

May 30, 2025

Office of the Mayor,
Corporation of the City of New Westminster
511 Royal Avenue
New Westminster, BC
V3L 1H9

Re: Business Regulations and Licensing (Rental Units) Amendment Bylaw No. 8525, 2025

Dear Mayor Johnstone,

Under sec. 2(2)(c)(ii) of the Public Health Bylaws Regulation, the local Medical Health Officer provides consultation on bylaws made by a council under section 8(3)(i) [*public health*] of the Community Charter prior to their adoption. I was pleased to learn about the proposed New Westminster Business Regulations and Licensing (Rental Units) Amendment Bylaw No. 8525, 2025 regarding cooling requirements. Recent extreme heat events have underscored the urgent need for effective indoor cooling measures to protect residents' health and safety. In creating Amendment Bylaw No. 8525, 2025, the City of New Westminster is taking proactive steps to ensure the availability and accessibility of indoor cooling solutions to prevent the negative health outcomes associated with extreme indoor heat.

High indoor temperatures were likely the leading factor contributing to heat-related illnesses and deaths during the 2021 Heat Dome in British Columbia (BC).¹ At the height of the Heat Dome, Metro Vancouver and communities within Fraser Health experienced record-breaking outdoor temperatures reaching up to 43°C.² Some indoor temperatures were recorded as high as 40°C.¹ These extremely high temperatures are dangerous because they make it harder for the human body to regulate its core temperature. When the body is unable to cool itself effectively, prolonged heat exposure can cause distress and lead to health issues such as heat rashes, heat exhaustion, and, in severe cases, heat stroke.³ Besides these direct health impacts, heat exposure can also worsen existing chronic conditions such as cardiovascular, respiratory, and

¹ Henderson, S. B., McLean, K. E., Lee, M. J., & Kosatsky, T. (2022). Analysis of community deaths during the catastrophic 2021 heat dome: Early evidence to inform the public health response during subsequent events in greater Vancouver, Canada. *Environmental Epidemiology*, 6(1), e189.

<https://doi.org/10.1097/EE9.0000000000000189>

² Fraser Health Authority. (2022, March 23). *Impacts of extreme heat events on emergency department visits and deaths in Fraser Health, 2021* (Population and Public Health Report).

³ British Columbia Coroners Service. (2022). *Extreme heat and human mortality: A review of heat-related deaths in B.C. in summer 2021*. Report to the Chief Coroner of British Columbia. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/death-review-panel/extreme_heat_death_review_panel_report.pdf

mental health conditions.⁴ Tragically, the Heat Dome resulted in 619 heat-related deaths across the province, 98% of which occurred inside a residence.³ The majority of those who lost their lives were vulnerable individuals, including low-income seniors, people with disabilities, those experiencing social isolation, and those with no access to cooling.³ Among those lost, 28 were residents of the City of New Westminster.⁵

Current climate change projections estimate that a heat event as extreme as the Heat Dome is now likely to occur once every 10 years, compared to previous estimates of once every thousand years.⁶ This sharp shift in frequency means that individuals will likely be exposed to more frequent heat-related health risks.⁷ In addition, the BC Heat Alert and Response System projects that significant heat events requiring activation of extreme heat responses in the province will occur 1 to 3 times per summer season.⁸ Central to reducing the risks associated with extreme indoor heat is the availability and accessibility of cooling solutions, such as air conditioning.⁹ The updated 2024 British Columbia Building Code will require new buildings to maintain indoor temperatures below 26°C in at least one living space in each dwelling unit.¹⁰ A critical gap remains for residents of older buildings where tenancy agreements may prohibit or restrict the use of air-cooling devices.¹¹

Cooling related bylaws are a key policy lever municipal governments can use to protect their citizens from heat-related negative health outcomes. The proposed Amendment Bylaw No. 8525, 2025 will not allow owners to prohibit tenants from using portable cooling devices. Tenants who have the financial means will be able to buy and use portable cooling devices. Additionally, this amendment bylaw enhances renters' access to initiatives like the BC Hydro

⁴ Ebi, K. L., Capon, A., Berry, P., Broderick, C., de Dear, R., Havenith, G., ... & Jay, O. (2021). Hot weather and heat extremes: health risks. *The Lancet*, 398(10301), 698-708. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(21\)01208-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(21)01208-3)

⁵ City of New Westminster. (2025, May 12). *Regular Council Meeting minutes*. <https://pub-newwestcity.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=22006>

⁶ Bartusek, S., Kornhuber, K., & Ting, M. (2022). 2021 North American heatwave amplified by climate change-driven nonlinear interactions. *Nature Climate Change*, 12(12), 1143-1150. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-022-01520-4>

⁷ Mason, H., King, J. C., & Peden, A. E. (2022). Systematic review of the impact of heatwaves on health service demand in Australia. *BMC Health Services Research*, 22(1), 960. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-022-08341-3>

⁸ BC Centre for Disease Control, & BC Ministry of Health. (2024). *BC Provincial Heat Alert and Response System (BC HARS): 2024*. <http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/Health-Environment/Provincial-Heat-Alerting-Response-System.pdf>

⁹ Cardoza, J. E., Gronlund, C. J., Schott, J., Ziegler, T., Stone, B., & O'Neill, M. S. (2020). Heat-related illness is associated with lack of air conditioning and pre-existing health problems in Detroit, Michigan, USA: a community-based participatory co-analysis of survey data. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(16), 5704. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17165704>

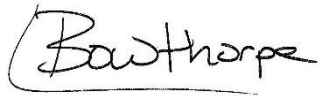
¹⁰ Building and Safety Standards Branch. (2024, April 19). *Protection from overheating in dwelling units (Information Bulletin No. B24-08)*. Government of British Columbia. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/construction-industry/building-codes-and-standards/bulletins/2024-code/b24-08_overheating.pdf

¹¹ Residential Tenancy Branch. (2024). *Air conditioning (AC) units: Information for landlords and tenants*. Government of British Columbia. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/housing-and-tenancy/residential-tenancies/information-sheets/rtb-acunits.pdf>

free portable air conditioner program, which provides support to individuals and families who may not otherwise be able to afford a cooling unit.¹²

I commend the City of New Westminster for proposing Amendment Bylaw No. 8525, 2025. I have no objections and welcome future consultation and collaboration on health-related policy initiatives and draft bylaws made by council under section 8(3)(i)[*public health*] of the Community Charter.

Warm regards,



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Pronouns: she/her

¹² BC Hydro. (2025). *Free portable air conditioners*. <https://www.bchydro.com/powersmart/residential/rebates-programs/savings-based-on-income/free-air-conditioner.html>