

Attachment 8: Results of the 2025 A/C Pilot Program and Additional Information

As the City has advanced policy development to mitigate the effects of extreme heat events, in 2025 the City launched a pilot program to provide portable air conditioners 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 Environment, Climate and Forestry Division, \$200,000 was allocated to implement the new pilot program.

Between late February and mid-July, the Environment, Climate and Forestry Division led a program design and consultation process working in close coordination with key partners including Social Development's Human Services Integration (HSI) unit, Strategic Public & Employee Communications (SPEC), Purchasing & Material Management Division (PMMD), among others.

The design of the pilot program prioritized simplicity, equity, and integration with existing City services by using a one-window intake system and a randomized draw to allocate up to 500 air conditioning units. On May 26 the City launched the application process, allowing seniors or their caregivers to complete it on their behalf, either online, by phone or in-person.

To ensure geographic equity across the city, staff allocated the funding envelope based on the weighted distribution of seniors living in multi-unit apartment buildings within each Community Council area. Outreach and communications to potential program participants was facilitated through existing City networks and in coordination with community partners. Through coordination with PMMD, the City was able to leverage an existing City contract to engage a Canadian company to supply, deliver and install the air conditioning units.

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. The dedicated phone line set up to support applicants received approximately 2,260 incoming calls between the point at which the application intake opened on May 26 and mid-July, at which point a majority of the AC units had been installed. The Program website also received close to 25,000 views between May and July. In total, 489 units were delivered to 246 buildings across the City.

While the key objectives of the pilot program were met, staff recognize that there is significant need for programs and services to mitigate the effects of extreme heat. In addition to delivery of

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the Air Conditioner Assistance Program, the City also saw an increase in interest for funding for cooling devices (e.g. air conditioners) administered through the City's Hardship Fund.

Project staff have focused on capturing key lessons learned to ensure the program can be improved to best serve Toronto residents. Key lessons learned include:

- Cross-corporate coordination that drew on the capabilities of multiple Divisions was key to program delivery.
- An ability to leverage existing staff capacity (e.g. HSI call centre), tools (e.g. survey software) and administrative processes allowed for timely program roll-out.
- The option to utilize an existing City contract to engage a vendor capable of supplying, delivering and installing air conditioner units was a key benefit of the pilot program.
- Communications, including outreach efforts through existing City channels and community partners was very effective in generating interest in the program, despite no dedicated marketing budget.

In September 2025, the project team distributed a program participant survey to further inform understanding of program challenges and opportunities: 193 responses were received of 440 recipients invited to participate.¹ Highlights from the survey are included below:

- **Improved your comfort and feeling of well-being**
 - 94% of respondents indicated the air-conditioner had improved their comfort and feeling of well-being. With over 80% reporting 'much better'
- **Delivery and installation of the air conditioner**
 - 77% rated the experience good or very good.
- **Air conditioner quality**
 - 80% rated the quality of the air conditioner good or very good
- **Satisfaction with assistance provided by City staff**
 - For those who required support 97% indicated they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the support provided by City staff.
- **Reduced need to use 'cooling' locations (e.g., cooling room, community centers, libraries, malls) to cope with the heat**
 - 78% indicated a moderate to major reduction.
- **Reduced need to seek medical attention**
 - 68% indicated a moderate to major reduction in the need to seek medical attention.
- **Would recommend the Air Conditioner Assistance Program**
 - 93% of respondents indicated they would recommend the program to someone they know, with the remainder unsure (4%) and only 3% unwilling to recommend the program.

¹ Survey invitations were sent to 440 of 489 recipients. The remaining applicants did not provide personal email addresses, using a generic City email instead and completing applications by phone with case worker assistance.

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Several questions in the feedback survey were structured with options for providing written comments. In total there were 343 written comments. Sixty-five percent (224) of the comments expressed positive satisfaction with the program and confirmed positive impacts on participants' comfort, well-being and health. Some participants raised concerns related to delivery and installation, general troubleshooting, draining the unit and issues with the remote control. These comments will be further reviewed to improve the program moving forward.

Engagement with City program delivery partners and related stakeholders, including program participants, have informed the development of the following recommendations intended to improve the design and delivery of subsequent programs:

- Initiate program development early with a continued focus on interdivisional collaboration and coordination.
- Identify dedicated staff resources to plan and execute any extension or expansion of the program.
- Initiate procurement processes as soon as possible to secure a vendor capable of providing air conditioner units and critical services like installation, delivery and post installation support.
- Leverage technology solutions to manage application in-take to better support applicants and more effectively leverage staff resources.
- Utilize effective communications channels (e.g. City newsletters, promotion by community organizations) to promote the program, with the potential to leverage additional channels in the future.

By applying the lessons learned from the pilot program, an opportunity exists to improve the delivery of an extended or expanded program, subject to budget approval, with the potential to deliver and install air conditioners earlier in the summer, thereby further improving recipients' comfort and well-being, while mitigating the potential health effects of extreme heat.

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