Extreme Heat and Climate Resilience

Presentation to Executive Committee

December 9, 2025

Environment, Climate and Forestry (ECF)

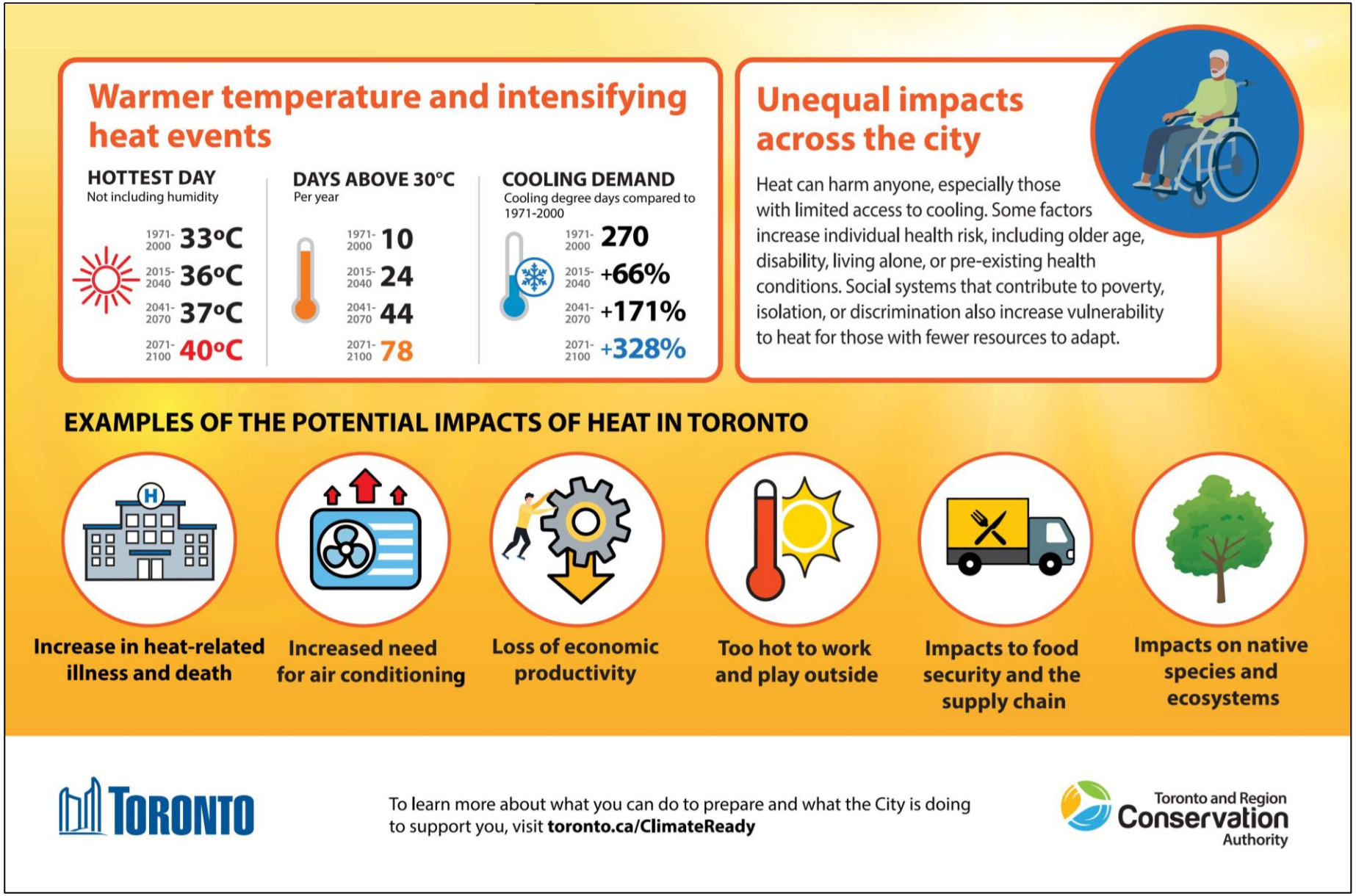
Municipal Licensing & Standards (MLS)

Toronto Emergency Management (TEM)

Toronto Public Health (TPH)

Background: Extreme Heat

Climate change is impacting public health and demands for City services.



Background: Climate Risks

Extreme heat is the most urgent of several **elevated climate change risks** that will escalate in scope and severity in Toronto by 2050. Getting the city ready for a changing climate requires building **climate resilience.**

Climate resilience is the ability to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to the impacts of climate change. This includes preparing for and responding to **climate shocks** and adapting and responding to **climate stressors**,

An all-of-City approach is needed to create **improved systems, update existing tools, and undertake new actions** that address climate risks. It is essential that the City act now, in a coordinated and effective manner, to get our community ready for the current and future climate.

Reports to Executive Committee

City staff are presenting three reports that collectively discuss extreme heat and how the City of Toronto is responding to climate change impacts:

EX28.5: Progress and Priorities for Enhancing Toronto's Climate Resilience (ECF)

- "The Big Picture:" outlines climate risks facing the City, with heat as the most pressing risk.
- Proposes a governance model and work plan to enable Divisions, Agencies, and Corporation leadership and operationalize the City's response to climate change.

EX28.4: Strengthening the Heat Relief Strategy (TEM)

- Example of seasonal planning and immediate response to heat events
- Focus on supporting people outdoors / in public spaces (parks, pools, public squares, streets)

EX28.3: Towards Implementing a Maximum Indoor Temperature Requirement for Rental Units and Cooling Rooms (MLS, ECF, TPH)

- Example of long-term planning occurring now to address current and future heat risk
- Focus on supporting people at home / in rental units

Progress and Priorities for Enhancing Toronto's Climate Resilience (ECF)

Report Overview

- Toronto's climate is changing, with extreme heat and flooding from heavy rainfall emerging as the city's most urgent climate hazards.
- On April 17, 2024, Council directed staff to report back on current and future climate resilience initiatives, provide a refreshed approach to governance, identify climate resilience priorities, and discuss Indigenous worldviews and relationships in climate resilience planning. (Item – 2024.IE12.3)
- Toronto has completed its first **city-wide assessment of climate risks** across major urban systems. The analysis identified 80 adaptation actions already underway by the City to build climate resilience.
- **More actions are necessary** to ensure that everyone in Toronto is prepared and protected from the impacts of climate change, now and in the future. The costs of climate change are already being felt by the City and its residents, and the impacts of climate change will not be distributed equally.

Progress and Priorities for Enhancing Toronto's Climate Resilience (ECF)

Key Directions and Recommendations

1. **Interdivisional Governance**

An interdivisional **Oversight Table for Climate Resilience**, led and coordinated by ECF, will provide visible leadership, coordination, clear accountability, and better decision making. This model is **recommended over a singular Chief Resiliency Officer** position, as it builds on and leverages existing expertise, Division-specific authorities and responsibilities and limits duplication or uncertainty around responsibilities.

2. **Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan**

ECF has developed a cross-corporate work plan for City Divisions. A key output will be a **Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan** that evaluates and prioritizes actions, and identifies how the City will address risks in the short, medium and long term.

3. **Cross-Corporate Systems, Tools, and Work Plan**

The plan will be complemented by initiatives to embed climate risk and resilience into existing City processes and decision making, including the **Carbon Budget, Climate Lens, Corporate Asset Management Plan**.

Towards Implementing a Maximum Indoor Temperature Requirement for Rental Units and Cooling Rooms (MLS, ECF, TPH)

Report Overview

- Excessive indoor temperatures are of particular concern for tenants in leased residential premises without cooling equipment like air conditioning or heat pumps, especially for individuals deemed more vulnerable to the impacts of heat (e.g., older adults, infants, young children, etc.).
- On December 17 and 18, 2024, Council endorsed the implementation of a health-based maximum indoor temperature standard of 26°C for leased residential premises and cooling rooms. (Item - 2024.PH17.5).
- In 2025, staff conducted comprehensive stakeholder engagement and procured C40 Cities to examine considerations for implementing maximum temperature standards in Toronto.
- While a maximum indoor temperature provides health and safety benefits, implementation costs and burdens to rental housing providers that do not currently provide cooling equipment are a significant barrier, and likely to be passed on to tenants.

Towards Implementing a Maximum Indoor Temperature Requirement (MLS, ECF, TPH)

Key Directions and Recommendations

Towards Max Indoor Temperature

Compliance Analysis Study 2026

- Determine compliance costs and burdens associated with implementation across different rental building/unit types (via case studies)
- Measure expected impact on tenant costs (e.g. rent increases)

Report back to Council in 2027 with:

- Results of the study
- Recommendations for potential implementation of a maximum temperature requirement, considering varying building infrastructure and the need for exceptions

Short-Term Measures

1. **Continue A/C Assistance Program (*subject to 2026 budget*)**

   Provide free air conditioners to low-income and vulnerable households, up to a certain amount

2. **Require Apartments Cool an Indoor Amenity Space**

   Targets the 93% of RentSafeTO buildings that don't provide A/C (some exceptions apply)

3. **Consolidate indoor temperature provisions in the Heating Bylaw; rename to Indoor Temperature Standards**

   Allows for set fines, notices of violation

Strengthening the Heat Relief Strategy (TEM)

Report Overview

- The summer of 2025 was among the hottest in the past decade, with a total of 29 days under a Heat Warning.

- This highlighted key areas to strengthen the City's response, including expanded access to cool spaces, increased water distribution and more coordinated, proactive communications. Specific challenges with the operation of public pools during the first 2025 Heat Warning required additional measures to support uninterrupted service.

- At its June 2025 meeting, Council directed staff to report back in Q4 of 2025 with a review of the City's Heat Relief Strategy and recommendations for improvements (2025.MM31.21). At the same meeting, Council directed staff to review pool and recreation facility closure updates to ensure accuracy of up-to-date information for members of the public (2025.MM31.26).

- Several improvements requested by Council were immediately implemented in Summer 2025. Staff also conducted a post-season debrief to identify lessons learned and additional measures to strengthen the City's 2026 Heat Relief Strategy.

Strengthening the Heat Relief Strategy (TEM)

Key Directions and Recommendations

1 Embed 2025 improvements in ongoing Strategy

The 2026 Strategy builds on improvements from 2025, including:

- enhanced operational readiness for indoor and outdoor pools;
- improved CampTO contingency plans reducing heat exposure for staff and children;
- continuation of 24-hour cool space during Heat Warnings;
- strengthened engagement of vulnerable populations through best-practice review of scalable outreach models; and
- enhanced drinking water access through the deployment of water trailers and the distribution of bottled water.

2 Enhance City-wide preparedness

Additional pre-season tabletop exercise to test protocols and procedures, enhanced cross-divisional communications through a Heat Warning Table and continuous improvement of metrics.

Strengthening the Heat Relief Strategy (TEM)
Pool Operations

Pre-Season Readiness

Facility & Equipment Condition Assessments

- Prioritizing any necessary repairs and upgrades to mechanical systems, dehumidification equipment through the State of Good Repair (SOGR) program

Heat Stress Prevention Training

- Interdivisional team supporting content and delivery
- Builds on mid-season Safety Talks to reinforce protocols and encourage situational awareness

During Heat Warnings

1. **Extended Pool Hours at 8 locations**
   Extended closing time from 8pm to 11:45pm
2. **Occupational Health & Safety for Pool Staff**
   Longer breaks, increased access to shade, cool space and hydration for outdoor workers; increased staffing to accommodate work/rest schedules
3. **Activation of Aquatics Command Centre**
   Support operational decision-making to maximize continuity of pool operations

Next Steps

Upcoming Implementation Dates

- **Q1 2026:** First meeting of the Oversight Table for Climate Resilience
- **By May 1, 2026:** Finalize and implement the final 2026 Heat Relief Strategy
- **June 1, 2026:** Requirement for cooled amenity spaces in RentSafeTO buildings, with some exceptions, comes into effect

As the climate changes, resilience must be built into all systems. The City has actions underway, clear climate risks identified, and ideas to fill the gaps – and we must keep adapting as risks escalate.