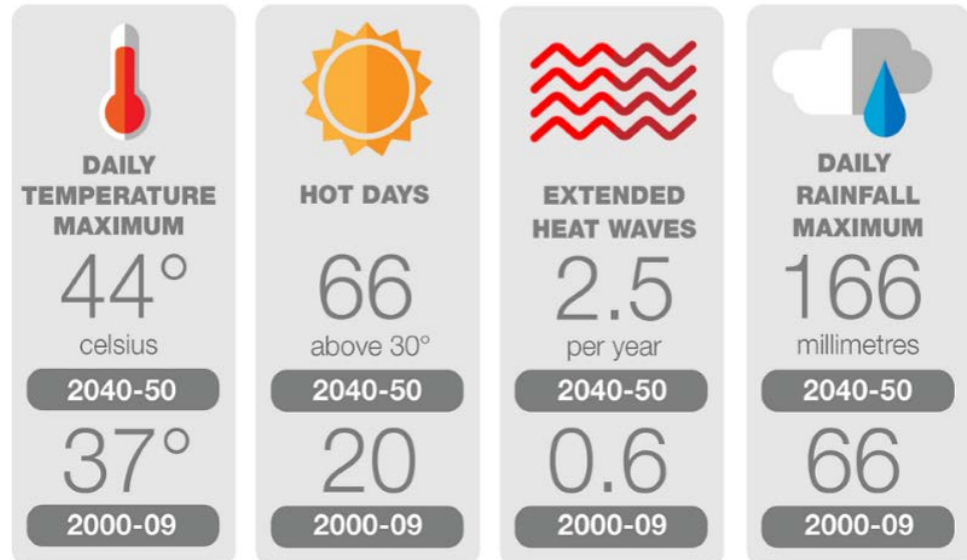


Strengthening Heat Resilience in the City of Toronto

Board of Health
October 28, 2019

Gayle Burse
Director, Strategy and Preventive Health
Toronto Public Health

- Evidence demonstrates that temperatures are rising and heat waves are more frequent and longer in duration due to climate change.
- The resulting exposure to extreme heat is a health risk that needs to be managed in a coordinated manner across City divisions who are also mitigating other climate change related risks.
- Over time, it is important for the City and its residents to continue to evolve the response to heat through operational changes and strategies that build the city's resilience to extreme weather.



Source: [Toronto's Future Weather and Climate Driver Study, 2011.](#)

- In 2018 and 2019, the Board of Health and City Council directed Toronto Public Health, along with other City Divisions, to review the City's hot weather response.
- An interdivisional Heat Relief Working Group, co-chaired by the Deputy City Manager of Corporate Services and Toronto Public Health, was convened in fall 2018 to develop a Heat Relief Strategy for the City.
- The Heat Relief Working Group has representation from 10 City Divisions.



Based on experience from other cities, the summer 2019 Heat Relief Strategy included 6 areas of focus:

1. **Heat Relief Network** - Expanded from 180 to more than 300 cool spaces available to the public across the city;
2. **Interactive Online Map** - To locate cool spaces and water in the Heat Relief Network at toronto.ca/keepcool;
3. **Neighbour Checking Pilot** - To promote messages about heat and health;
4. **Communication Strategy** - Collaboration with Municipal Licensing & Standards (MLS) to implement a communications strategy in May 2019 to educate landlords and residents on the Heating Bylaw;
5. **Collaboration with ECCC** - Greater integration with Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) by amplifying Heat Warnings issued by ECCC and promoting the WeatherCan app; and

6. Proactive Outreach Program

To better reach vulnerable populations, individuals with lived experience of homelessness engaged with people near service settings used frequently by those experiencing homelessness to:

1. Provide information about how to protect themselves from heat exposure;
2. Facilitate referrals to other services;
3. Provide sunscreen and water;
4. Check on well-being in general, especially, for those people who maybe street involved; and
5. Facilitate access to heat relief network locations with publically available cool space.

Feedback received on the outreach program:

- Positive feedback from community organizations and Shelter Support & Housing Administration frontline staff; and
- Some feedback citing the need for access to 24hr cooling centres/shelters providing a broad range of supports for those experiencing homelessness.

Based on experience from previous years, operating cooling centres was not effective because:

1. They did not reach those most in need; and
2. They functioned as an inadequate form of shelter.

Given this feedback, the Heat Relief Strategy going forward should include support of:

- Housing Secretariat's HousingTO 2020 – 2030 Action Plan;
- Shelter, Support & Housing Administration's efforts to provide temporary shelter;
- Interactive map;
- Stakeholder communication;
- Neighbourhood checking;
- Outreach Initiative in the 2020 Budget implemented by Shelter, Support and Housing Administration; and
- Publically accessible, cool space – continuing to increase from 180 to 300+ cool spaces throughout the city.

- **Strengthening Resilience:** The 2019 Heat Relief Strategy has successfully created a city-wide response to heat and has identified areas for ongoing development.
- **Cross-Divisional Response:** While several Divisions have responsibilities within the Heat Relief Strategy, a strategic and coordinated approach is key to mitigating the impacts of heat, and other extreme weather issues.
- **Collaborative Leadership:** To achieve this goal it is recommended that the Medical Officer of Health, Deputy City Manager Corporate Services and Deputy City Manager Infrastructure & Development provide continued implementation of the city-wide Heat Relief Strategy through the Resilience Strategy.

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. City Council request that the Medical Officer of Health, Deputy City Manager Corporate Services, and Deputy City Manager Infrastructure & Development Services collaborate to provide continued implementation of the City-wide Heat Relief Strategy through the Resilience Strategy and the Heat Relief Working Group.
2. City Council request all City Divisions including Parks, Forestry & Recreation, Social Development, Finance & Administration, City Planning, Environment & Energy, Municipal Licensing & Standards, Strategic Communications, Shelter, Support & Housing Administration, Facilities Management, Information and Technology and Corporate Real Estate Management continue to incorporate hot weather response activities as a part of their divisional mandates.
3. Staff report on the progress of incorporating the Heat Relief Strategy into the Resilience Strategy in 2020.