

BRIEFING NOTE: TORONTO MUST IMPLEMENT A MAXIMUM HEAT BY-LAW TO PROTECT TENANTS FROM EXTREME INDOOR TEMPERATURES

OBJECTIVE:

Toronto is experiencing increasingly severe extreme heat events, leaving many tenants unprotected from dangerous indoor temperatures. Without a maximum heat by-law, tenants, especially those most vulnerable, face serious health risks, including illness and death. While Council has already endorsed a framework recognizing the need for action, immediate implementation of a 26°C maximum indoor temperature standard is necessary to protect public health and ensure safe housing conditions.



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BACKGROUND AND ISSUE SUMMARY:

Extreme heat is a growing public health emergency, with Toronto experiencing one of its hottest summers on record in 2025, including multiple heat waves. Prolonged exposure to high indoor temperatures can lead to serious health impacts, including cardiovascular and respiratory illness, dehydration, and even risk of death, especially for at risk populations such as seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income residents.

The **2021 British Columbia Heat Dome, which resulted in 619 deaths** (mostly indoors) demonstrates the consequences of inadequate cooling. Despite this, Toronto currently lacks a maximum indoor temperature standard for rental housing, leaving tenants vulnerable. While City Council endorsed a framework in December 2024 (PH17.5) supporting a 26°C maximum indoor temperature standard, we urge the City to ensure a maximum heat standard is implemented by summer 2026 to protect tenants from extreme heat. Existing programs and policies such as cooling centres and subsidy programs are inadequate.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Toronto City Council must urgently pass a by-law setting a **maximum indoor temperature standard of 26°C in all rental units** to protect tenants from the serious and potentially fatal health impacts of extreme heat.

The City must also ensure this by-law includes **strong tenant protections** so tenants not forced to bear the burden of these environmental upgrades.

Immediate action is required. Delays will continue to place the most vulnerable residents at risk of preventable harm and death.

For questions, please contact: jacqueline@cela.ca