VANCOUVER HVAC PRO

Water Heaters

Tank, tankless and heat pump water heaters, sizing, venting, lifespan and replacement costs

4 Expert Answers from HVAC IQ

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Q1

Does a heat pump water heater make the basement colder in a Dunbar house?

Yes, it will cool the basement, and in a Dunbar house that is worth thinking through carefully before you buy.

A heat pump water heater pulls heat from the surrounding air to warm the water, which means it exhausts cool, dehumidified air into the space it sits in. In a typical Dunbar-area house, the water heater lives in a basement mechanical room that might be 15 to 25 square metres. On a mild Vancouver winter day the unit can drop that room's temperature by several degrees, and it runs frequently enough that the effect is real, not just theoretical. If the basement is finished living space, or if the mechanical room shares air with a suite, occupants will notice.

How much it matters depends on your setup

The unit needs roughly 28 cubic metres of air volume to operate efficiently; a cramped mechanical room can starve it and force it into less efficient resistance-heating mode. Most installers solve this by ducting the intake and exhaust to a larger adjacent space, to the outdoors, or to a crawl space. Ducting to outside is the cleanest fix for a finished basement but adds to the installation cost and requires a wall penetration, which in the City of Vancouver means the contractor pulls both an electrical permit and, if the old water heater was gas, a gas permit to cap the line.

The cooling effect is actually a mild benefit in summer, when Vancouver basements can get stuffy. In winter it is a small added load on whatever heats the basement, usually a furnace or baseboard heaters. For a Dunbar house with a gas furnace, the extra heating load is modest and the energy math still favours the heat pump water heater over a standard gas tank, especially given the City of Vancouver's rule that replacement water heaters in detached houses must meet the highest efficiency standard from January 1, 2027.

On the cost side, a heat pump water heater installed in Metro Vancouver typically runs $4,000 to $7,000, which is more than a standard tank but less than gas tankless. If you are income-qualified, the CleanBC Energy Savings Program offers up to $3,500 toward a heat pump water heater; confirm your eligibility with Better Homes BC before you buy, because the program rules can change.

A proper quote should include the unit itself, the electrical circuit (heat pump water heaters need a dedicated 240 V circuit, usually $800 to $2,500 for the wiring alone), any ducting to manage the exhaust air, removal of the old unit, and the City of Vancouver electrical permit. If the old water heater is gas, the quote must also include capping the gas line and the City of Vancouver gas permit; do not let that step get left out.

Before you commit, ask the contractor this: "Will you duct the intake and exhaust, and if so, where exactly, and what does that add to the price?" That single question will tell you whether they have actually looked at your mechanical room or are quoting a generic install.

Vancouver HVAC Pro can pass your details along to local contractors who work in the Dunbar area, so you can compare a few quotes side by side.

Q2

Hot water smells like rotten eggs in our Abbotsford home, what causes that?

That sulphur smell almost always comes from a reaction inside the water heater tank, not from the water supply itself. The most common cause is a magnesium anode rod reacting with sulphate-reducing bacteria in the water, producing hydrogen sulphide gas. It happens in both gas and electric tanks and tends to be worse when a tank sits unused for a while or when the water temperature is set too low.

What's Actually Happening and What to Do

The anode rod is a sacrificial metal rod that protects the tank lining from corrosion. In some water supplies, particularly where sulphate levels are higher, the rod creates the right chemistry for anaerobic bacteria to thrive and produce that rotten-egg odour. Abbotsford draws from both surface and groundwater sources, and mineral content can vary enough to trigger this in tanks that were odour-free for years.

There are three practical fixes, roughly in order of cost and permanence. First, raising the water heater temperature to 60°C kills most sulphate-reducing bacteria; note that at that temperature you will need a mixing valve at the tap to prevent scalding, especially if children or elderly people are in the home. Second, flushing the tank thoroughly and replacing the magnesium anode rod with an aluminium or zinc-alloy rod often eliminates the problem for a fraction of the cost of a new unit. Third, if the tank is more than 10 to 12 years old, the smell is sometimes the push a homeowner needed to replace it anyway, since an older tank is also losing efficiency.

A licensed plumber or HVAC contractor can flush the tank, inspect the anode and swap it out in a single service call, typically in the $150 to $350 range depending on the tank's age and accessibility. A full tank replacement in Abbotsford runs roughly $2,000 to $3,500 for a standard gas or electric unit installed. If you are considering a heat pump water heater, budget $4,000 to $7,000 installed; those units are eligible for the CleanBC Energy Savings Program rebate of up to $3,500 if your household meets the income thresholds, so confirm eligibility with Better Homes BC before purchasing.

One thing worth noting: Abbotsford is outside Metro Vancouver and sits in the Fraser Valley Regional District, so permit and utility rules differ slightly from the municipalities this service covers most closely. Gas water heater work requires a gas contractor licensed with Technical Safety BC, and Technical Safety BC issues the gas permit for Abbotsford. Ask any contractor you hire to confirm their Technical Safety BC gas contractor licence number and

WorkSafeBC coverage before work begins.

If the smell is coming only from the hot side and only after the water sits, the anode rod is almost certainly the culprit. If both hot and cold water smell, the issue is more likely the water supply itself, and you would want to contact Abbotsford's water utility or have the water tested.

Anode rod swaps and tank flushes are straightforward jobs that contractors can usually schedule within a week or two; water heater replacements take a bit longer to source the right unit, so if you are heading into the colder months and the tank is aging, sooner is better. For a quote, Vancouver HVAC Pro can send your request to local contractors in the Vancouver Construction Network.

Q3

How long does it take to replace a hot water tank in Maple Ridge?

Most hot water tank replacements in Maple Ridge take two to four hours from the contractor's arrival to hot water flowing again, assuming a straightforward swap of a similar tank in an accessible location.

What Affects the Timeline

A direct like-for-like replacement (same fuel type, same location, similar capacity) is the fastest scenario. The contractor drains and disconnects the old unit, installs the new tank, reconnects the gas or electrical supply and the plumbing, and tests for leaks and proper ignition. If the space is tight, the venting needs adjustment, or the new tank is a different size or fuel type, add another hour or two.

A few Maple Ridge-specific factors can stretch the job. Because Maple Ridge issues its own gas permits and its own electrical permits, the contractor needs to pull those permits before or at the time of installation. Permit inspection is typically scheduled separately, sometimes the same day but often within a few days after the work is done. The tank is functional right away; the inspection confirms the installation meets code. A good contractor will include permit fees in the quote and handle the scheduling.

If you are switching from a standard gas tank to a heat pump water heater, budget a half-day or more. Heat pump water heaters need adequate clearance around them (check the manufacturer's specs), a condensate drain, and sometimes a dedicated 240V circuit. If your electrical panel is already at capacity, an upgrade could push the project to a second visit.

What a fair quote should include: the new tank with manufacturer warranty, removal and disposal of the old unit, all fittings and connections, gas and electrical permits, and labour. Ask the contractor for their Technical Safety BC

gas contractor licence number and confirm WorkSafeBC coverage before signing anything; Maple Ridge handles its own permits but the gas work still must be done by a licensed gas fitter.

On cost, a standard gas or electric tank replacement in Metro Vancouver typically runs $2,000 to $3,500 installed; a gas tankless unit is $3,500 to $6,500; a heat pump water heater $4,000 to $7,000. These are 2025-2026 figures aggregated across the Vancouver Construction Network and your quote may vary based on the tank size, venting changes and any electrical work needed.

One thing worth knowing if you own a detached house or duplex in the City of Vancouver: from January 1, 2027, replacement water heaters there must meet a high-efficiency standard. That rule does not apply in Maple Ridge, so a standard gas tank remains a permitted option here.

The right tank size and fuel type for your household is the most important decision; once that is settled, a licensed local contractor can usually have the job done and inspected within a day or two, and Vancouver HVAC Pro can match you with one for a free quote.

Q4

Is a heat pump water heater a good fit for a Richmond house?

For most Richmond houses, a heat pump water heater is a genuinely good fit, and the installed cost typically runs $4,000 to $7,000, which is higher upfront than a standard tank but lower over a 10 to 15 year lifespan thanks to roughly two to three times the efficiency of a resistance electric tank.

What makes Richmond houses a good match

Richmond's housing stock leans heavily toward detached houses and townhouses built in the 1970s through 2000s, many of which have a mechanical room or basement utility space with enough volume for a heat pump water heater to work well. These units pull heat from the surrounding air to heat water, so they need a room with at least roughly 28 to 30 cubic metres of air space (about 1,000 cubic feet) and a temperature that stays above 10°C year-round. A conditioned basement or a garage that doesn't freeze fits that description well. An unheated crawl space or a tight closet does not.

One practical side effect: the unit exhausts cool, dehumidified air into the room. In Richmond's damp climate, that's often a bonus in summer and shoulder seasons, though in a small mechanical room in winter it can slightly increase heating load. Contractors typically duct the exhaust to an adjacent space or to outside if the room is tight.

Richmond does not have the City of Vancouver's 2027 rule requiring replacement water heaters in houses and duplexes to meet its highest efficiency standard. A like-for-like gas tank or tankless replacement remains permitted here. That said, if you're currently on electric resistance heat or want to reduce gas use, a heat pump water heater is the most cost-effective electric option available.

On permits: because Richmond issues its own gas permits, any gas line work (capping an existing gas water heater connection, for example) goes through the City of Richmond, not Technical Safety BC. The electrical circuit for a heat pump water heater, however, is permitted through Technical Safety BC, since Richmond is not one of the seven municipalities that issue their own electrical permits. Your contractor should be pulling both permits where they apply and including the fees in the quote.

Rebates worth checking before you buy: the CleanBC Energy Savings Program offers up to $3,500 toward a heat pump water heater for income-qualified households, with three income tiers and a six-month window to apply after the invoice. Confirm your eligibility at Better Homes BC before purchasing, because rebate programs can change and the unit must typically be on an approved product list.

A fair quote should include the unit itself with its capacity in litres (200 to 270 L covers most households), the dedicated 240V circuit if one isn't already in place, removal and disposal of the old unit, any condensate drain work,

and the permit fees. Ask the contractor whether they are certified to handle refrigerant under BC's Ozone Depleting Substances and Other Halocarbons Regulation, since the heat pump circuit in the water heater counts. For gas disconnection of the old unit, confirm they work for a gas contractor licensed with Technical Safety BC.

Richmond homeowners replacing a tank this year have a real choice; getting one heat pump quote and one gas quote side by side through Vancouver HVAC Pro makes the comparison concrete.

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.