VANCOUVER HVAC PRO

Hiring & Quotes

What a fair HVAC quote includes, comparing quotes, load calculations, checking gas licences and WorkSafeBC coverage, and when to get a second opinion in Metro Vancouver

4 Expert Answers from HVAC IQ

vancouverhvacpro.com/construction-brain

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Q1

Does my strata need to approve a mini-split condenser on my balcony?

Almost certainly yes. In a strata, the balcony is typically common property or limited common property, and attaching or placing any equipment there requires written strata council approval before work begins.

What the Strata Property Act says

Under BC's Strata Property Act, owners cannot make changes to common property or limited common property without the strata corporation's permission. A balcony almost always falls into one of those categories, even if you have exclusive use of it. A mini-split condenser involves a wall penetration for the line set, a condensate drain, vibration transferred to the building structure, and a visible change to the building's exterior. Strata councils can and do refuse, impose conditions, or require a specific contractor.

Start with a written request to strata council before you buy anything. Approval can take weeks or months depending on when the council meets, and some stratas require a three-quarters vote at a general meeting for alterations to common property. Buying the unit first is a common and expensive mistake.

What to include in your request. Ask your contractor to prepare a package showing the proposed condenser location on the balcony, the line set routing through the wall, the condensate drainage plan, the unit's sound power rating (55 dBA or quieter is widely recommended and makes approval easier), and the manufacturer's installation specifications. A professional drawing or site sketch helps. Some strata councils also want proof of the contractor's insurance and WorkSafeBC coverage.

What to ask for in return. Get the council's decision in writing, including any conditions attached to the approval, such as who is responsible for future maintenance, what happens if the unit leaks, and whether the approval transfers to a future owner. A verbal "sounds fine" at a council meeting is not enough protection.

A few practical points for Metro Vancouver balcony installs: the outdoor unit needs a raised pad or wall bracket with clear drainage, because our wet winters mean standing water under the unit is a real problem. The line set penetration through the exterior wall must be properly sealed against our persistent rain. And if your strata building is in the City of Vancouver, the contractor will also need to pull an electrical permit and a mechanical permit for the installation.

Refrigerant work on the mini-split may only be done by a person approved under BC's Ozone Depleting Substances and Other Halocarbons Regulation, so confirm that when you speak to contractors. Ask each one for their WorkSafeBC coverage and liability insurance details as well.

Once you have strata approval in hand, Vancouver HVAC Pro can match you with local HVAC contractors for free so you can compare quotes and get the job done properly.

Q2

Is that HVAC company in Metro Vancouver actually local or a lead broker?

A fair question, and one worth asking before you hand over your contact details or pay a deposit.

The Metro Vancouver HVAC market has a mix of genuinely local contractors, regional chains, and third-party lead brokers whose business is selling your request to contractors. Here is how to tell them apart.

Signs a company is actually local

A real local contractor will have a physical address in Metro Vancouver (not a P.O. box or a suite number at a virtual office), a Technical Safety BC gas contractor licence you can look up by name at the Technical Safety BC public registry, and technicians who live and work in the region. Ask where their shop or office is, and whether the person doing the work is an employee or a subcontractor they found after you called.

A lead broker typically has a national or provincial website, no specific address, and no licence of its own because it does not do the work. It sells your name, address and job description to one or more contractors, and those contractors pay the broker for each lead. The sign to watch for is calls from companies you never contacted and no clear answer about who will actually do the work.

The single most useful check: look up the company name at the Technical Safety BC public registry. A licensed gas contractor will appear there with an active licence. If the name does not appear, it may be a company that does no gas work (some heat pump and electrical-only firms), a lead broker, or an unlicensed operator, so ask which it is. For any job involving a gas furnace, boiler or water heater, the company doing the work must hold that licence.

Also confirm WorkSafeBC coverage. You can search the WorkSafeBC clearance letter system by company name. A contractor without coverage leaves you potentially liable if a worker is injured on your property.

A few other practical checks: ask for a local phone number (not just a toll-free line), read Google reviews and look at whether the reviewer names match the service area, and ask directly whether the quote is coming from the company you contacted or from a third party they will refer you to.

How Vancouver HVAC Pro is different: we are a matching service, not a lead reseller, and we never sell your details. Your request is matched by area to local HVAC contractors who are members of the Vancouver Construction Network, and we send it to them. Contractors never pay for leads; they are a free part of being a member, and the service is free for you too. We do not do the work ourselves and we do not verify licences on your behalf, so confirm the Technical Safety BC gas contractor licence and WorkSafeBC coverage yourself before signing anything.

Want to get matched with local Metro Vancouver HVAC contractors and compare a couple of quotes? Vancouver HVAC Pro can match you with them for free.

Q3

Why won't some Vancouver contractors quote without a site visit?

Contractors who refuse to quote over the phone or email are not being difficult; they are protecting you from a number that could be wrong by thousands of dollars.

What a contractor actually needs to see

The honest reason is that Metro Vancouver homes vary enormously, and the variables that move a heat pump or furnace price are physical things a photo or floor plan rarely captures clearly. A contractor who quotes blind is usually padding the number to cover surprises, or cutting it to win the job and recovering the difference in change orders.

Here is what changes when someone walks through the house. Duct condition is the first thing: a 1970s Surrey split-level may have undersized returns, flex duct in poor shape, or a layout that will not move enough air for a heat pump without modifications. A contractor cannot see that on a video call. Electrical capacity is the second: the panel location, the available breaker slots, the distance from the panel to where the outdoor unit will sit, and whether the service is 100 A or 200 A all affect the electrical quote. In the City of Vancouver, the electrical permit comes from the City itself, and a contractor familiar with that process knows the inspection requirements before they price the job.

Venting is the third issue, especially in older Vancouver and North Shore houses with a shared chimney between a gas furnace and a water heater. Switching to a high-efficiency furnace means the chimney likely cannot be used and a new PVC flue needs a path to the outside; where that path goes depends on the house. The City of Vancouver also requires a mechanical permit for a new or replacement heating or cooling system (not a like-for-like swap of the same fuel, type and capacity), and the permit fee is based on equipment capacity in kilowatts, so the contractor needs to confirm the right size before quoting that line item.

Outdoor unit placement matters too. Vancouver's rules allow a ground-mounted heat pump without a development permit only within specific zones near the house, at least 90 cm from the property line, one unit per yard. A contractor needs to see the yard to know whether that works or whether a wall mount or alternative location is needed, each of which changes the price and the permit path.

For a strata townhouse or condo, the site visit also lets the contractor confirm what the strata council has approved, where the line set can run, and whether a condensate drain is feasible without opening walls.

The practical upside for you: a contractor who insists on a site visit before quoting is also the one most likely to pull the correct permits, size the equipment from a proper heat loss calculation rather than copying the old unit's nameplate, and not come back asking for more money mid-job.

Before someone comes out, have the following ready: your current equipment's make, model and approximate age; your electrical panel's amperage (usually on the main breaker); any strata approval letters if applicable; and a rough idea of which rooms are hardest to heat or cool. That information lets the visit move quickly and the quote come back faster.

When you are ready to have contractors come through, Vancouver HVAC Pro can connect you with local HVAC contractors who serve the City of Vancouver and the rest of Metro Vancouver, at no cost to you.

Q4

What does a 10-year manufacturer's warranty actually require in BC?

Most 10-year parts warranties from heat pump and furnace manufacturers are conditional warranties, meaning the 10 years only applies if you register the equipment within a set window (often 60 to 90 days of installation) and keep up annual professional maintenance. Miss either step and the warranty typically reverts to a shorter base period, commonly five years for parts and one year for labour.

What the Fine Print Usually Requires

Registration is the first thing most homeowners skip. Manufacturers require online registration tied to the serial number, installation address and sometimes the contractor's licence number. Some brands allow the installing contractor to register on your behalf; confirm this happened before they leave the job site.

Annual servicing is the other condition. The manufacturer typically wants a record of yearly professional maintenance, which in Metro Vancouver means a licensed HVAC technician cleaning the heat exchanger or coil, checking refrigerant charge, inspecting electrical connections and documenting the visit. Technical Safety BC recommends annual servicing of all home heating appliances as a matter of safety, not just warranty protection. Keep every invoice with the equipment's serial number on it; a warranty claim without that paper trail is an uphill argument.

Labour is almost never covered for the full 10 years. Parts warranties and labour warranties are separate. A typical split is 10 years on the compressor or heat exchanger, five years on other parts, and one year on labour. That means a compressor replacement in year eight could still cost you $800 to $1,500 or more in labour even with a valid parts warranty.

The warranty is also tied to the original installation address and, in most cases, is non-transferable to a new owner. If you sell the house, the buyer loses the remaining term unless the manufacturer explicitly allows transfer (a few do, sometimes for a fee).

In BC, the Limitation Act gives you two years to bring a legal claim once you discover a defect, but that runs alongside, not instead of, the manufacturer's process. If a contractor's workmanship caused the failure, the contractor's own labour warranty and their liability insurance are the first place to look, not the manufacturer's parts warranty.

A few practical steps worth doing right after installation: photograph the data plate and serial number, register the equipment yourself even if the contractor says they will, set a calendar reminder for an annual tune-up each fall, and file every service invoice somewhere you can find it in year nine. A tune-up in Metro Vancouver typically runs

$150 to $300 per system and is a small price compared to a voided warranty on a $15,000 heat pump.

One thing to ask any contractor before signing: does their quote include first-year registration, and what is their own workmanship warranty? A reputable installer will offer at least one year on labour, sometimes two.

Keeping the paperwork straight is honestly the whole game with these warranties; the equipment side usually holds up fine if it's sized and installed correctly. If you're still choosing a contractor or comparing quotes, Vancouver HVAC Pro can connect you with local HVAC contractors through the Vancouver Construction Network at no cost to you.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Vancouver HVAC Pro. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local permit authority (your municipality or Technical Safety BC) before starting any heating, cooling or gas project. Information is current as of November 8, 2026 and may change. Visit **vancouverhvacpro.com** for the latest answers.