

May 12, 2026

Re. Item EX 31.2 Update on Tenant Supports and Heat-related Directives: Standardizing the Air Conditioner Benefit (Pilot)

ATTN: Mayor Olivia Chow and Executive Committee, Toronto City Council

Hello, I'm Dr Mili Roy A physician and surgeon with the University of Toronto, Faculty of Medicine and Co chair of the Ontario committee of the Canadian association of physicians for the environment AKA Cape. CAPE Ontario calls on the Executive Committee to urgently pass a maximum indoor heat by-law for all rental units in Toronto to complement the Air Conditioner Benefit. This is a matter of protecting public health that will save lives, particularly for some of the most vulnerable among us.

We commend the City of Toronto for action on a heat relief strategy such as planning a cooling centre, and support for funding and installing air cooling units in low income households, and for passing the December 2024 staff report recognizing the need to regulate maximum indoor temperatures.

Unfortunately this will not be enough to address the potential morbidity and mortality on the very near horizon. We are disappointed at the lack of even a draft indoor temperature by-law as 2026 is expected to be one of the hottest years in recorded history with a "super El Nino" boosted by some of the hottest ocean temperatures on record. This will have deadly potential, possibly costing health and lives right here in Toronto.

We already know that the deadliest weather event in Canadian history was extreme heat during the 2021 BC heat Dome that killed 619 people. Ninety eight percent who succumbed, died in their own homes. Most were elderly, low income, and had no access to air conditioning. The BC Center for Disease Control later confirmed that human health was most at risk when indoor temperatures remained above 26 degrees Celcius – setting the bar for the by-law we now seek.

We also already know how heat stress and heat exhaustion strain our cardiovascular, kidney and respiratory systems, producing dizziness, vomiting, swelling of hands & feet, rapid heartrate and even loss of consciousness. This can progress to outright heat stroke -- a medical emergency -- as the body's sweating mechanisms, key organs, and ability to maintain core temperature, all fail, leading to confusion, seizures and possibly to death. The hundreds who died in BC experienced these unimaginable consequences in what should have been the safety and security of their own homes. And the same could happen in Toronto at any time, with increasing odds as the climate crisis accelerates.

In 2023, the 2<sup>nd</sup> hottest year on record and worst Canadian wildfire season ever, my niece in Winnipeg gave birth to severely premature twins, a boy and a girl. It was uncertain whether the tiny baby girl would live through her very first night but she pulled through. Weeks later when the babies were finally released home from the hospital, the city was enveloped in daily wildfire smoke that could rapidly trigger respiratory distress in the fragile twins. Every window and door had to be kept tightly closed despite an extreme heat wave that could quickly produce stifling indoor heat also threatening the babies' volatile health. In-home air conditioning was crucial to their very survival.

With all these lessons learned, Toronto has an opportunity and responsibility to protect some of our most vulnerable residents from what's coming.

In Ontario, long term care homes are already regulated to have mandatory air conditioning with both minimum and maximum temperatures defined as 22-26 deg C. The groundwork is already laid. Now is Toronto's time to lead by extending temperature regulations to rental units.

At this time, we call on the Executive Committee to protect residents of all Toronto rental units by urgently drafting and passing a maximum indoor temperature by-law, complementary to the Air Conditioner Benefit, to begin implementation as soon as possible. This could also form a precedent for other jurisdictions, potentially protecting so many more people beyond Toronto city limits. As a matter of public health with local lives at stake, we hope the Executive Council and city staff will address this issue with the urgency and due consideration it deserves.

Sincerely,

Dr Mili Roy MD, FRCSC

Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto

Co-chair, Canadian Assn of Physicians for the Environment, Ontario Regional Committee

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