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Written Correspondence from ACORN Hamilton. Canadian Environmental Law Association Environment Hamilton and the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic - Budget Delegations 2025

In May 2023 our coalition of community and environmental groups urged the city to develop and implement an Adequate Temperature By-law to introduce mandatory maximum indoor temperatures for apartment buildings to protect tenants from indoor extreme heat. Extreme heat indoors can have very serious health consequences for people who can't cool down because of excessive heat in their apartments. After the 2021 heat dome in British Columbia caused the deaths of 619 people, the Chief Coroner of British Columbia highlighted that the primary cause of death was exposure to extreme heat indoors of over 26 degrees Celsius throughout the heat event. While many Canadians are familiar with the need for heat in our homes in the winter, we are now facing a situation where climate change has made mechanical cooling in homes to deal with extreme heat necessary too.

The impacts of climate change are disproportionately impacting certain populations in Hamilton. Extreme heat is a particular risk for seniors, children and infants, individuals with chronic illnesses, and those with mobility challenges. Tenants who rent are also more vulnerable to extreme heat events as an inability to control the temperature within their own units can create dangerously hot environments that can severely impact their day to day, as well as their lives. Studies from around the world on the impacts of extreme heat on human health have shown the negative cognitive impacts extreme heat imposes as well as the multitude of physiological health effects, with the most severe being life threatening.

After delegations from community and environmental organizations, Council unanimously passed a motion directing staff to get to work on local policy to protect tenants from extreme heat, including how to implement an Adequate Temperature By-Law.

Fast forward to now in 2025, while Council approved interim measures for the 2024 summer (special bus tickets, expansion of the AC benefit program), tenants are still waiting for a maximum heat bylaw.

As Hamilton continues to experience more frequent and lengthier extreme heat events due to climate change there is a danger to residents if indoor temperatures are not controlled. The implementation of an Adequate Temperature By-Law that would set a maximum temperature of 26 degrees Celsius in all rental units is of the utmost importance. It will save lives.

In December 2024, City of Toronto staff recommended to Toronto Council that the city implement a max heat bylaw with an implementation framework report to be published by the fourth quarter of 2025. This is a significant step ahead of where the City of Hamilton currently is with regards to its own efforts.

Our coalition is urging the City of Hamilton to adopt the following for the 2025 budget:

- Free transit during extreme heat alerts
- Continue funding of the expansion of the AC benefit program and better advertising of the availability of free AC for eligible tenants
- Develop and implement a maximum heat bylaw for summer 2025

The health and basic comfort of Hamiltonians across our city rely on this.