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Heat Pump vs Gas Heater

A Complete Guide to Pool Heating — Your Choice, No Extra Charge

□ Both options are included in your standard package at no extra charge. Choose the one that fits your lifestyle.

How They Work

Gas Heater (150,000 BTU Natural Gas)

Burns natural gas in a combustion chamber, transferring heat directly to pool water as it passes through. Efficiency: ~82–84%. Heats water regardless of outdoor air temperature. Think of it as a furnace for your pool.

Electric Heat Pump (55,000 BTU)

Extracts heat energy from outdoor air using refrigerant and a compressor — the same technology as your home air conditioner, but in reverse. For every unit of electricity consumed, a heat pump produces 5–6 units of heat energy. That's 500–600% efficient (COP of 5.0–6.0). It doesn't generate heat — it moves it.

Side-by-Side Comparison

Feature	Gas Heater (150K BTU)	Heat Pump (55K BTU)
How It Heats	Burns natural gas	Extracts heat from air
Heating Speed	Fast — 1–2°F/hour	Gradual — 1–3 days to temp
Operating Cost/Season	$800–$1,500	$300–$600
Efficiency	82–84%	500–600% (COP 5.0–6.0)
Works in Cold Weather?	Yes — any temperature	Down to 45–50°F (7–10°C) air
Lifespan	8–12 years	10–20 years
Noise Level	Low (combustion hum)	Moderate (fan noise, like A/C)
Emissions	CO_2 (fossil fuel)	Zero on-site emissions
Electrical Requirement	40-amp breaker	50–60 amp breaker
Gas Line Required?	Yes — licensed gas fitter (~$1,800)	No
Placement Restrictions	Must be 10'+ from any window (gas code)	No setback from windows required
Maintenance	Annual inspection recommended	Annual coil cleaning
Environmental Impact	Higher (natural gas)	Lower (electric, no combustion)

The Trend: Heat Pumps Are Taking Over

The pool industry is experiencing a significant shift toward electric heat pumps:

- Heat pump pool heater sales have grown 15–20% year-over-year since 2020

- The U.S. Department of Energy actively recommends heat pumps as the most cost-effective pool heating option
- Rising natural gas prices in Ontario (up ~40% since 2020) are accelerating the shift
- Canada's carbon pricing on natural gas makes heat pumps increasingly attractive year over year
- Heat pump technology has improved dramatically — modern units work efficiently down to 45°F ambient air
- Many new Ontario homes are being built without gas connections entirely (electric-only)

□ Installation & Constructability

This is where heat pumps really shine from a construction perspective:

Heat Pump — Simpler Installation

- No gas line to run — saves ~$1,800 in gas fitter costs
- No setback requirements from windows — gas code requires gas appliances be 10'+ from any operable window, door, or air intake
- More flexible placement — can go closer to the house, in tighter spaces
- No combustion = no exhaust clearances needed
- One trade instead of two — electrician handles everything (no separate gas fitter)
- Runs on a 50–60 amp breaker (dedicated 240V circuit)

Gas Heater — More Complex

- Requires licensed gas fitter for connection (~$1,800 + HST)
- Must maintain 10' clearance from windows, doors, and air intakes (Ontario gas code B149.1)
- Needs proper venting and exhaust clearance
- Gas line routing can be complicated in finished landscapes
- Runs on a 40-amp breaker (still needs electrical for ignition/controls)

When to Choose Gas

- You want the pool hot FAST — gas heaters raise temperature 1–2°F per hour
- You only swim on weekends and don't want to pre-heat for days
- You already have a gas line near the equipment area
- You need reliable heating in any weather — gas works at any air temperature
- Your electrical panel doesn't have room for a 50–60A breaker without upgrade

When to Choose Heat Pump

- You swim regularly and keep the pool heated throughout the season
- You want the lowest operating cost — 60–70% less than gas per season

- You don't have gas or don't want the cost of running a gas line ($1,800+)
- You want flexible placement — no 10' window setback required
- You care about environmental impact — zero on-site emissions
- You want to extend your season (heat pumps work well May through October in the GTA)
- Your equipment area is close to the house — no gas exhaust concerns

The Math: 5-Year Operating Cost

	Gas Heater	Heat Pump	Savings
Annual heating cost	$1,150 (avg)	$450 (avg)	$700/year
Gas fitter install	$1,800	$0	$1,800
5-Year Total	$7,550	$2,250	$5,300
10-Year Total	$13,300	$4,500	$8,800

Upgrade Option: 80,000 BTU Heat Pump

For clients who want faster heat pump performance, we offer an upgrade to the 80,000 BTU model. This heats significantly faster while maintaining the operating cost advantages of a heat pump.

- Heats ~45% faster than the standard 55K BTU unit
- Better performance during cooler spring and fall shoulder months
- Same energy efficiency — still 500%+ efficient
- Ask us about pricing for the 80K BTU upgrade

Can You Switch Later?

Yes! Our plumbing includes a bypass valve system that accommodates either heating type. If you start with gas and want to switch to a heat pump later (or vice versa), the plumbing is already in place. You'd just need the new unit and appropriate utility connection.

Our Recommendation

For most GTA homeowners who swim regularly from May through September: the heat pump is the better long-term value. Lower operating costs, longer lifespan, simpler installation, no gas line needed, and flexible placement.

For homeowners who want instant heat on demand, swim primarily on weekends, or already have gas infrastructure: the gas heater is the right choice.

Either way, there's no extra charge — both are included in your standard package.