher risk than others. These groups include older adults, infants and young children, people with chronic illnesses (e.g., breathing problems, heart problems or certain mental health conditions), people on certain medications, or people with limited physical mobility. Vulnerable groups also include economically and socially disadvantaged individuals (e.g. low income, experiencing homelessness or living alone), people who work in the heat, and people who are physically active outside. Systemic inequities, including racism, ableism, poverty, isolation, precarious work, insecure housing, and language barriers limit people's ability to prepare for, withstand, and recover from extreme heat.

The HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan and Toronto Housing Charter, both adopted in 2019, commit the City to advancing the right to adequate housing. They are centred in a human rights-based approach, which recognizes that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of a person and to building healthy, inclusive, and sustainable communities. As such, access to good quality and safe housing that can be adapted to extreme heat events will become more critical as climate change accelerates the frequency and duration of these events.

The City recognizes the immediate impacts of excessive heat on residents and the long-term barriers facing Toronto's aging rental housing stock. Any regulatory, policy and/or program-based considerations regarding indoor temperatures will also have to address the broader equity impacts on housing availability, affordability and decarbonization efforts. City staff are aware that compliance could result in costs that rental housing providers may pass down to tenants via rent increases and increasing utility costs. This can exacerbate housing affordability challenges.

Any proposals to address excessive indoor temperatures must be considered in tandem with other key strategies and policies such as the City's HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan and the work to decarbonize the building sector. Collectively, they aim to address strategic priorities, including reducing carbon emissions, enhancing community preparedness for climate events, and improving housing quality and affordability. As such, thoughtful regulatory design to address excessive indoor temperature must include consideration of compliance measures for building owners and operators, supports for tenants and housing providers, and coordination with climate action to ensure equitable and successful outcomes for all.

DECISION HISTORY

On June 26, 2025, City Council adopted MM31.21 - Addressing Gaps in the City's Heat Relief Strategy, requesting staff to find opportunities to activate 24/7 indoor cool spaces for vulnerable people in the 2025 summer season, as well as report back in the fourth quarter of 2025 with a review of the City's Heat Relief Strategy and recommendations for improvements.

On December 17 and 18, 2024, City Council adopted 2024.PH17.5 – Establishing a Framework to Address Excessive Indoor Temperatures in Leased Residential Premises, to report back by Q4 2025 with implementation considerations and recommended next steps to implement a health-based maximum indoor temperature of 26°C for leased residential premises and cooling rooms.

On June 14, 2023, City Council adopted 2023.MM7.8 - Request to Implement an Adequate Temperature By-law, directing staff to examine the feasibility of establishing minimum and maximum temperatures for leased residential premises and cooling rooms in addition to other data collection and building retrofit considerations.

On November 26, 2019, City Council adopted 2019.PH10.4 - Amendments to Chapter 354, Apartment Buildings and Progress Update on RentSafeTO, amending Chapter 354, Apartment Buildings to require property owners to post information on their Tenant Notification Board about air-conditioned spaces in the building (or other places on the property) as well as the nearest publicly accessible air-conditioned location.

On March 5, 2018, the Board of Health adopted 2018.HL25.3 Increasing Access to Cooling in the Community, requesting staff to conduct a trial Heat Relief Network that would maximize access to public air-conditioned spaces.

On October 2, 2017, City Council adopted 2017.MM32.50 - Protecting Toronto's Tenants from Extreme Heat, directing staff to identify options that address heat in apartment buildings including amending applicable dates in Chapter 497, Heating and Chapter 629, Property Standards.

On May 17, 2017, the Board of Health adopted 2017.HL19.5 - Reducing Vulnerability to Extreme Heat in the Community at Home, which did not recommend a health-based maximum indoor temperature standard for all apartment buildings due to significant infrastructure and resource challenges identified.

On November 30, 2015, the Board of Health adopted 2015.HL8.5 - Update on Extreme Heat and Maximum Indoor Temperature Standard for Multi-unit Residential Buildings, directing staff to explore the feasibility of implementing a health-based maximum indoor temperature standard of 26°C for rental multi-unit residential buildings.

COMMENTS

Purpose of Report

This report recommends next steps towards the potential implementation of a maximum indoor temperature requirement for leased residential premises and cooling rooms, as requested by City Council in 2024.PH17.5.

Report recommendations are as follows:

- In 2026, staff will conduct a compliance analysis study across different types of leased residential buildings/dwellings to determine compliance costs and burdens associated with implementing a maximum indoor temperature requirement in rental units. The findings and resulting recommendations will be reported back to Council in 2027. The compliance analysis study will determine:
    - Using case studies, the cost for building owners/operators associated with implementing the requirement, determining barriers and opportunities across different building/dwelling types. This will inform which building/dwelling types would face higher compliance costs and burdens.
    - Any opportunities to prioritize populations more vulnerable to heat, to ensure relief is provided on a more immediate basis.
- Undertake short-term measures to help protect tenant health and safety, including:
    - Continue the City's A/C Assistance Program, which would provide (a certain amount of) eligible low-income and vulnerable households with free A/Cs.
    - Require RentSafeTO buildings to cool an existing amenity space during the summer months, if they meet the requirements to comply (June 1, 2026).
    - Consolidate all existing indoor temperature provisions in the Heating By-law (renamed Indoor Temperature Standards), allowing by-law enforcement officers to issue notices of violation and set fines as part of their compliance tools for all temperature matters (June 1, 2026).

The recommendations were informed by a report prepared by C40 Cities for the City of Toronto on improving thermal safety in existing multi-family rental buildings and through broad public and stakeholder engagement in Spring and Summer 2025. Further information is contained in the following sections.

Background

Climate Change, Rising Temperature

In late 2024, the City released Toronto's Current and Future Climate, which analyzed current and future climate projection data, and described how Toronto's climate has and might change, to inform planning, operations, and adaptation. The projections showed that Toronto is already hotter than it used to be and will continue to warm. The ten warmest years on record (since 1850) have occurred since 1998. The number of very hot days per year (defined as days with temperatures above 30°C) is expected to increase from 10 days between 1971-2000 to 36-44 days by the 2050s and 46-78 days by the 2080s, depending on the emissions scenario.

Heat-Based Health Impacts and Populations Most Vulnerable to Heat

The health impacts of excessive indoor heat are outlined on page 6-7 in the 2024 framework report on establishing a maximum indoor temperature standard (2024.PH17.5). As discussed in the framework report, excessive heat is associated with several health impacts, including heat stress and heat stroke, that can lead to hospitalization or death. Everyone is vulnerable to the effects of excessive heat, but certain groups are at higher risk than others. These groups include older adults, infants and young children, people with chronic illness (e.g. breathing problems, heart problems or mental illness), people on certain medications, and people with limited physical mobility. Vulnerable groups also include economically and socially disadvantaged individuals (e.g. low income, experiencing homelessness or living alone), people who work in the heat and people who are physically active outside.

Thermal Safety vs Thermal Comfort

Measures to address excessive indoor heat on residents are intended to improve *thermal safety* for those most vulnerable to impacts of heat, though may also improve *thermal comfort* for others. Thermal safety is a state in which indoor conditions are maintained within temperature thresholds that prevent adverse health effects under prolonged exposure, protecting occupants' health even if the environment is not comfortable. Thermal comfort is a condition in which building occupants generally feel satisfied with the indoor temperature, humidity, and airflow, and is achieved by balancing environmental and personal factors to create a pleasant indoor environment conducive to a range of activities, from working to sleeping.

Active and Passive Cooling Measures

Active cooling measures, like A/C and heat pumps, mechanically remove heat and cool a space to achieve a desired indoor temperature. However, passive cooling measures, which do not involve mechanical elements, also play a critical role in thermal safety. Passive cooling includes building-level measures such as minimizing solar heat gains (e.g., through internal or external shading) and improving air flow in the building and rental unit. Passive cooling measures also often have co-benefits, meaning advantages in addition to cooling. For instance, envelope upgrades, improving air sealing, or adding green or reflective roofs can reduce energy demand, improve energy efficiency, and increase a building or unit's thermal resilience and passive survivability.[2]

For most rental units, passive strategies are not likely to be sufficient on their own to meet a 26°C threshold during extreme heat without being combined with active cooling measures. However, they play a critical role in reducing indoor heat gain, lowering demand on active systems, and improving performance during power outages.

The Toronto Green Standard (TGS), which has been in place since 2018, includes thermal performance and greenhouse gas requirements for new residential and commercial buildings as part of the energy and emissions targets. The TGS encourages the use of low carbon fuel sources to support passive cooling and high efficiency heating and cooling systems such as air source and ground source systems. Following changes proposed by the Government of Ontario through Bill 17, Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025, staff understand the Government of Ontario is looking at potential legislative or other changes that could impact mandatory TGS requirements. However, there are no changes to the TGS currently.

The City also operates several programs that support passive cooling measures (e.g., through loans and grants) – please see Attachment 2 for an overview.

Existing Regulations

Indoor temperatures and A/C systems are regulated by municipal by-laws. Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 629, Property Standards ("Property Standards By-law") requires that, if a property owner/operator provides an A/C system in a dwelling unit, that A/C system or unit must be kept in good repair and maintained in good working condition. The Property Standards By-law also requires that if a building has an A/C system, it shall be operated from June 1 to September 30 to maintain an indoor temperature of not more than 26°C. See Attachment 3 for a detailed regulatory landscape on indoor temperatures and maintenance of mechanical cooling equipment.

Data Collection and Analysis

Service Requests

If a resident has a concern about their unit being too hot in the summer months and/or the functionality of the cooling equipment provided by the property owner, they are encouraged to speak to their landlord or property manager. However, if no response is received from the property owner within 7 days, residents can contact 311 to have the City investigate. By-law Enforcement Officers investigate issues on a case-by-case basis and educate and/or take enforcement action where necessary, which can include property standards orders or charges. In 2025, there was about 500 service requests related to A/C across all housing types – a significant increase from 124 service

[2] Passive survivability refers to the ability of buildings to maintain habitable conditions, including temperature control, without active mechanical systems during power outages, ensuring occupant safety and comfort. Approaches that promote passive survivability include natural ventilation and cooling, passive solar design, exterior shading, green and cool roofs and high-performance insulation.

requests in 2024. A summary of service requests related to A/C can be found in Attachment 4.

Prevalence of A/C in Toronto Households

According to the Housing Secretariat's Toronto Housing Data Book (published in March 2023), almost half (48%) of Toronto households rent their homes. The City does not track the availability of A/C or other cooling equipment across Toronto's leased residential dwelling stock. However, the provision of A/C in buildings registered under the RentSafeTO program (all apartment building with three or more storeys and 10 or more units) is captured through the Apartment Buildings By-law registration requirements.

In Summer 2024, staff conducted a summer heat survey of all RentSafeTO buildings to self-report whether they currently provide A/C to tenants. From the data available from the survey, as of September 2024, 93% of 3,582 RentSafeTO registered buildings reported that they do not provide A/C to tenants. This represents approximately 271,000 rental units that do not have A/C in this building type. Note that 94% of RentSafeTO registered buildings do not prohibit tenants from installing some type of A/C.

Note that the presence of A/C does not necessarily mean it is used. In 2025, Toronto Public Health conducted a survey focused on Toronto residents' experiences with extreme heat and wildfire smoke. The survey was supported as part of Toronto Public Health’s work with the Partnership for Healthy Cities. The survey identified multiple reasons why tenants do not use their A/C including the cost of electricity (34%), preferring alternatives like opening the window (23%), and the noise generated by the unit (15%).

Other Jurisdictions

Maximum indoor temperature requirements or mandatory A/C requirements are in place in several jurisdictions in the United States such as the cities of Austin, New Orleans, North Las Vegas, and Palm Springs, as well as counties such as Clark County, Los Angeles County, and others. In British Columbia, both New Westminster and Vancouver are considering introducing indoor maximum temperature requirements within their respective contexts. This follows a 2024 amendment to the British Columbia Building Code[3], which requires that in buildings for which a permit was applied for on or after March 8, 2024, at least one single living space in each dwelling unit must be able to maintain a temperature no greater than 26°C. Additionally, through its PlaNYC, New York City has committed to instating a maximum indoor temperature policy by 2030. Please see Attachment 5 for a full jurisdictional scan.

[3] The Government of British Columbia’s 2024 amendment to the Building Code occurred in response to the B.C. Coroners Service's report about the 2021 heat dome, which included amongst its recommendations the introduction of cooling requirements for new housing construction and existing home renovation.

The 2025 C40 Cities Indoor Thermal Safety Report for the City of Toronto

Since 2005, Toronto has been a member of C40 Cities, which is a global network of cities engaged in actions to confront the climate crisis. City staff have been active members of C40 Cities Indoor Temperature Working Group since 2023, which involves multiple North American cities to address the emerging policy gap in indoor thermal safety regulations. In 2024, the City of Toronto began working in partnership with C40 Cities to develop Toronto-specific recommendations for improving thermal safety in existing multi-family rental buildings. See Attachment 6 for the C40 Cities Indoor Thermal Safety Report for the City of Toronto.

The C40 report for Toronto recommended several actions that seek to address indoor thermal safety, including an analysis of implementing active cooling measures. The C40 report recommends that the City consider, among other things, phasing-in of the maximum temperature standard. The requirement could apply to one room, multiple rooms, or an entire unit. Jurisdictions that have already implemented this have adopted these different approaches, including requiring cooling in bedrooms (City of New Orleans), in a minimum of one single living space (British Columbia, in buildings for which a permit is applied for on or after March 2024), as well as an entire unit approach (City of Austin, City of Dallas, and others).

The C40 report emphasizes that thermal safety measures are most effective when more than one is implemented. While passive cooling strategies (such as minimizing solar heat gains and improving air flow) may not be sufficient alone to meet the 26°C threshold during extreme heat, they play a critical role when combined with active cooling measures. Passive cooling measures can reduce demand on mechanical systems (like A/C) and can help mitigate the impacts of extreme heat during a power outage. In turn, this can reduce the risk of equipment failure, improve overall system reliability, and help mitigate grid strain during peak summer demand.

Lastly, the C40 report also explored interim solutions that can temporarily or partially mitigate overheating risk or reduce the need for active cooling, while long-term solutions are in the planning stages. These are shorter-term solutions that may be lower-cost to implement. One example of an interim measure is providing cooling in common rooms of multi-unit residential buildings.

Engagement/Consultation

Throughout Spring and Summer 2025, City staff, through third-party consultation vendor, Environics Research, consulted with a broad range of parties that would be directly impacted by implementation of a maximum indoor requirement. This included tenants, landlords, property owners/operators, community organizations, and medical professionals. Organizations representing seniors, immigrants, newcomers, 2SLGBTQ+, and people with low-income, disabilities or other heath-conditions were also consulted. Engagement included interviews, focus groups, and a public online feedback form. In September 2025, staff also engaged the Tenant Advisory Committee and the Housing Rights Advisory Committee on the potential proposals being considered. Across these methods, approximately 2,000 individuals and organizations were consulted. Consultation feedback specific to each recommendation is outlined in the recommendations section below. The full summary of external consultations can be found in Attachment 7.

Recommendations

1. Conduct compliance analysis study across different types of leased residential buildings/dwellings, impact on tenant costs (2026)

Engagement feedback from landlords, property owners/operators, and property managers/superintendents have helped inform staff of the potential costs and timeframe to implement active and passive cooling measures. As identified by the C40 Cities report, some leased residential buildings/units are expected to have greater challenges in complying with a maximum indoor temperature requirement than others, such as excessively high costs and time in complying based on the existing infrastructure and age of the dwelling/building. In some cases, coming into compliance with a maximum temperature requirement may reduce the financial viability of being a rental housing provider.

Staff are aware of general implementation considerations from stakeholder feedback and from the C40 Cities report, however, more information and analysis are required on the specific cost and implementation time differences across different leased residential buildings/units. While the C40 Cities report spoke to the need for financial and non-financial support to be targeted to address challenges, the focus of the report was to explore the range of solutions to facilitate indoor thermal safety more broadly.

As such, this report recommends that staff procure a consultant to conduct research into on-the-ground expected realities for rental housing providers if a maximum indoor temperature requirement were introduced and the measured impact on tenants. The analysis will determine:

- Using case studies, the cost for building owners/operators associated with implementing a maximum temperature requirement and whether certain building/dwelling types would have higher compliance costs or other burdens. This will help to measure the differences across building/dwelling types associated with meeting a potential maximum temperature requirement. It will account for challenges that would be faced for older high-rise residential buildings, for instance. One of the case studies that will be explored is multi-tenant homes (i.e., rooming houses), to better understand unique compliance challenges and opportunities.
- A measured understanding of how compliance costs and burdens faced by rental housing providers will impact tenant costs.
- Continue to explore if there are viable opportunities to prioritize populations more vulnerable to heat as the City considers a maximum indoor temperature in dwellings, to ensure relief is provided on a more immediate basis.

The compliance analysis study will also help inform implementation supports, if a maximum indoor temperature in rental units is pursued. This may include pursuing C40 Cities' recommendation that the City consider whether to and how to direct supports to rental housing providers that are most challenged in complying with a maximum temperature requirement. Given it will also provide valuable information into cost challenges for tenants across building types, it may help the City to develop targeted solutions to support tenants that would be most impacted by compliance costs and other impacts.

Staff intend to use the results from the compliance analysis study to inform a report back to Council in 2027 with recommendations for potential implementation of a maximum indoor temperature requirement in rental units, considering varying building infrastructure, with exceptions to be informed by the compliance analysis study. Any recommendations to Council on indoor temperature standards will also continue to take account the interplay of relevant provincial legislation such as the Building Code Act, 1992.

Staff intend to provide case studies, developed as part of the compliance analysis study, as a helpful tool for rental housing providers as they may be required to prepare and plan for the maximum indoor temperature requirement.

Consultation Feedback

During consultations, tenants and tenant advocates expressed significant support for implementing a maximum indoor temperature requirement. Tenants saw this as a necessary step for habitable living conditions and protecting human health against climate impacts. Tenants also expressed interest in the potential for environmental benefits and increased resiliency to climate change, especially if sustainable retrofits are undertaken.

Property owners/operators commonly expressed significant concerns with the cost of implementation. Landlords suggested that they would likely apply to the provincial Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) for Above Guideline Rent Increases (AGIs)[4] if they are eligible to do so to recuperate costs to meet the new standard. Staff will continue to monitor how common it may be for landlords to be eligible for AGIs for complying with the policy – this will be evaluated and reported back to Council in 2027.

Staff consulted on implementing the requirement for Summer 2030. Tenants generally viewed 2030 as too far into the future – they want to see solutions as early as next summer. However, property owners/operators indicated that coming into compliance could take more time than 2030, depending on the type of work that needs to be undertaken (e.g., retrofits, electrical upgrades). Feedback suggested that, in some cases, property owners/operators want time to incorporate the installation of cooling equipment into building-level capital plans, which are at least 5-year plans (at the earliest).

[4] When a landlord is approved for an AGI, rent could be increased above the annual guideline amount by a set amount per year over a period of time (as set out by the LTB's decision). The RTA provides that a landlord can apply to the LTB for an AGI in certain circumstances that may be applicable to the type of upgrades being undertaken (including meeting housing standards).

Staff heard overwhelming feedback from a range of groups (e.g., tenants, property owners/operators, community organizations) that government support is crucial in meeting a maximum temperature standard in a way that does not confound existing affordability challenges. All groups consulted want some or all levels of government to provide subsidies to offset the cost of implementing and using cooling equipment.

Rental housing providers commonly expressed that they see value in receiving guidance on what cooling measures to implement and how to plan for building upgrades.

Staff continue to consider how to balance the health and safety needs of tenants with the concerns of landlords, and this will be evaluated and reported back to Council in 2027.

Electrical Grid Capacity & Toronto Hydro's Plan for Expansion

Staff recognize that, if a maximum indoor temperature standard were to come into place for some or all rental units, there would be increased reliance on the electrical grid in Toronto as a result of more residential buildings operating cooling equipment like A/C for the first time. It is recognized that the risk of power outages increases during extreme heat events. Higher demand and greater ambient temperatures combine to increase thermal stress on electrical equipment, which can accelerate the aging of transformers, reduce efficiency, and increase failure risk.

Staff worked closely with Toronto Hydro leading up to the endorsement of a maximum indoor temperature standard in December 2024 and continue to closely collaborate on potential implementation considerations and next steps. As an outcome of these discussions, Toronto Hydro has confirmed that the electrical grid would be able to accommodate the potential impacts of implementing the standard. Staff continue will continue to engage with Toronto Hydro as part of the compliance analysis study to ensure hydro costs are considered. Under its 2025-2029 investment plan, Toronto Hydro plans to spend more than $5 billion to expand, modernize and sustain the local electricity grid to serve the current and future electricity needs of Toronto's homes and businesses.

Future Financial Impact

Any financial impacts related to the development and potential implementation of any future indoor temperature by-laws, including the potential need for additional MLS enforcement resources, will be outlined in the report back to Council in 2027.

2. Short-term measure #1: Continue the City's A/C Assistance Program, which would provide a number of eligible recipients with free A/Cs

In 2025, the City launched a pilot program to provide portable A/Cs to low-income seniors with self-identified medical needs made worse by extreme heat who are living in multi-unit residential buildings. The pilot program received funding in 2025 and was aligned with broader climate change resilience efforts and complemented existing support programs, such as the City's Hardship Fund. As part of the approved 2025 operating budget for the ECF Division, $200,000 was allocated to implement the new pilot program. There was significant interest in the program with the City receiving over 1,414 applications from residents living in 585 buildings over a two-week period. In total, 489 units were delivered to 250 buildings across the City.

This report recommends the continuance of the City's A/C assistance program for low-income and vulnerable households, incorporating lessons learned from the 2025 pilot program into the program design and implementation of future A/C programs. This would be subject to the funding approval through the 2026 budget submission.

In September 2025, the project team distributed a program participant survey to further inform understanding of program challenges and opportunities; 193 responses were received. The feedback was positive – for example, 94% of respondents indicated the A/C had improved their comfort and feeling of well-being, with over 80% reporting feeling 'much better'. For the full results of the survey and additional details about the 2025 program, see Attachment 8.

Consultation Feedback

In the maximum indoor temperature external consultations, stakeholder feedback suggested that the City should take action to support those that are most vulnerable to the impacts of extreme indoor heat on a more immediate basis, while rental housing providers prepare for a potential maximum indoor temperature requirement in dwellings. This measure would directly target certain people vulnerable to the impact of extreme heat on a more immediate basis, by providing (a certain amount of) eligible low-income and vulnerable households with a free A/C unit.

3. Short-term measure #2: Cool RentSafeTO amenity spaces (June 1, 2026)

Only 7% of the ~3,580 apartments buildings registered with RentSafeTO provide A/C in its rental units. Staff recommend amending Chapter 497, Heating, to require all RentSafeTO registered buildings to keep the air temperature of at least one amenity space no more than 26°C from June 1 – September 30 of each year, beginning June 1, 2026, if the apartment building:

a) does not provide A/C in their rental units, and,
b) has an existing indoor amenity space.

However, this requirement would not apply where the owner or operator can establish that the only way to comply with the requirement is to undertake construction or demolition within the meaning of the Building Code Act, 1992.

This would mean that if a property owner/operator of a RentSafeTO building meets the criteria to comply, they would be expected to keep the air temperature no more than 26°C from June 1 – September 30 of each year. If mechanical cooling equipment is needed to achieve this (i.e., passive cooling measures like natural ventilation are insufficient), the owner/operator could install and operate a portable A/C or window heat pump (among other low intervention examples) to reduce the temperature to 26°C or less. If the amenity space does not have operable windows or other outdoor ventilation opportunities that are needed to operate a portable A/C or window heat pump, the owner/operator would not be expected to comply. In other words, if construction of material alteration, as defined by the Ontario Building Code Act, is needed and the owner/operator can establish that, the building is not subject to the requirement.

Under the City of Toronto’s Zoning By-law, an indoor “amenity space” means an indoor space on a lot that is communal and available for use by the occupants of a building on the lot for recreational or social activities. Hallways, standard lobbies, and laundry rooms are not considered amenity spaces. The proposed requirement does not intend to take away the intended purpose and typical use of the amenity space – i.e., if the amenity space is deemed to be a games room, it may continue to be used as such. If the amenity space is typically rented out for private use by a resident on occasion, the new proposed changes do not intend to interfere with that ability.

There are a number of RentSafeTO registered buildings that do not have an indoor amenity space. Based on RentSafeTO registration data, this could mean about 25% of buildings would not be subject to the requirement due to the lack of available space. These buildings, including all other leased residential building types not part of RentSafeTO, will continue to be considered for a maximum indoor temperature requirement in their rental units. Most Toronto Community Housing Corporation buildings, including its buildings registered with RentSafeTO (343 buildings, or about 10% of all RentSafeTO buildings), already have one or more shared amenity spaces/common rooms with access to cooling for tenants of those buildings.

Guidance for Property Owners/Operators

In early 2026, staff will develop guidance material for property owners/operators of apartment buildings to provide additional information on how to come into compliance with cooling their amenity spaces, if they are subject to the requirement. The guidance material will:

- Recommend daily minimum hours of operation for the amenity space to be available for tenants to use to temporarily cool down (e.g., cooled during all daylight hours). Daily hours of operation will be required to be posted on the tenant notification board.
- Remind owners/operators of their obligations under the Fire Code to have determined the occupancy load of the residential building they are responsible for, including amenity spaces. Recommend posting the occupancy load in a visible place in the amenity room, even if not required under the Fire Code, to avoid the potential the risk of overcrowding.
- Remind owners/operators that they are subject to requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 when considering use of the cooled amenity space.

The guidance material will be made available and circulated before the changes come into effect on June 1, 2026.

Consultation Feedback

The NORC Innovation Centre at the University Health Network identifies that there are 179 naturally occurring retirement communities[5] that exist in RentSafeTO buildings. As noted in the outset of the report, seniors and older adults are among the most vulnerable during extreme heat events. This is due to older age itself decreasing the body's ability to cope with heat along with compounding factors such as chronic illnesses, medications that interfere with the body's cooling mechanisms, social isolation, and poverty. As such, the recommendation to require RentSafeTO buildings to cool an amenity space (with exceptions) helps to target thermal safety efforts in buildings where risks are identified.

While the usage patterns of existing cool amenity spaces in individual buildings are unknown, their current use on average across the city as a cooling option is believed to be relatively low. Toronto Public Health's survey supported by the Partnership for Healthy Cities found very few people have ever used a cool amenity space to cool down. Large proportions of heat vulnerable populations also indicated that they would not leave their home to access a cooler space including 50% of adults over the age of 65, 39% of those living alone and 35% of those with a disability. However, during the City's engagement with RentSafeTO tenants, owners, and operators, 61% indicated support for this proposal, citing the benefit of immediate relief during heat waves.

Even if user uptake may be low (particularly for seniors and older adults, those living alone, and those with a disability), this proposal is intended to be a short-term measure, bringing the option of temporary cooling to apartments, while the City conducts a compliance analysis study for a rental unit maximum temperature requirement. To support the use of these cooled amenity spaces, the City would promote their availability to tenants of those buildings (e.g., through RentSafeTO communications, City webpage updates) leading up to the June 1, 2026, implementation date.

Other Jurisdictions

Other jurisdictions that participated in C40 Cities research on thermal safety requirements are considering this measure, and one jurisdiction has implemented it. In 2022, the City of Chicago adopted a Cooling Ordinance, requiring A/C in at least one indoor common gathering space accessible to all residents of the building free of charge, in buildings greater than 80 feet tall, or buildings with more than 100 units, or buildings which are operated as "housing for older persons" under the Federal Fair Housing Act (usually, housing primarily intended for those 55 years of age or older). The Ordinance sets requirements such as cooling and dehumidification equipment and a maximum temperature of 24°C when the outdoor temperature is 33°C or more. The City of Chicago is currently the only known jurisdiction that has implemented a cooling ordinance. City of Toronto staff engaged City of Chicago staff to discuss lessons learned from implementation and they did not identify major issues.

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[5] The NORC Innovation Centre defines naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs) as vertical communities such as rental apartments, condos, and co-ops with a high concentration of older adults. They do not include communities that were purpose-built to provide care for older adults like retirement homes, assisted living facilities, or long-term care homes.

4. **Short-term measure #3: Improving enforcement tools to ensure timely landlord repair of A/Cs (June 1, 2026)**

This report recommends by-law changes to improve the available enforcement tools when responding to 311 service requests about landlord repair of A/Cs, in circumstances where A/C is provided by landlords. This is accomplished by deleting an indoor temperature related provision in section 38 of the Chapter 629, Property Standards By-law (heating and A/C) and including it to a newly updated Chapter 497 By-law (which will be renamed Indoor Temperature Standards).

The current process relies on Orders to Comply issued under the Property Standards By-law. This can allow for lengthier delays in achieving compliance if a property owner opts to appeal the order, as provided for in the Building Code Act, to the Property Standards Committee. When the appeal process is undertaken during the hottest months of the year (July and August), this could mean a tenant is without cooling equipment that the landlord agreed to provide at the outset of the tenancy. During extreme heat events like heatwaves, this can have a profound effect on thermal safety for the tenant.

If upon inspection a violation with the relevant by-law requirements is observed, BEOs will discuss with the landlord their plan to repair the A/C to get the indoor temperature to below 26°C, such as determining if replacement parts need to be ordered. If landlords do not make efforts to address the temperature-specific violation, these by-law changes would allow BEOs to issue notices of violation and set fines as part of their compliance tools, instead of using the Order to Comply process. General A/C disrepair and all other structural elements of heating and cooling equipment would still be subject to the Order to Comply process.

Staff also recommend renaming Chapter 497, Heating to Chapter 497, Indoor Temperature Standards. The by-law currently includes the minimum indoor temperature requirement of 21°C during the winter months. Clarifying the by-law title would better represent the consolidated indoor temperature requirements being in one place.

The by-law changes would come into effect on June 1, 2026.

Complementary Actions and Programs

There are several complementary actions and program that the City already undertakes in its approach to hot weather, indoor temperatures, climate resilience and building efficiency of Toronto's existing buildings, through other strategic policy commitments and operational programs overseen by various City divisions. These actions and programs continue to be improved to accommodate the changing climate landscape. For example, the City of Toronto's [Heat Relief Strategy] is a protocol for hot weather response to reduce the incidence of heat-related illness and death in Toronto due to extreme heat. One important component of the Strategy is Toronto's Heat Relief Network, which maximizes the use of existing air-conditioned and other cool spaces throughout the heat season. In June 25 and 26, 2025, City Council adopted

2025.MM31.21, which directed the City Manager to report back in Q4 2025 on a review of the City's heat relief strategy and recommendations for improvements, such as increased public communications, enhanced operational readiness for indoor and outdoor pools, and greater access to cool spaces through the report titled *Strengthening the City's Heat Relief Strategy* . Please see Attachment 9 for a summary of all relevant complementary actions and programs.

Other Directives and Recommendations

Outstanding Directive: Avoidable Sources of Indoor Heat

In 2024.PH17.5, City Council directed the Executive Director, Environment and Climate (now Environment, Climate and Forestry) to investigate avoidable sources of indoor heat which could exacerbate indoor temperatures in rental premises, such as the use of fossil gas stoves, and incorporate the findings as part of the implementation options being reported. A summary of academic research on sources of indoor heat can be found in Attachment 10.

The Property Standards By-law sets the baseline standards for maintenance of all properties in Toronto, and compels repair where those standards are not being met. It sets broadly applicable minimum standards to ensure the safety, cleanliness, and general upkeep of all property types. Regarding supplied facilities, such as kitchen appliances, it requires they are properly installed, maintained, repaired when necessary, and capable of being operated at all times. Introducing performance-based metrics requiring that landlords upgrade appliances or install upgraded kitchen materials is not consistent with the legislative intent of the Property Standards By-law; however, public education may have a role to play in reducing the impacts of indoor heat sources.

Requests to the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario

The Canadian Board for Harmonized Construction Codes (CBHCC) conducted public reviews on proposed changes to the National Building Code of Canada, 2020 (NBC), including a proposed change which would introduce a maximum indoor air temperature of 26°C for new dwelling units. The proposed change included in the Winter 2025 public review would require that new residential dwelling units be provided with mechanical cooling or, where achievable, through passive cooling design measures, to achieve the indoor air temperature specified. City staff submitted comments in support of these proposed changes in February 2025. In addition to submitting comments to the CBHCC in support of this proposed change to the NBC, City staff submitted a letter to the Government of Ontario requesting a similar amendment to the Ontario Building Code, reiterating City Council's December 2024 request to amend the Ontario Building Code to address overheating in residential dwelling units.

The proposed change to the NBC is in line with 2024 updates to the British Columbia Building Code, which introduced requirements for new homes to include at least one living space that is kept below a temperature threshold during extreme heat to prevent indoor temperatures from rising too high.

Unlike heat, fuel, gas, electricity and hot or cold water, cooling is not a vital service under the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 (RTA). As a result, when responding to extreme heat and cooling related service requests, the City is not able to use the enhanced enforcement tools that are available for responding to vital service requests. Given the increasing severity and duration of heat of Canadian summers due to climate change, staff are recommending that City Council reiterate its request to the Government of Ontario to amend the RTA to include cooling as a vital service and establish a maximum indoor temperature standard applicable to all rental units. These considerations have been raised by the Ontario Human Rights Commission[6] and are considered a critical step in ensuring the thermal safety of tenants.

In 2023, the Government of Ontario passed [Bill 97, Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, 2023], which outlines changes to the RTA regarding access to A/C in rental housing. The legislation received Royal Assent on June 8, 2023, but has not yet been proclaimed and supporting regulations have not been published. This would, if proclaimed, strengthen tenants' rights to access cooling in leased residential premises and examine additional measures to support vulnerable and low-income tenants with associated cooling costs. This report recommends that Council reiterate its request to the Government of Ontario to proclaim these changes to support tenant access to cooling.

Lastly, in October 2025, a Liberal MPP introduced [Bill 64, Housing Equity and Rental Transparency Act, 2025], which would, if passed, require landlords of residential complexes to maintain an indoor temperature of 26°C or less from May 15 – September 15 of each year in the common areas of the residential complex, including the lobby, any indoor event spaces, and any exercise facilities. City staff will monitor if these changes are passed.

Conclusion and Next Steps

This report proposes to report back to Council in 2027 with recommendations for potential implementation of a maximum indoor temperature requirement in rental units, considering varying building infrastructure, with exceptions to be informed by the compliance analysis study. This report also proposes short-term measures to protect tenant health and safety in the meantime. These measures, combined with several other City-wide measures to address the impacts of climate change and rising temperatures, are aimed at protecting tenants from negative health impacts associated with living in spaces that are too hot during the summer.

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[6] OHRC statement on human rights, extreme heat waves and air conditioning | Ontario Human Rights Commission

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – New Chapter 497, Indoor Temperature Standards By-Law
Attachment 2 – City Programs Supporting Passive Cooling Measures
Attachment 3 – Detailed Regulatory Landscape – Indoor Temperatures
Attachment 4 – Summary of Service Request and Charge Data
Attachment 5 – Jurisdictional Scan of Maximum Indoor Temperature Thresholds and Cooling Room Requirements for Rental Units
Attachment 6 – C40 Cities Indoor Thermal Safety Report
Attachment 7 – Summary of External Consultations 2025 – Environics Research
Attachment 8 – Results of the 2025 A/C Pilot Program and Additional Information
Attachment 9 – Summary of the Complementary Actions and Programs
Attachment 10 – Summary of Academic Research on Indoor Heat Sources