

City Council

Motion without Notice

MM31.21	ACTION			Ward: All
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Addressing Gaps in the City's Heat Relief Strategy - by Mayor Olivia Chow, seconded by Councillor Alejandra Bravo

** Notice of this Motion has not been given. A two-thirds vote is required to waive notice.*
** This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*
** This Motion has been deemed urgent by the Chair.*

Recommendations

Mayor Olivia Chow, seconded by Councillor Alejandra Bravo, recommends that:

1. City Council request the City Manager to report to City Council in the fourth quarter of 2025 with a review of the City's heat relief strategy and recommendations for improvements, including restoration of previously offered services like 24/7 cooling centres, and consideration of the creation of a Chief Heat Officer.
2. City Council direct that in advance of forecast heat events that have the potential to meet temperature or humidex thresholds for health and safety, the Deputy City Manager, Community and Emergency Services ensure nurses (and/or paramedics as permitted under provincial guidelines) are on call to support the uninterrupted operation of outdoor pools.
3. City Council direct that funding be allocated to backfill charitable donation gaps and ensure frontline agencies can distribute at least 500,000 bottles of water through existing networks established by Project FoodChain for 2025.
4. City Council direct the Deputy City Manager, Community and Emergency Services, in collaboration with the General Manager, Toronto Water, to work with frontline agencies to determine high-priority locations for surge capacity water trucks in advance of forecast heat events.
5. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation to ensure extreme heat contingency plans are in place for summer operations including any CampTO locations where there is limited access to indoor space.
6. City Council direct the Deputy City Manager, Community and Emergency Services, in consultation with the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards, the Medical Officer of Health, and the Executive Director, Social Development, to work with the Canadian Red Cross to develop a pilot program where the City would support Red Cross Volunteers in going door-to-door in areas with vulnerable populations to check on residents, provide information on relevant services, and collect data to better assist the City in responding to extreme weather events or emergency situations.

Summary

When Environment Canada issues a heat warning, the City's Heat Relief Strategy protocols are activated. That includes spaces where people can cool off, longer swimming pool hours, surge shelter spaces and other actions.

However, when it's really hot, these actions don't always go far enough. And this year, the challenges are compounded by a number of factors. Project Water is unable to deliver water bottles to people experiencing homelessness, which they have done for 25 years. For the first time in many years, the humidex reached the threshold of 46 degrees, and health and safety standards came into effect that closed some pools.

Ahead of the recent heat event on June 22, the Mayor's office worked with City staff to rapidly deploy three additional water trucks to operate 24/7. As well as acquire 14,000 bottles of water and distribute them through Streets to Home outreach workers. We have also worked with City staff to ensure more lifeguards are deployed to pools, more shade structures are put up, and medical professionals are available - to ensure pools are well staffed, staff are healthy, and pools can stay open.

Further, on June 22, through coordination with the Mayor's office, volunteers from the Red Cross canvassed buildings with a high concentration of seniors and low-income residents to do wellness checks and share resources on heat relief.

But we need to go further, this motion asks staff to pursue several changes that will help us better manage extreme heat events:

- a. a review of the 2019 shift away from dedicated cooling centres towards the current heat relief plan,
- b. working with the Red Cross to expand outreach to vulnerable people during extreme heat,
- c. ensuring we have medical professionals on-call in the case of extreme heat that threatens our ability to provide City pools, and
- d. deploying more water trucks and providing 500,000 water bottles to frontline agencies for people experiencing homelessness.

Background Information (City Council)

(June 23, 2025) Member Motion MM31.21