

BACKGROUNDER**Safe Temperatures in Rental Housing**

September 22, 2025 — X^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓wxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, BC — The undersigned organizations and elected officials are calling on the B.C. Government to make protecting tenants from extreme heat a priority.

Dangerous indoor temperatures are an increasingly urgent problem as summer temperatures increase, and extreme heat is one of the top three weather hazards British Columbia is facing. Temperatures will continue to rise, as will healthcare, economic and social costs. The health impacts of extreme heat are often compounded by poor air quality, due to increasingly prevalent wildfire smoke and local air pollutants.

As we saw during B.C.'s 2021 heat dome, the deadliest weather incident in Canadian history, extreme heat can push healthcare systems **to the brink**. Extreme heat precipitates not only immediate medical emergencies, but heat-related injuries that can persist for years. These devastating impacts can be mitigated by ensuring people are able to keep cool in their homes. Still, currently, renters face barriers, restrictions, and bans on installing life-saving cooling systems.

We ask the B.C. Government to ensure that tenants have the right to cooling in their homes, and that building owners and stratas cannot unreasonably restrict them from doing so. At the same time, we urge the Province of BC to place greater responsibility on building owners and strata councils to pursue permanent solutions—such as efficiency upgrades and building-wide cooling systems—that can prevent dangerous indoor temperatures and poor air quality. Until such measures are in place, renters must have the clear right to use reasonable means to keep their homes safe and livable, whether through heat pumps, air conditioners, external shading, or other active and passive cooling, ventilation, and air quality measures.

Local governments are leading the way and have repeatedly asked for province-wide action, including through Union of BC Municipalities resolutions.¹ The City of Port Moody² and City of New Westminster³ have established bylaws to prevent unreasonable cooling bans for tenants, but provincial backstops and enforcement supports are needed. BC's Residential Tenancy Act⁴ does not provide sufficient protection to this effect. The burden of proof remains on tenants, most of whom do not have the capacity to engage with the Tenancy Branch, or do not do so for fear of losing their housing. Since one-fifth of renters live in stratas,⁵ cooling bans should be restricted in this type of housing as well.

¹ UBCM resolutions EB19 2023; NR29 2023; NEB5 2024

² Port Moody City Council adopted a **rental standards of maintenance bylaw** (section 7.2, p. 4) that prohibits unreasonable cooling bans on Jan. 28, 2025.

³ New Westminster City Council amended their **Business Regulations and Licensing (Rental Units) Bylaw** (section 34., p. 12) on June 23, 2025 to prevent cooling device prohibitions, including for tenants in stratas. It sets out a process through which building owners may obtain exemptions if they cannot reasonably comply.

⁴ See guidance on **Air Conditioning Units** and **Policy Guideline 8. Unconscionable, Unlawful, and Material Terms** (pp. 2-3).

⁵ The 2021 Census found 21% of tenant households were in condominiums in BC.



Similarly, manufactured home park residents, which make up 4% of BC households, face park-wide cooling bans that must be justified or overturned, as detailed in Ecotrust Canada's [latest research](#).

British Columbians' agency to cool their homes to protect their own health should not be unreasonably restricted. Landlords have an obligation to provide safe housing, including adequate home cooling to protect renters' health.

Key facts:

- Nearly one-third of British Columbians are renters; some face unreasonable restrictions on keeping their homes at a safe temperature
- Experts and municipalities are asking the Province to take action to protect renters from extreme heat
- Many stratas and manufactured home parks have banned heat pumps, which are one of the most effective and efficient solutions for keeping rental units cool
- Our research and that of utility experts show that concerns around increased electricity demand from cooling can be cost-effectively mitigated

Research:

[Ecotrust Canada "Safe Indoor Temperatures and Decarbonization in Rental Units" \(2025\)](#)
[Ecotrust Canada "Advancing Tenants' Rights to Retrofits and Energy Efficiency" \(2024\)](#)
[Consortium for Power Efficiency "Power Efficient Design Strategies" \(2025\)](#)

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