

## COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

*For consideration at the Standing Committee meeting of City Council on November 27, 2024*

### 1. **Advocating for Climate-Resilient Housing Standards in Response to Extreme Heat Events**

Submitted by: Councillor Dominato and Councillor Meiszner

#### WHEREAS

1. The City of Vancouver is increasingly affected by extreme heat events which pose significant and serious health risks for residents, especially those living in multi-unit residential buildings where adequate cooling is often limited;
2. The *Strata Property Act* lacks provisions that ensure access to cooling measures which are vital to the health and well-being of residents living in strata housing, particularly in the context of rising temperatures due to climate change;
3. In response to rising temperatures and the increase in extreme heat events, a “right to cool” has emerged as an essential component of housing policy that ensures the right of residents to access indoor cooling solutions to safeguard their health and comfort. This fundamental right is particularly relevant for individuals living in multi-unit residential buildings where access to adequate active or passive cooling systems may be restricted by strata by-laws or structural limitations;
4. Enabling and incentivizing the installation of heat pumps and/or passive cooling approaches (e.g. external shades, window replacement or coverings, white roofs, etc.) in strata units and other multi-unit residential buildings including rentals would provide thermally safe, energy-efficient, and climate-resilient solutions for cooling homes, reducing the impact of extreme heat on health and quality of life;
5. In 2023, the Province of British Columbia announced updates to the BC Building Code, effective March 8, 2024, which require that all new residential buildings provide at least one living space designed to remain at or below 26°C. This measure aims to protect health and comfort by providing a thermally safe room in each dwelling unit in extreme heat conditions, marking a step toward climate-resilient housing for new builds across the Province;
6. The *Vancouver Charter* (VC) currently authorizes the City to set minimum temperature standards in residential buildings to protect residents. However, the VC does not extend this same authority to regulating maximum indoor temperatures, which limits the City’s ability to protect residents from the serious health risks posed by extreme heat events such as the 2021 heat dome;
7. On June 11, 2024, Vancouver City Council approved a staff recommendation to formally request that the Province of British Columbia amend Section 330(k) of the VC to allow for Council to enact by-laws requiring buildings to maintain a

maximum indoor air temperature, as outlined in the report "Improving the Effectiveness of the Standards of Maintenance (SOM) By-law.";<sup>1</sup>

8. The proposed VC amendment aims to enable future by-law amendments for cooling temperature controls, such as permitting and/or requiring the maintenance of mechanical air conditioning units or heat-shielding window coverings. If the VC amendment is enacted by the Province, the City's ongoing Multi-family Cooling Study—conducted in partnership with Metro Vancouver, Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), and the City of North Vancouver—could inform future policy levers available to address extreme heat solutions; and
9. By adopting this motion in response to extreme heat events and advocating for climate-resilient housing standards and measures, and a collaborative, cross-jurisdictional approach to protect the health and well-being of residents across the region, Council would be demonstrating its commitment to addressing the urgent impacts of climate change and extreme heat on housing safety for residents.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

THAT Vancouver City Council call upon the Province of British Columbia to adopt the following measures to ensure climate-resilient, thermally safe housing for residents in the City of Vancouver and across British Columbia:

- i. **Vancouver Charter Amendment for Regulating Maximum Indoor Temperatures:** Reaffirm Vancouver's request to amend Section 330(k) of the Vancouver Charter, granting the City the authority to set maximum safe indoor temperatures in residential buildings to protect residents' health and safety during extreme heat events.
- ii. **Strata Property Act Amendment to Enshrine a "Right to Cool":** Urge the Province to amend the *Strata Property Act* to recognize a "right to cool," allowing residents of strata buildings access to cooling solutions, including the installation of air conditioning, heat pumps, or passive cooling measures, without unreasonable restrictions from strata corporations.
- iii. **Incentives for Strata Owners to Install Heat Pumps and/or passive cooling approaches:** Advocate for provincial incentives, grants, or subsidies specifically for individual strata owners to install heat pumps as energy-efficient, climate-resilient cooling solutions, and to expand eligibility for these incentives to include multi-unit residential and strata properties.

FURTHER THAT Council empower the Mayor to write to the Province on behalf of Council to advocate for enactment of the climate resilience measures and standards outlined in this motion;

AND FURTHER THAT Council endorse the following resolution for submission to the 2025 Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) convention for the consideration of the membership:

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<sup>1</sup> "Improving the Effectiveness of the Standards of Maintenance (SOM) By-law." (Vote No. 10045) carried unanimously.

## RESOLUTION

### **MOTION: Advocating For Climate-Resilient Housing Standards in Response to Extreme Heat Events**

WHEREAS the Province of British Columbia announced updates to the *BC Building Code* in 2023, effective March 8, 2024, which requires that all new residential buildings provide at least one living space in each dwelling unit designed to remain at or below 26°C. This measure aims to protect health and comfort in extreme heat conditions, marking a step toward climate-resilient, thermally safe housing for new builds across the Province;

AND WHEREAS in response to rising temperatures and an increase in extreme heat events, a “right to cool” for residents to access indoor cooling solutions to safeguard their health and comfort has emerged as an essential component of housing policy, particularly for individuals living in multi-unit residential buildings, where access to adequate active or passive cooling systems may be restricted by strata bylaws or structural limitations.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) call on the Provincial government to amend the *Strata Property Act* to recognize and enshrine a "right to cool" as a fundamental right for residents of strata and multi-unit residential buildings to access cooling solutions, including the installation of air conditioning or heat pumps or passive cooling approaches without unreasonable restrictions from strata corporations, and that the Province likewise recognize a “right to cool” as an essential component of provincial housing policy, including – but not limited to – creating provincial incentives for strata owners to install heat pumps and other cooling measures to ensure that climate-resilient, thermally safe housing is available for all residents of British Columbia.

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