



July 2026



# Climate Caucus

## The Right To Cool

Protecting Renters  
From Extreme Heat:  
A Municipal Response

# Introduction

Extreme heat events and high indoor temperatures are a serious risks to public health, sometimes causing cardiovascular illness and collapse, dehydration, heat stroke , and lung damage —all of which can be fatal. As climate change drives heat waves that are more frequent, longer, and more intense, maintaining safe indoor temperatures is becoming an increasingly urgent housing and public health priority — and one which councils can play an essential role in.

The devastating 2021 heat wave in British Columbia highlighted the scale of this threat. During the event, more than 600 people died from heat-related causes, and nearly all of these deaths occurred indoors, primarily in residential buildings.

These risks can be reduced when people are able to maintain safe temperatures in their homes. However, renters often face significant barriers to staying cool due to limited control over their housing conditions.

In response, local governments across the country are adopting regulatory and policy measures aimed at improving tenant safety during extreme heat. Often referred to as a “Right to Cool”, these approaches seek to ensure tenants can access adequate cooling by removing barriers to active cooling technologies and establishing maximum indoor temperature standards - requiring landlords to provide safe indoor temperatures.



# Right to Cool Bylaws

## City of New Westminster Bylaw

In June 2026, New Westminster became the first municipality in Canada to implement a bylaw establishing a maximum indoor temperature requirement for rental housing. The regulation requires that at least one living area in rental units remain at or below 26°C during overnight hours (8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.), recognizing the heightened risk of nighttime heat exposure.

**View the bylaw [here](#)**

**Access more reports and information on the bylaw [here](#)**

"This is life-saving work. We can all agree that no one should die in their homes due to extreme heat. We can also all agree that we don't have a lot of tools to ensure people's safety, but luckily this is one we do have. I hope more municipalities will be bold and brave and, in the face of pushback from landlords and property owners, will prioritize the health and well-being of tenants."

**Councillor Tasha Henderson, New Westminster**

## City of Vancouver Bylaw

In June 2026, Vancouver City Council approved amendments to the Licence By-law to ensure tenant safety during hot weather for renters. The bylaw prohibits landlords from preventing tenants from using portable air conditioners in rental units that do not have centralized cooling. Landlords who violate the bylaw may face fines of up to \$1,000 per offence, while exemptions may be granted in limited circumstances with supporting professional documentation.

**Learn more about the updates in the Council Report [here](#)**

## City of Port Moody Bylaw

In 2025, Port Moody's Council adopted a Standard of Maintenance Bylaw that prohibits landlords from preventing tenants from using portable cooling devices in rental units without air conditioning. The bylaws also established enforcement mechanisms, including fines for violations.

**View the bylaw [here](#) (Section 7.2, p. 4)**

**Access Council minutes [here](#) (pg.8)**

# Directives and Policy Recommendations

## City of Victoria Directive for Staff

In May 2026, Victoria passed the “Strategies and Resources to Require Cooling (26 degree maximum) in Victoria’s Rental Buildings” motion, which directs staff to examine bylaw tools that would ensure that at least one room in every rental unit won’t exceed more than 26°C. This could include restricting landlords from prohibiting cooling equipment, and/or requiring existing rental units to have a heat pump—or other cooling equipment or passive means.

**[Access the Motion here](#)**

“Politics is the language of stories, narratives, and symbols. How you choose to map and respond to emergencies like extreme heat tells a story about the implicit priorities of a city. I'm really proud that we're exploring a cooling bylaw at the City of Victoria, because what we're telling folks is this is a story that we want to care about and not let go.”

**Councillor Susan Kim, City of Victoria**

## City of Kamloops Directive for Staff

In June 2026, Kamloops passed a motion directing staff to explore the tools available to establish a bylaw requiring existing rental units to have cooling equipment or passive cooling measures capable of preventing at least one room from exceeding the recommended maximum indoor temperature of 26°C.

**[Access the Motion here](#)**

**[Access the Council Minutes here](#)**

“Don't be surprised if you table a similar motion and it is defeated. You have at least started a conversation that must begin. People died from the last heat dome. Most were seniors. It is never wrong to champion a belief that comes from the basic belief people should not be dying from extreme heat.”

**Deputy Mayor Dale Bass, Kamloops**

## City of Toronto Directive for Staff

Currently, Toronto's RentSafeTO program requires landlords who provide air conditioning in rental units to operate cooling systems from June 1 to September 30, 2026, to maintain indoor temperatures of more than 26°C. Beginning June 2026, apartment buildings that do not provide in-unit cooling but have indoor amenities will also be required to maintain those spaces at or below 26°C during the same summer period.

In 2026, City Council also directed staff to develop a bylaw that would establish a maximum indoor temperature standard of 26°C for rental units, with a proposed bylaw expected to return to Council in 2027. If adopted, the bylaw would shift responsibility to landlords to ensure rental units remain below the temperature threshold. Learn more [here](#).

**See the Indoor Temperature Standards bylaw [here](#)**

## City of Calgary Campaign

In 2026, Calgary ACORN and the Calgary Climate Hub [launched a campaign](#) calling on the City of Calgary to adopt a Maximum Temperature Bylaw to protect renters from unsafe indoor heat. The campaign calls for a maximum indoor temperature standard of 26°C, enforcement through a landlord licensing program, a free portable air conditioner program for low-income households, and improved tracking of heat-related illnesses and deaths.

### Additional Resources

#### [The Right to Cool: FAQs for Municipalities](#)

First United

A resource outlining municipal roles, jurisdiction, and opportunities to advance cooling protections for renters.

#### [Safe Temperatures in BC Rental Housing: Municipal and Provincial Policy Pathways \(2025\)](#)

Ecotrust Canada

A report exploring municipal policy options to protect renters from unsafe indoor temperatures, including right-to-cool protections, rental standards of maintenance, and other tools to improve thermal safety in housing.

#### [Thermal Safety Policy Municipal Action Tracker](#)

Ecotrust Canada

A tracker documenting municipal policy developments across Canada related to thermal safety, maximum temperature standards, and cooling rights in rental housing.

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