What Heater is Best for you?

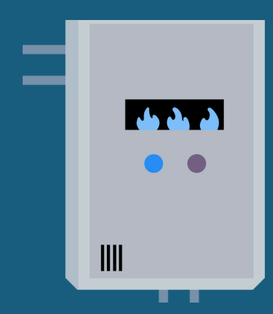
A Homeowners Guide to Heating in British Columbia

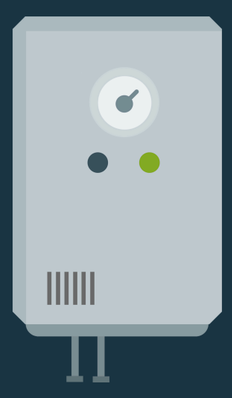
HEAT PUMPS

Heat pumps are an energy-efficient, climate-friendly option for heating and cooling your home. They work like a reverse refrigerator - using electricity to capture heat from the air and move it indoors. They're especially effective in Vancouver thanks to BC's 98% renewable hydro-powered grid and mild climate. With up to **300% efficiency**, heat pumps produce three times more energy than they consume and also provide air conditioning, useful as summers get hotter. They suit most housing types and require only mechanical permits, simplifying installation. While costs range from **$3,500 to $20,000** depending on the system, Vancouver residents can access up to **$11,000** in rebates from CleanBC, federal, and municipal programs. With a **15-year lifespan** and stable long-term energy costs, heat pumps are a smart financial and environmental choice.

ELECTRIC FURNACES

Electric furnaces use electricity to produce heat with **100% efficiency** - every unit of electricity consumed is converted into heat. In Vancouver, they are a good fit for smaller homes or apartments and work well for supplemental heating. They're also powered by BC's 98% renewable electrical grid, making them a cleaner energy choice. While upfront costs are relatively low (**$2,000–$7,000**), electricity rates can make **long-term operation more expensive**. Electric furnaces are the **second-best option for colder regions** and are most cost-effective when used in smaller or energy-efficient spaces.





GAS FURNACE

Gas furnaces are a common heating option in BC, using oil or natural gas to generate heat. Modern models are **90–98% efficient**, producing slightly less energy than they consume. In Vancouver, gas furnaces are best suited for homes already connected to natural gas or for those with a recently installed air conditioner, as they only provide heating - not cooling. They are particularly effective in colder climates, making them more ideal for interior BC than coastal regions. Upfront costs range from $**3,500–$10,000** depending on the system and installation. While they tend to have a longer **lifespan of about 20 years**, **long-term costs can vary significantly** due to natural gas price fluctuations.

Comparing Heat Sources

	Heat Pump	Electric Furnace	Gas Furnace
Efficiency	300%	100%	98%
Affordability	High upfront, low running cost	Low install, high operating cost	Medium install, variable gas cost
Climate	Best for Vancouver’s mild, wet climate	Good for small homes	Better for colder BC interior
Environmental	Very low emissions (uses hydro power)	Low emissions (if powered by BC Hydro)	High emissions (burns fossil fuels)
Life Span	~15–20 years	~20+ years	~20 years
Cooling	Provides both heating and cooling year-round	Heating only	Heating only — needs separate A/C system

Sources: Natural Resources Canada, CleanBC Better Homes, City of Vancouver, FortisBC, BC Hydro, HomeEnergyNav.ca