

CALGARY FIREPLACES

Fireplace Inserts

Gas and wood insert installation into existing fireplaces for improved efficiency in Calgary homes

23 Expert Answers from Fireplace IQ

calgaryfireplaces.com/construction-brain

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What is the difference between a flush-face and a protruding gas insert for Calgary homes?

The main difference is how the insert sits in your existing fireplace opening — flush-face inserts sit completely within the firebox opening creating a seamless look, while protruding inserts extend outward past the fireplace face for easier access and often better heat output.

Flush-Face Gas Inserts are designed to fit entirely within your existing masonry fireplace opening, creating a clean, built-in appearance where the insert face aligns perfectly with your fireplace surround. The control knobs and access panels are typically located behind a hinged front panel or accessed from the side. This style works best when your existing fireplace opening is properly sized and you want the insert to look like it was always part of the original fireplace design. Installation requires precise measurements since the entire unit must fit within the existing firebox dimensions.

Protruding Gas Inserts extend several inches beyond the fireplace opening, sitting partially outside the firebox. The front face of the insert projects into the room, which provides easier access to controls and typically allows for a larger viewing area and heat exchanger. This design often delivers better heat output because more of the unit's surface area is exposed to the room rather than contained within the masonry firebox. The protruding style also makes maintenance and service more accessible since technicians don't need to work in the confined space of the firebox.

For Calgary homes, protruding inserts often make more practical sense given our long heating season and the need for maximum efficiency from supplemental heating. The improved heat output and easier maintenance access are valuable when your insert will run regularly from October through April. However, flush-face inserts provide a more refined appearance that works better in formal living rooms or when maintaining the original architectural character of heritage Calgary homes is important.

Installation considerations in Calgary include ensuring your existing chimney can accommodate the required flexible liner regardless of insert style. Both types require a gas permit and Safety Codes Officer inspection. Protruding inserts may require modifications to your existing surround or mantel to accommodate the extended depth, while flush-face inserts might need firebox modifications if the opening isn't properly sized. Most Calgary fireplace contractors can assess your existing fireplace and recommend which style works best based on your firebox dimensions, heating needs, and aesthetic preferences.

Cost differences are typically minimal between the two styles — expect \$2,500-\$5,500 installed for either type, with the final price depending more on BTU output, efficiency rating, and brand than whether it's flush or protruding.

Need help finding a fireplace contractor to assess your existing fireplace for an insert? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local professionals who specialize in fireplace conversions.

Q2

What is a fireplace insert surround panel and do I need one in my Calgary home?

A fireplace insert surround panel is a decorative and functional cover that fills the gap between your fireplace insert and the existing masonry opening, creating a finished, seamless appearance. Most Calgary homeowners installing gas or wood inserts absolutely need surround panels to complete the installation properly.

When you install a fireplace insert into an existing masonry fireplace, the insert unit is typically smaller than the original firebox opening. This leaves an unsightly gap around the edges where you can see the old brick or stone interior, damaged masonry, or even the flexible liner connection. The surround panel covers this gap and gives your fireplace a clean, professional appearance as if the insert was custom-built for the space.

Surround panels serve both aesthetic and functional purposes in Calgary installations. Aesthetically, they transform what would otherwise look like an afterthought into an intentional, finished fireplace that becomes a proper focal point for your room. Functionally, they help direct airflow properly around the insert, prevent debris from falling into the gap, and in some cases provide additional heat reflection into the room. For gas inserts, the surround panel often incorporates the control access and sometimes decorative louvers for convection air circulation.

Most fireplace inserts come with basic surround panels included, but these are often simple black or brass-finished steel that may not match your home's décor. Calgary homeowners frequently upgrade to custom surround panels made from materials that complement their room design — brushed stainless steel for modern homes, antique brass for traditional settings, or even custom-painted steel to match trim colors. Some manufacturers offer decorative surround panels with different textures, colors, or trim styles.

For Calgary's climate considerations, a properly fitted surround panel helps maintain the insert's efficiency by ensuring proper airflow patterns around the unit. During Calgary's long heating season from October through April, even small efficiency improvements translate to meaningful energy savings on your ATCO Gas bill. A loose or poorly fitted surround panel can allow heated air to escape back into the chimney rather than into your room.

Installation of surround panels typically requires professional fitting during the insert installation process. The panel must be precisely measured to the existing opening and properly secured to maintain Alberta Building Code

clearances from combustible materials. While the surround panel itself isn't complex, it's usually installed as part of the overall insert project that requires a gas permit and Safety Codes Officer inspection.

If you're planning an insert installation in your Calgary home, discuss surround panel options with your fireplace contractor during the initial consultation. They can show you samples and help you choose a style that complements both your insert and your room's design. The surround panel is one of those details that makes the difference between a fireplace that looks professionally installed versus one that looks like an obvious retrofit.

Need help finding a fireplace contractor to discuss insert and surround panel options? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local professionals who specialize in insert installations and can show you the full range of surround panel choices for your specific fireplace opening.

Q3

Can I install a gas insert in my 1960s Calgary bungalow fireplace without major modifications?

Most 1960s Calgary bungalows can accommodate a gas insert with minimal modifications, but the existing masonry chimney condition is the critical factor that determines project scope and cost.

The good news is that 1960s Calgary homes typically have well-built masonry fireplaces with adequate firebox dimensions for modern gas inserts. These fireplaces were constructed during an era of solid building practices, and the fireboxes are usually large enough to house a gas insert while maintaining proper clearances. The existing damper can remain in place (though it should stay open), and most units can connect to your home's natural gas supply through ATCO Gas lines that were standard by the 1960s.

The chimney liner is where complications typically arise. Most gas inserts require a flexible aluminum or stainless steel liner running from the insert to the chimney top. If your existing clay tile liner is in excellent condition with no cracks, gaps, or deterioration, the installation is straightforward. However, many 1960s Calgary chimneys show wear from decades of freeze-thaw cycles and chinook temperature swings that cause masonry expansion and contraction. Cracked or separated clay tiles require liner replacement, which adds \$1,500-\$2,500 to the project cost.

Calgary's chinook winds create unique challenges for older chimneys. These rapid temperature changes from -25°C to +10°C in hours put tremendous stress on masonry joints and chimney crowns. A pre-installation chimney inspection by your gas fitter or a WETT-certified technician will identify any structural issues that need addressing before the insert installation.

The installation process involves sliding the gas insert into your existing firebox, connecting it to a new gas line (requires a licensed gas fitter and gas permit from the City of Calgary), installing the chimney liner if needed, and connecting the insert's exhaust to the liner. The Safety Codes Officer inspection ensures everything meets Alberta Building Code requirements. Total project cost typically ranges from \$3,000-\$6,000 depending on chimney condition and gas line routing.

One major advantage of your 1960s fireplace is the substantial hearth and surround structure. These homes often feature beautiful brick or stone surrounds that provide the perfect frame for a modern gas insert. You'll maintain the classic look while gaining 70-85% heating efficiency compared to the 10-15% efficiency of your current open fireplace. During Calgary's brutal winter months, a properly sized gas insert can provide meaningful supplemental heat to your main living areas.

Before proceeding, have a qualified professional assess your chimney condition, measure the firebox dimensions, and evaluate the gas line routing. This inspection costs \$150-\$300 but prevents costly surprises during installation. Most 1960s Calgary bungalows are excellent candidates for gas insert upgrades with minimal structural modifications required.

Need help finding a fireplace installer? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local contractors who specialize in gas insert installations in older Calgary homes.

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- Onsite Contracting and Electrical Services
- The Original Workshop
- True North Overhead Doors
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How much does a Regency gas fireplace insert cost in Calgary?

A Regency gas fireplace insert in Calgary typically costs \$2,500-\$5,500 installed, depending on the model size, efficiency rating, and installation complexity. The insert unit itself ranges from \$1,800-\$3,500, with installation adding another \$700-\$2,000 for gas line connection, chimney liner, and labor.

Regency offers several insert models popular in Calgary homes. Their Classic series (like the I31 and I35) are mid-range options at \$1,800-\$2,500 for the unit, providing 25,000-30,000 BTU output suitable for heating 800-1,200 square feet. The Panorama series (P33CE, P36D) are premium models at \$2,800-\$3,500, offering higher efficiency ratings (75-85%) and larger viewing areas. These higher-output models (30,000-40,000 BTU) are particularly valuable during Calgary's brutal winter cold snaps when supplemental heating makes a real difference in comfort and furnace workload.

Installation costs vary significantly based on your existing masonry fireplace condition. If your chimney already has a suitable liner in good condition, installation might cost \$700-\$1,200 for gas line connection and basic setup. However, most Calgary homes with older masonry fireplaces need a new flexible aluminum or stainless steel liner (\$800-\$1,500) to properly vent the insert. Chimney condition is critical—Calgary's freeze-thaw cycles and chinook temperature swings cause accelerated deterioration in masonry chimneys, so a thorough inspection before installation is essential.

The gas permit and Safety Codes Officer inspection add \$100-\$200 to your project cost but are mandatory under Alberta Building Code. The gas line connection must be done by a licensed gas fitter, and the completed installation requires inspection before operation. At current ATCO Gas rates of approximately \$3.50-\$5.00 per GJ, operating costs run about \$0.50-\$1.00 per hour—significantly cheaper than electric heating and making gas inserts an economical upgrade for Calgary's six-month heating season.

Regency inserts transform inefficient masonry fireplaces from 10-15% efficiency to 70-85% efficiency, meaning you get actual usable heat instead of most of your energy going up the chimney. This efficiency gain is particularly valuable in Calgary where fireplaces see heavy use from October through April. The sealed combustion design also eliminates indoor air quality concerns common with older open fireplaces.

Additional costs to consider include decorative surrounds and finishing work. Many homeowners upgrade the mantel and surround when installing an insert, adding \$1,000-\$4,000 for stone, tile, or custom millwork. Annual maintenance runs \$150-\$250 and becomes more important with Calgary's heavy usage patterns.

Need help finding a qualified fireplace installer for your Regency insert? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local contractors who specialize in gas insert installations and can properly assess your existing chimney condition

before providing accurate project quotes.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

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- UR COWRY CABINETS
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- Calgary Garage Builders Ltd
- Amar Homes Inc

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Q5

How much does it cost to replace the chimney liner when installing a gas insert in Calgary?

Chimney liner replacement for a gas insert installation in Calgary typically costs \$1,500-\$3,500, depending on the chimney height, liner material, and accessibility. This is often the largest single cost component when upgrading an existing masonry fireplace with a gas insert.

Gas insert installations require a new flexible aluminum or stainless steel liner that runs from the insert up through the existing masonry chimney to provide a proper sealed flue path. The old clay tile liner in most Calgary masonry chimneys is oversized for modern gas inserts and doesn't provide the tight seal required for efficient operation and safety compliance under the Alberta Building Code.

Aluminum liners cost \$8-\$12 per linear foot and are suitable for most gas insert applications, while **stainless steel liners run \$15-\$25 per linear foot** and offer better durability against Calgary's harsh freeze-thaw cycles. For a typical two-story Calgary home with a 25-30 foot chimney, material costs alone range from \$200-\$750. However, the installation labor is the bigger expense — accessing the chimney top, removing the old damper, threading the new liner down through the flue, connecting it properly to the insert, and sealing the top termination typically requires 4-6 hours of skilled work at \$100-\$150 per hour.

Calgary's extreme climate makes liner replacement more complex than in milder regions. Chinook wind events create rapid temperature swings that stress chimney components, so proper expansion joints and secure

connections are critical. Many older Calgary chimneys also have deteriorated mortar joints or cracked crowns that should be addressed during the liner installation to prevent water infiltration and freeze damage.

Additional costs often include chimney cap replacement (\$200-\$500) since the new liner requires a different termination than the original clay tiles, and **crown repair (\$300-\$800)** if the existing concrete crown has cracks that could let moisture reach the new liner. A **gas permit from the City of Calgary (\$100-\$200)** is required, and the completed installation must pass a Safety Codes Officer inspection before the insert can be operated.

The total project cost for a gas insert with liner replacement typically runs \$3,000-\$6,000 in Calgary — \$1,200-\$2,500 for a mid-range gas insert, \$1,500-\$3,500 for liner replacement and installation, plus gas line connection and finishing work. While this seems expensive, it transforms a 10-15% efficient masonry fireplace into a 70-85% efficient heating appliance that can meaningfully reduce your heating bills during Calgary's long winter season.

Professional installation is mandatory — gas line work requires a licensed gas fitter, and improper liner installation can cause carbon monoxide poisoning. The liner must be properly sized to the insert's BTU output and venting requirements, with correct clearances and termination details.

Need help finding a qualified fireplace contractor for your gas insert project? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local installers who specialize in chimney liner replacement and gas insert installations.

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- Quality count construction Ltd.
- Besademolition

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Q6

How much money will a gas insert save me on heating costs in a Calgary winter?

A gas insert can save Calgary homeowners \$300-\$800 per winter on heating costs by transforming an inefficient masonry fireplace from 10-15% efficiency to 70-85% efficiency, plus providing targeted zone heating that reduces furnace runtime.

The savings depend on several factors specific to your situation. If you currently have a traditional open masonry fireplace that you use regularly, you're essentially heating the outdoors — these fireplaces pull heated indoor air up the chimney faster than they generate heat. A gas insert reverses this energy drain completely. For a typical Calgary home using their fireplace 3-4 hours daily during the 6-month heating season, upgrading to a gas insert eliminates this heat loss and adds 25,000-40,000 BTU of efficient zone heating.

Zone heating provides the biggest savings opportunity in Calgary's extreme climate. Instead of heating your entire 2,000 square foot home to 22°C when you're spending the evening in the living room, you can lower your furnace thermostat to 18-19°C and use the gas insert to keep your main living area comfortable. At current ATCO Gas rates of \$3.50-\$5.00 per GJ, running a gas insert costs roughly \$0.50-\$1.00 per hour — significantly cheaper than electric baseboard heating and more efficient than forcing your furnace to heat unused bedrooms and basement areas to full temperature.

Calgary's long heating season maximizes your return on investment. From October through April, you'll accumulate 150-200 hours of fireplace use, compared to 50-100 hours in milder climates. This heavy usage means your efficiency gains compound over six full months. A homeowner replacing 4 hours of furnace runtime daily with efficient gas insert heating can save \$2-\$4 per day, adding up to \$300-\$600 over the heating season. If you're upgrading from an energy-draining open fireplace that you actually use, add another \$200-\$300 in eliminated heat loss.

The math works best for homes with existing masonry fireplaces in main living areas. Your gas insert installation cost of \$2,500-\$5,500 pays for itself in 3-7 years through heating savings, plus you gain the reliability of zone heating during Calgary's -30°C cold snaps when your furnace is working hardest. Homes with open floor plans, cathedral ceilings, or fireplaces centrally located between kitchen and living areas see the highest savings because the insert can effectively heat your most-used spaces.

Keep in mind that actual savings vary based on your home's insulation, how much you currently use your fireplace, your furnace efficiency, and your heating habits. A gas insert won't dramatically reduce your total heating bill if you rarely used your old fireplace, but it will provide comfortable, cost-effective zone heating and eliminate the energy waste of an open masonry fireplace.

Need help finding a gas insert installer? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local contractors who can assess your existing fireplace and provide specific savings estimates based on your home's layout and heating patterns.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Mike's Restoration Service
- BOND CONTRACTING & CONSTRUCTION INC
- Quality count construction Ltd.
- Amar Homes Inc

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What is the price difference between a gas insert and a gas log set in Calgary?

A gas insert typically costs \$2,500-\$5,500 installed in Calgary, while a gas log set runs \$800-\$2,500 installed — making gas log sets roughly \$1,500-\$3,000 less expensive. However, this price difference reflects fundamentally different products that serve different purposes in your existing masonry fireplace.

Gas inserts are complete sealed fireplace units that slide into your existing masonry firebox and transform it from an inefficient open fireplace (10-15% efficiency) into a high-efficiency heating appliance (70-85% efficiency). The insert includes its own firebox, glass doors, blower fan, and heat exchanger. Installation requires running a flexible aluminum or stainless steel liner up your existing chimney, connecting a gas line, and often installing a new chimney cap. You're essentially installing a new fireplace inside your old one. During Calgary's brutal winters when temperatures hit -25°C to -35°C, a quality gas insert can provide 25,000-40,000 BTU of meaningful supplemental heat that reduces your furnace load and provides comfortable zone heating.

Gas log sets are decorative burners that sit inside your existing open firebox and burn with the damper open, just like a wood fire. They provide the visual appeal of flames and glowing logs but minimal heat output — most of the heat goes up the chimney. Vented gas log sets operate exactly like wood fires, drawing room air for combustion and exhausting up the chimney. Installation is simpler: connect the gas line to the log set burner and ensure proper damper operation. No chimney liner modification is typically required.

The efficiency difference is dramatic in Calgary's climate. Gas inserts capture and circulate heat into your room, making them genuine heating appliances that provide value during our six-month heating season. Gas log sets are primarily decorative — you're paying ATCO Gas rates of \$3.50-\$5.00 per GJ to create ambiance while most heat escapes up the chimney. For Calgary homeowners who want both beauty and function from their fireplace, the extra cost of a gas insert pays for itself through heating efficiency over multiple winters.

Installation complexity also differs significantly. Gas log sets require a gas permit and licensed gas fitter for the gas line connection, but the existing chimney typically needs no modification. Gas inserts require the same gas permit plus chimney liner installation, which often means additional Safety Codes Officer inspection of the chimney system. If your existing masonry chimney has deteriorated mortar joints or a damaged clay liner — common in older Calgary homes after years of freeze-thaw cycles and chinook temperature swings — the insert installation may require chimney repair work that adds \$1,500-\$3,500 to the project cost.

Consider your goals and chimney condition. If you want occasional ambiance and your existing fireplace draws properly, a gas log set provides the flame experience at lower cost. If you want supplemental heating during Calgary winters and your chimney is in good condition, a gas insert delivers far more value despite the higher upfront investment. Have your chimney inspected before deciding — cracked liners or deteriorated mortar may

influence which option makes financial sense for your specific situation.

Need help finding a fireplace installer to assess your existing fireplace and provide estimates? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local contractors who specialize in both gas inserts and log set installations.

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- The Original Workshop
- Calgary Custom Concepts
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Q8

Do I need a chimney liner for a gas insert in my Calgary home?

Yes, you absolutely need a chimney liner for a gas insert in Calgary. Installing a gas insert without a proper liner violates the Alberta Building Code and creates serious safety risks including carbon monoxide poisoning and potential chimney fires.

Why Gas Inserts Require Chimney Liners

When you install a gas insert into an existing masonry fireplace, you're transforming a system designed for open wood burning into a sealed combustion appliance. The original masonry chimney was built for the high temperatures and draft requirements of an open fire, not the lower-temperature, moisture-laden exhaust from gas combustion. Without a proper liner, several dangerous problems occur: the cooler gas exhaust condenses against the cold masonry walls, creating acidic moisture that deteriorates mortar joints from the inside; the oversized chimney doesn't provide adequate draft for the gas insert, potentially causing exhaust gases to spill back into your home; and any existing cracks or gaps in the masonry allow carbon monoxide to leak into living spaces or the attic.

Calgary's Climate Makes Liners Even More Critical

Calgary's extreme temperature swings, especially during chinook events, accelerate chimney deterioration. When temperatures jump from -25°C to +10°C in hours, masonry chimneys expand and contract rapidly, opening hairline cracks that weren't visible during installation. These cracks allow carbon monoxide to escape the chimney system. Additionally, Calgary's long heating season means your gas insert will operate heavily from October through April — six months of regular use that puts constant stress on an unlined chimney system.

Liner Types and Installation Requirements

Flexible aluminum liners (\$800-\$1,500 installed) are the most common choice for gas inserts in Calgary. These corrugated aluminum tubes run from the insert collar to the chimney top, creating a sealed pathway for exhaust gases. They're less expensive and easier to install in chimneys with bends or offsets. **Rigid stainless steel liners** (\$1,200-\$2,500 installed) offer superior durability and are required for higher-BTU inserts or when the existing chimney has structural issues. The liner must be properly sized to match your insert's venting requirements — typically 5-inch or 6-inch diameter for most residential gas inserts.

Permits and Professional Installation

Gas insert installation requires a **gas permit** from the City of Calgary and must be performed by a licensed gas fitter. The Safety Codes Officer inspection includes verifying that the chimney liner is properly installed, sealed at both ends, and meets manufacturer specifications. Attempting to install a gas insert without a liner or using an improper liner will fail inspection and create liability issues with your home insurance.

Signs Your Existing Chimney Needs Attention

Before installing any liner, have your chimney inspected for structural integrity. Common problems in Calgary homes include: deteriorated mortar joints from freeze-thaw cycles, cracked chimney crowns allowing water infiltration, damaged or missing chimney caps, and existing clay tile liners with cracks or separations. These issues must be addressed before liner installation to ensure a safe, code-compliant system.

Cost Considerations

A complete gas insert installation with liner typically runs \$3,000-\$6,000 in Calgary, with the liner representing roughly 25-40% of the total project cost. While it might seem tempting to skip the liner to save money, the safety risks and code violations make this a dangerous false economy. A properly installed system will provide decades of safe, efficient heating during Calgary's long winters.

Need help finding a qualified gas fitter for your insert installation? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local professionals who understand Alberta Building Code requirements and Calgary's unique climate challenges.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

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- Upper Cut Landscaping LTD
- Royland Stucco
- Durable Decks
- Quality count construction Ltd.

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Q9

What happens to my existing brick fireplace when I install an insert in Calgary?

When you install a gas or wood insert into your existing brick fireplace in Calgary, the brick structure remains completely intact — the insert simply slides into the existing firebox opening and transforms your inefficient masonry fireplace into a high-efficiency heating appliance.

Your existing brick fireplace and chimney become the housing system for the new insert. The brick firebox walls, hearth, and chimney structure all stay in place. A gas insert typically achieves 70-85% efficiency compared to your current masonry fireplace's 10-15% efficiency, meaning you'll get dramatically more heat output while using less fuel. For Calgary's long heating season from October through April, this efficiency improvement translates to substantial energy savings on your ATCO Gas bill.

The installation process involves several key modifications to integrate the insert safely. For a gas insert, a flexible aluminum or stainless steel liner gets installed down your existing chimney to properly vent the new appliance — your old clay tile liner likely has gaps or cracks after years of Calgary's freeze-thaw cycles and chinook temperature swings. The gas fitter runs a new gas line to the fireplace location and connects it to the insert's gas valve. The insert slides into your firebox opening and gets secured in place, with the front face covering the gap between the insert and your brick opening.

Your chimney requires inspection and likely some repair work before insert installation. Calgary's extreme temperature cycling — from -30°C winter cold snaps to +15°C chinook events within hours — accelerates mortar joint deterioration and crown cracking in masonry chimneys. Most Calgary chimneys over 15-20 years old need tuckpointing, crown repair, or cap replacement. A cracked or deteriorated chimney liner is dangerous with any fuel-burning appliance, so expect to invest \$1,500-\$3,000 in chimney restoration alongside your \$2,500-\$5,500 insert

installation.

The aesthetic impact depends on your insert choice and finishing preferences. The insert face will cover most of your existing brick firebox opening, but your brick surround, hearth, and mantel remain visible and functional. Many Calgary homeowners use this opportunity to update their fireplace's appearance — adding a new wood mantel, stone veneer over the existing brick, or a decorative surround that complements the insert's style. You can also leave everything as-is for a more traditional look.

Installation requires a gas permit from the City of Calgary and Safety Codes Officer inspection — the same permitting process as any gas appliance installation. The gas fitter handles the permit application, gas line work, and coordinates the inspection. Never attempt DIY gas line work or skip the permit process, as unpermitted gas work creates safety hazards and insurance liability.

Need help finding a qualified gas fitter for your insert installation? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local professionals who handle both the gas work and chimney preparation for a complete, code-compliant installation.

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- Venkor Group Inc
- PLATINUM Pool & Spa Services Ltd
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Is a fan kit or blower worth adding to a gas insert in a Calgary home?

Yes, a fan kit is absolutely worth adding to a gas insert in a Calgary home. Given Calgary's extreme winters and long heating season, the enhanced heat distribution from a blower can significantly improve your fireplace's effectiveness as a supplemental heating source.

How Fan Kits Improve Gas Insert Performance

A fan kit consists of one or two variable-speed blowers that mount beneath or behind your gas insert and circulate room air across the unit's heat exchanger. Without a fan, your insert relies entirely on natural convection — warm air rises from the unit while cool air is drawn in from below. This creates a gentle heat flow but doesn't move warm air very far from the fireplace itself.

With a blower system, heated air is actively pushed into the room and can reach areas 15-20 feet away from the insert. In Calgary homes where you might run your gas insert for 4-6 hours during a -25°C evening, this improved heat distribution means more of your living space benefits from the fireplace's 25,000-40,000 BTU output. The result is more even room temperatures and better value from your ATCO Gas investment.

Calgary-Specific Benefits

During Calgary's long heating season from October through April, a gas insert with a blower becomes a more effective zone heating solution. Instead of creating a hot zone immediately around the fireplace with cooler areas across the room, the fan helps maintain comfortable temperatures throughout your main living area. This allows you to turn down your furnace thermostat by 2-3 degrees while maintaining comfort — meaningful savings over six months of regular use.

The blower also helps during chinook events when outdoor temperatures swing dramatically. When it's +10°C outside but your home's thermal mass is still cold from days of -30°C weather, the enhanced circulation from a fan kit helps your insert warm the space more quickly and evenly.

Installation and Cost Considerations

Most quality gas inserts from manufacturers like Napoleon, Regency, and Valor are designed to accommodate factory blower kits. The fan assembly typically mounts to the insert's lower housing and connects to a variable-speed controller that you can adjust based on desired heat output and noise preference. Installation requires access to the insert's electrical connection and usually takes 1-2 hours for a qualified technician.

Blower kits typically add \$300-\$600 to your insert installation cost, depending on the unit size and manufacturer. For a gas insert that you'll use regularly throughout Calgary's heating season, this represents excellent value — the

improved heat distribution and zone heating capability often pay for the upgrade through reduced furnace usage.

Noise and Operation

Modern variable-speed blowers operate quietly on low settings — typically producing a gentle white noise similar to a bathroom exhaust fan. You can adjust the speed based on your heating needs and noise tolerance. Many homeowners run the blower on low during casual evening use and increase the speed when actively heating the room during cold snaps.

When Installing Your Gas Insert

If you're having a gas insert installed, discuss the blower option with your contractor during the initial consultation. It's much easier and less expensive to install the fan kit during the original installation than to retrofit it later. The electrical connection and access requirements are simpler to address when the insert isn't yet permanently positioned.

For Calgary homes where your gas insert will serve as meaningful supplemental heat rather than just ambiance, a blower kit transforms the unit from a localized heat source into an effective room heating system. Given our climate and heating costs, it's one of the most worthwhile fireplace upgrades you can make.

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- Durable Decks
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- Premium Built Structures
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Q11

How much does a gas fireplace insert cost installed in Calgary?

A gas fireplace insert costs \$2,500-\$5,500 installed in Calgary, with most homeowners paying \$3,500-\$4,500 for a quality mid-range unit with professional installation and gas permit.

Gas inserts are one of the most popular fireplace upgrades in Calgary because they transform an inefficient masonry fireplace from 10-15% efficiency to 70-85% efficiency — a meaningful improvement during Calgary's long heating season from October through April. Instead of losing most of your heat up the chimney, a gas insert provides real supplemental heating that reduces furnace strain during those -25°C to -35°C cold snaps that can last for weeks.

The total cost breaks down into several components. The insert unit itself ranges from \$1,200-\$3,000 depending on size, efficiency rating, and features. Basic 25,000 BTU inserts start around \$1,200-\$1,800, while premium 35,000-40,000 BTU units with remote controls, variable flame height, and decorative fronts run \$2,200-\$3,000. Installation adds \$800-\$1,500 and includes connecting the gas line (must be done by a licensed gas fitter), installing a flexible aluminum or stainless steel liner up your existing chimney, sealing the damper area, and obtaining the required gas permit from the City of Calgary. The gas permit and Safety Codes Officer inspection add approximately \$150-\$200 to the project cost.

Calgary's climate makes the efficiency upgrade particularly valuable. At current ATCO Gas rates of approximately \$3.50-\$5.00 per GJ, running a gas insert costs roughly \$0.50-\$1.00 per hour — significantly cheaper than electric heating. During Calgary's six-month heating season, an efficient gas insert providing 30,000 BTU of zone heating can reduce your overall heating costs while making your main living areas more comfortable. The sealed combustion design also eliminates the indoor air quality concerns of your old open fireplace, which is important in modern Calgary homes that are tightly sealed for energy efficiency.

Important considerations before installation include chimney condition and sizing. Your existing masonry chimney needs inspection before insert installation — Calgary's extreme freeze-thaw cycles and chinook wind events accelerate chimney deterioration, and cracked liners or deteriorated mortar joints must be addressed first. The insert must be properly sized for your room volume and existing firebox dimensions. Most Calgary homes with masonry fireplaces can accommodate standard insert sizes, but oversized or undersized units won't perform efficiently.

Professional installation is mandatory — the gas line connection requires a licensed gas fitter, and the chimney liner work involves working at height with specialized tools. The completed installation must pass a Safety Codes Officer inspection before you can operate the unit. Attempting DIY installation violates the Alberta Building Code and creates serious safety risks including carbon monoxide poisoning and gas leaks.

Need help finding a gas insert installer? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local fireplace contractors who specialize in insert installations and handle all the permitting requirements.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Turnbull masonry
- Durable Decks
- Calgary Custom Concepts
- UR COWRY CABINETS

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Q12

What size gas insert fits a standard Calgary masonry fireplace opening?

Most standard Calgary masonry fireplaces have openings that accommodate gas inserts ranging from 28-32 inches wide, 20-24 inches tall, and 16-20 inches deep, but measuring your specific opening is essential since masonry fireplace dimensions vary significantly even within the same neighborhood.

Calgary's older homes (1960s-1980s) typically feature masonry fireplaces with openings around 30 inches wide by 22 inches tall, which fits most medium-sized gas inserts perfectly. These inserts typically produce 25,000-35,000 BTU of heat output — ideal for Calgary's climate where you need meaningful supplemental heating during those -25°C to -35°C winter stretches. Newer homes (1990s-2000s) often have slightly larger openings that can accommodate inserts up to 36 inches wide, allowing for higher BTU output and more dramatic flame displays.

The critical measurements you need are the fireplace opening width, height, and depth, plus the rear width (many fireplaces taper from front to back). Measure at the narrowest points since the insert must fit through the opening. Most Calgary fireplace contractors recommend leaving 1-2 inches of clearance on all sides for easier installation and future service access. You'll also need to measure the chimney flue size — most Calgary masonry chimneys have 8-inch or 10-inch clay tile flues that require a flexible aluminum liner for the gas insert.

Beyond the opening size, your existing chimney condition matters enormously in Calgary's climate. Chinook winds and freeze-thaw cycles cause mortar joint deterioration and clay tile cracking faster than in most Canadian cities. A professional chimney inspection before insert installation typically costs \$200-300 and can reveal whether your chimney needs relining, crown repair, or other work. Installing a gas insert into a damaged chimney creates serious safety risks and violates the Alberta Building Code.

Popular gas insert sizes for Calgary homes include 28-inch models (20,000-25,000 BTU) for smaller rooms, 32-inch models (25,000-35,000 BTU) for average living rooms, and 36-inch models (35,000-42,000 BTU) for large great rooms or open-concept spaces. Brands like Napoleon, Regency, and Valor offer multiple sizes within each model line. The insert installation requires a gas permit from the City of Calgary, a licensed gas fitter to run the gas line, and a flexible aluminum liner up your existing chimney — total project cost typically runs \$3,000-\$6,000 depending on gas line distance and chimney work required.

Measure carefully and have a professional assess your chimney before purchasing an insert. Every masonry fireplace is unique, and what fits your neighbor's fireplace may not fit yours. A qualified installer can template your opening and recommend the optimal insert size for both fit and heating performance.

Need help finding a fireplace installer to measure your opening and assess your chimney? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local professionals who specialize in gas insert installations.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Durable Decks
- Upper Cut Landscaping LTD
- Mr & Mrs Paintastic Inc
- Wise Abatement

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What is the lifespan of a gas fireplace insert in Calgary?

A quality gas fireplace insert in Calgary typically lasts 15-20 years with proper annual maintenance, though the harsh climate and heavy winter use can reduce this to 12-15 years for budget units or those that aren't properly serviced.

Calgary's extreme winter conditions put gas fireplace inserts through more demanding use cycles than most Canadian cities. During the long heating season from October through April, many Calgary homeowners run their gas inserts regularly during cold snaps that can last weeks at -25°C to -35°C. This heavy use accumulates 800-1,200 operating hours annually compared to 300-500 hours in milder climates, which accelerates wear on key components like the heat exchanger, blower motor, and gas valve.

The most critical factor affecting lifespan is annual maintenance. Gas inserts need professional service every fall before heavy winter use begins. This includes cleaning the heat exchanger, inspecting the venting system, checking gas connections, and testing safety controls. Skipping annual service in Calgary's demanding climate often reduces insert lifespan by 30-40% as dust buildup causes overheating, corroded components fail prematurely, and small problems become major repairs.

Chinook winds create additional stress on gas inserts through rapid temperature swings that cause metal components to expand and contract repeatedly. The sudden pressure changes during chinook events can also affect venting systems, making proper vent termination and annual vent inspection especially important for Calgary installations.

Quality matters significantly in Calgary's climate. Premium brands like Napoleon, Regency, and Valor typically deliver the full 15-20 year lifespan with proper maintenance, while budget units may need replacement after 10-12 years. The heat exchanger is usually the first major component to fail, often showing cracks or corrosion after years of thermal cycling. Blower motors typically last 10-15 years, while electronic ignition systems may need replacement every 8-12 years.

Signs your gas insert is nearing replacement include: reduced heat output despite normal gas consumption, visible rust or corrosion on the heat exchanger, frequent pilot light outages, unusual odors during operation, or repair costs exceeding 50% of replacement value. Modern high-efficiency inserts also offer significantly better performance than units from the early 2000s, making replacement worthwhile even for functioning older units.

Installation quality affects longevity. Proper gas line sizing, correct venting, and adequate combustion air supply help inserts operate efficiently and last longer. Poor installation can reduce lifespan through inadequate gas pressure, restricted airflow, or improper venting that causes condensation damage.

With ATCO Gas rates making gas inserts cost-effective for Calgary's long heating season, investing in a quality unit with annual professional maintenance provides the best value over the 15-20 year lifespan. The combination of reliable supplemental heating during brutal Calgary winters and reasonable operating costs makes a well-maintained gas insert one of the most practical home heating investments for Calgary homeowners.

Need help finding a qualified gas insert installer or service technician? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local fireplace professionals through the Calgary Construction Network.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Onsite Contracting and Electrical Services
- Calgary Garage Builders Ltd
- Amar Homes Inc
- Ardco Construction

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Q14

Can I still use my damper after installing a gas insert in my Calgary fireplace?

No, you should not use your existing damper after installing a gas insert. The damper should be permanently secured in the open position or removed entirely, and the gas insert will be connected to a new flexible liner that runs up through your existing chimney.

When a gas insert is installed in your existing masonry fireplace, it creates a completely new venting system. The insert connects to a flexible aluminum or stainless steel liner that's fed down from the top of your chimney and runs all the way up to terminate at the chimney crown. This liner becomes the dedicated flue for your gas insert, bypassing your original damper entirely.

Your original damper becomes obsolete and potentially dangerous if left functional. If you accidentally closed the damper while operating the gas insert, you'd block the exhaust path for combustion gases, creating a serious carbon monoxide hazard. Most Calgary fireplace installers will either remove the damper mechanism completely or permanently secure it in the open position with clamps or brackets to prevent accidental closure.

The new liner system actually provides better performance than your original setup. **Gas inserts in Calgary typically use 5-inch or 6-inch flexible liners that create proper draft and prevent condensation issues** that can occur when undersized gas appliances use oversized masonry flues. The liner also protects your existing chimney from acidic condensation that gas combustion produces, which can deteriorate mortar joints over time.

This work requires a gas permit from the City of Calgary and must be performed by a licensed gas fitter. The Safety Codes Officer will inspect the completed installation, including verifying that the liner is properly sized, connected, and terminated, and that the original damper has been properly secured or removed. The inspector will also check that the insert maintains proper clearances and that carbon monoxide detectors are installed.

During Calgary's chinook events, the new liner system actually provides more consistent draft than the original large masonry flue, which could experience draft reversals during rapid pressure changes. The smaller, dedicated liner maintains steadier airflow for reliable gas insert operation.

If you're considering a gas insert for your existing masonry fireplace, expect the complete project to cost \$3,000-\$6,000 in Calgary, including the insert unit, liner installation, gas line connection, permits, and finishing work around the surround. The efficiency upgrade from 10-15% (open masonry) to 70-85% (gas insert) makes this one of the most cost-effective fireplace improvements for Calgary's long heating season.

Need help finding a gas insert installer? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local contractors who specialize in fireplace conversions and can handle the permit process from start to finish.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Besademolition
- Eshine Cleaning Services
- Allure Residential & Commercial inc
- G.D.K Drywall LTD.

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Q15

How long does a gas fireplace insert installation take in Calgary?

A gas fireplace insert installation in Calgary typically takes 6-8 hours for a straightforward project, or 1-2 full days if chimney liner replacement or significant gas line work is required. The timeline depends heavily on your existing chimney condition and gas line accessibility.

The Standard Installation Process

Most gas insert installations follow a predictable sequence. The contractor starts by inspecting your existing masonry fireplace and chimney to ensure they're structurally sound and properly sized for the new insert. If your chimney already has a suitable liner in good condition, the actual insert installation moves quickly — removing the old damper, positioning the insert, connecting the flexible aluminum liner to the insert and existing chimney system, running the gas line connection, and completing the finishing work around the insert face.

What Adds Time to Calgary Projects

Calgary's harsh climate creates specific challenges that can extend installation time. Many older masonry chimneys in Calgary homes have deteriorated mortar joints or cracked clay liners from decades of freeze-thaw cycles and chinook temperature swings. If your chimney needs a new stainless steel liner — common in homes built before 1980 — add another 4-6 hours to snake the new liner up the chimney and properly connect it. Gas line work also varies significantly: if your existing gas line is properly sized and easily accessible near the fireplace, connection takes 1-2 hours; if the gas fitter needs to run new line from your meter or upgrade undersized pipe, expect a full additional day.

Permit and Inspection Requirements

Every gas insert installation in Calgary requires a gas permit from the City of Calgary, and the work must be completed by a licensed gas fitter. The Safety Codes Officer inspection typically happens within 2-3 business days of permit application, but this doesn't affect installation time since the inspection occurs after the work is complete. Smart contractors pull permits before starting work to avoid delays.

Seasonal Considerations in Calgary

Installation timing is less weather-dependent than you might expect. Since most gas insert work happens inside your home, installations proceed year-round in Calgary. However, if chimney repair or new liner installation is needed, contractors prefer working on roof penetrations during warmer months when materials handle better and working conditions are safer. Fall is peak season for fireplace work in Calgary as homeowners prepare for winter, so booking 3-4 weeks ahead during September and October ensures better scheduling flexibility.

What You Can Expect on Installation Day

Plan for some disruption to your living space. The contractor will lay protective coverings and may need to remove the existing damper and debris from your firebox. There will be some dust and noise, particularly if chimney work is

involved. Most installations are complete and ready for the Safety Codes Officer inspection by end of day, though you'll need to wait for inspection approval before operating your new insert.

Need help finding a qualified gas insert installer? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local fireplace contractors who handle the entire process from permits to final inspection.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Royland Stucco
- Alpine Exteriors siding and roofing
- Keystone Exteriors
- True North Overhead Doors

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What is the efficiency rating of a gas insert versus my open Calgary fireplace?

A gas insert will increase your fireplace efficiency from roughly 10-15% to 70-85% — transforming your existing masonry fireplace from an energy-wasting decorative feature into a genuine heating appliance that can meaningfully warm your Calgary home during our brutal winters.

Your current open masonry fireplace operates at dismal efficiency because most of the heat goes straight up the chimney along with the heated air from your home. In Calgary's extreme cold, an open fireplace actually creates a net heat loss — it pulls warm air from your living space and sends it outside while drawing cold outdoor air into your home through gaps and cracks. During a -25°C January cold snap, running an open fireplace can actually make your furnace work harder.

A gas insert completely changes this equation. Modern gas inserts use sealed combustion with a glass front, so they don't pull heated air from your room. Instead, they draw combustion air from outside through a flexible liner system installed in your existing chimney. The sealed firebox captures and radiates heat into your living space rather than sending it up the flue. A quality gas insert producing 25,000-35,000 BTU can effectively heat 800-1,200 square feet in a well-insulated Calgary home — enough to reduce your furnace load and provide comfortable zone heating in your main living areas.

The efficiency difference becomes especially meaningful during Calgary's six-month heating season. At current ATCO Gas rates of approximately \$3.50-\$5.00 per GJ, running a gas insert costs roughly \$0.75-\$1.25 per hour of operation. While your open fireplace burns the same amount of gas or uses seasoned firewood, virtually none of that energy heats your home effectively. The gas insert captures 70-85% of the combustion energy as usable heat.

Installation involves sliding the insert into your existing firebox and connecting it to a flexible aluminum or stainless steel liner that runs up your existing chimney. This requires a gas permit from the City of Calgary, gas line connection by a licensed gas fitter, and Safety Codes Officer inspection. Total project cost typically runs \$2,500-\$5,500 including the insert, liner system, gas line work, and installation labor.

Before installing any insert, have your chimney inspected for structural integrity, proper draft, and liner condition. Calgary's freeze-thaw cycles and chinook temperature swings can crack chimney crowns and deteriorate mortar joints, which must be repaired before liner installation.

The efficiency upgrade pays for itself through reduced heating costs and transforms your fireplace from a decorative liability into a functional heating asset that provides real value during Calgary's long, cold winters.

Need help finding a fireplace installer? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local contractors who specialize in gas insert installations and chimney liner systems.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Keystone Exteriors
- UR COWRY CABINETS
- Premium Built Structures
- Dealtwith.

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Q17

How much does a wood-burning insert cost compared to a gas insert in Calgary?

Wood-burning inserts typically cost \$3,000-\$6,000 installed in Calgary, while gas inserts run \$2,500-\$5,500 installed. The initial purchase price is similar, but wood inserts require more expensive installation work due to WETT certification requirements and full stainless steel chimney liner systems.

Wood Insert Costs and Requirements

A quality wood-burning insert from brands like Napoleon, Regency, or Pacific Energy costs \$2,000-\$4,000 for the unit itself. Installation adds \$1,000-\$2,000 and requires a WETT-certified installer — essential for insurance compliance in Alberta. The biggest cost factor is the chimney liner system. Wood inserts need a full stainless steel liner from the insert to the chimney top, typically costing \$800-\$1,500 depending on chimney height and condition. If your existing masonry chimney needs structural repair or crown work, add another \$1,000-\$3,000.

Wood inserts operate at 70-80% efficiency compared to 10-15% for open masonry fireplaces, making them excellent heating appliances during Calgary's brutal winters. A properly sized insert can heat 1,500-2,500 square feet and provides heat during power outages — valuable when temperatures drop to -30°C. However, you'll need to buy, store, and handle seasoned firewood, plus commit to annual chimney sweeping at \$200-\$300.

Gas Insert Costs and Convenience

Gas inserts cost \$1,500-\$3,500 for the unit, with installation running \$1,000-\$2,000. They require a flexible aluminum or stainless steel liner (less expensive than wood systems) plus a gas line connection by a licensed gas fitter. You'll need a gas permit from the City of Calgary and Safety Codes Officer inspection, adding \$100-\$200 in permit fees.

Gas inserts offer 70-85% efficiency with instant on/off convenience and precise temperature control. At current ATCO Gas rates of \$3.50-\$5.00 per GJ, operating costs run roughly \$0.50-\$1.00 per hour — significantly cheaper than electric heating. Modern gas inserts produce realistic flame effects and require only annual maintenance at \$150-\$250.

Calgary Climate Considerations

Calgary's extreme cold and six-month heating season make both insert types genuinely functional heating appliances, not just decorative features. However, **chinook winds create unique challenges for wood-burning systems** — rapid temperature and pressure changes can cause backdrafting issues that require wind-directional chimney caps or dampers. Gas inserts are less affected by chinook events since they use sealed combustion systems.

For most Calgary homeowners, **gas inserts offer better value** — lower installation costs, no fuel storage requirements, cleaner operation, and immunity to chinook-related draft problems. Wood inserts appeal to those who prioritize the authentic fire experience and want backup heating during power outages.

Need help finding a fireplace installer? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local contractors who specialize in insert installations and can assess your existing chimney condition to provide accurate project quotes.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Eshine Cleaning Services
- Mr & Mrs Paintastic Inc
- Mike's Restoration Service
- True North Overhead Doors

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Is it worth putting a gas insert in my old masonry fireplace in Calgary?

Yes, a gas insert is typically an excellent investment for Calgary homeowners with existing masonry fireplaces. You'll transform a 10-15% efficient masonry fireplace into a 70-85% efficient heating appliance that provides meaningful supplemental heat during Calgary's brutal winters, while keeping your existing chimney and hearth.

The efficiency gain alone makes gas inserts compelling in Calgary's climate. Traditional masonry fireplaces are notoriously inefficient — most of the heat goes straight up the chimney while cold air gets sucked into your home through the damper. During Calgary's -25°C to -35°C cold snaps that can last for weeks, an open masonry fireplace actually makes your furnace work harder. A quality gas insert producing 25,000-35,000 BTU will provide real zone heating for your main living area, reducing strain on your furnace and lowering your overall heating costs.

ATCO Gas rates make operating costs very reasonable at approximately \$3.50-\$5.00 per GJ, meaning you'll spend roughly \$0.50-\$1.00 per hour to run a gas insert — significantly cheaper than electric baseboard heating. With Calgary's six-month heating season from October through April, a gas insert gets heavy use and pays for itself through energy savings and increased comfort. Many Calgary homeowners find they can lower their whole-house thermostat by 2-3 degrees and maintain comfort in their main living space with zone heating from the insert.

Installation requires chimney inspection and likely a flexible liner. Most older Calgary masonry chimneys need a new aluminum or stainless steel flexible liner to safely vent a gas insert — the original clay tile liner may be cracked from decades of freeze-thaw cycles and chinook temperature swings. Budget \$2,500-\$5,500 total for a quality gas insert installation including the liner, gas line connection, and gas permit. Popular brands in Calgary include Napoleon, Regency, and Valor.

Chimney condition is critical before proceeding. Calgary's extreme weather is particularly hard on masonry chimneys — chinook winds cause rapid temperature changes that crack mortar joints and crowns faster than normal seasonal cycling. Have a qualified fireplace contractor inspect your chimney structure, flue condition, and damper operation before committing to an insert. If major chimney repairs are needed (crown replacement, extensive tuckpointing, structural issues), the total project cost might approach that of a new direct-vent gas fireplace installation.

The gas permit and Safety Codes Officer inspection are mandatory for any gas appliance installation in Calgary. Your contractor will handle the permit application, but factor \$100-\$200 for permit fees into your budget. The gas line connection must be done by a licensed gas fitter, and the completed installation requires inspection before you can operate the unit.

Consider your long-term plans for the home. Gas inserts are excellent for homeowners planning to stay put for several years and wanting to maximize their existing fireplace investment. If you're planning major renovations or questioning the chimney's structural integrity, a new direct-vent gas fireplace might offer more flexibility in placement and venting options.

Need help finding a fireplace installer? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local contractors who specialize in gas insert installations and chimney assessments for a free estimate on your project.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Turnbull masonry
- Royland Stucco
- G.D.K Drywall LTD.
- Amar Homes Inc

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Can I control a gas insert with a wall thermostat in my Calgary home?

Yes, most modern gas fireplace inserts can be controlled with a wall thermostat, giving you automatic temperature control just like your furnace. This is one of the most popular upgrades Calgary homeowners make to their gas inserts because it transforms the fireplace from a manual-operation appliance into a true zone heating system.

Thermostat compatibility depends on your specific gas insert model and control system. Most gas inserts manufactured in the last 15 years have either a built-in thermostat receiver or can accept an optional thermostat module. The thermostat connects through low-voltage wiring (24V) — the same type used for furnace thermostats — and communicates with the insert's gas valve to cycle the burner on and off based on room temperature.

For Calgary's extreme winter conditions, a wall thermostat makes exceptional sense. During those -25°C to -35°C cold snaps that can last for days, you can set the thermostat to maintain 22°C in your living room while your main furnace handles the rest of the house. This provides consistent comfort in the room you use most while reducing strain on your furnace. Many Calgary homeowners set their main thermostat 2-3 degrees lower and rely on the gas insert to heat their primary living space — a strategy that can reduce overall heating costs given ATCO Gas rates of \$3.50-\$5.00 per GJ.

Installation requires running thermostat wire from the insert to your desired wall location. This is straightforward new construction but requires fishing wire through walls in existing homes. The thermostat wire is low-voltage and doesn't require an electrical permit, but the gas insert itself still needs a gas permit and Safety Codes Officer inspection if you're installing a new unit. Most fireplace contractors can handle the thermostat wiring as part of the insert installation.

Programmable and smart thermostats add even more convenience. You can program the insert to automatically warm the living room before you wake up, maintain temperature while you're home, and reduce heat when you're at work or sleeping. Some smart thermostats integrate with home automation systems, allowing you to control your fireplace remotely — useful for warming the house before you arrive home during Calgary's long winter commute.

Existing gas inserts can often be retrofitted with thermostat control. If your current insert doesn't have thermostat capability, a fireplace technician can usually install a thermostat module during your annual service. This upgrade typically costs \$200-\$400 including the thermostat and installation.

One important consideration for Calgary homes: Make sure your thermostat is positioned away from other heat sources and drafts. Chinook winds can create temperature fluctuations near windows and exterior walls that might

cause the thermostat to cycle the insert incorrectly. The ideal location is on an interior wall at standard height (about 5 feet) in the room where you want temperature control.

Need help finding a fireplace contractor to install thermostat control on your gas insert? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local professionals who specialize in gas fireplace upgrades and retrofits.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- WestAim Construction Ltd.
- Alpine Exteriors siding and roofing
- Amar Homes Inc
- Greenstone landscaping solutions

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Q20

Can a gas insert heat my Calgary basement from an existing upstairs fireplace?

A gas insert installed in an upstairs fireplace will provide minimal heating to your basement — heat rises naturally, so most of the warmth will stay on the main floor and upper levels rather than flowing downward to heat basement spaces.

Gas inserts are designed for zone heating, meaning they effectively heat the room where they're installed plus adjacent open areas on the same level. A typical gas insert producing 25,000-35,000 BTU can comfortably heat 800-1,200 square feet of open-concept main floor space during Calgary's winter months. However, expecting that same unit to push meaningful heat down to a basement goes against basic physics — warm air rises and cold air sinks, so your basement will remain the coolest area of your home regardless of how powerful your upstairs gas insert is.

For basement heating in Calgary's climate, you need a dedicated heating solution in the basement itself.

The most practical options include a separate electric fireplace (no venting required, can be installed anywhere with electrical access), a direct-vent gas fireplace if you can run gas line and vent through the basement wall, or improving your home's overall heating system with better ductwork, a heat pump, or zone-controlled HVAC. Many

Calgary homeowners find that a wall-mounted electric fireplace in the basement family room provides excellent zone heating at approximately \$0.15-\$0.25 per hour of operation — more expensive than natural gas but far more targeted than trying to heat the basement from two floors up.

Calgary's extreme winter temperatures make basement heating particularly important since unheated basements can drop to 5-10°C during extended -30°C cold snaps, creating comfort issues and potential pipe freezing concerns. An upstairs gas insert, while excellent for main floor heating and reducing your furnace load, simply cannot overcome the thermal dynamics that keep basements cooler. The long heating season from October through April means you'll want reliable, controllable heat in whatever basement spaces you actually use.

If you're considering a gas insert for your existing upstairs fireplace, it's still an excellent investment for main floor heating efficiency — transforming a 10-15% efficient masonry fireplace into a 70-85% efficient heating appliance that can meaningfully reduce your ATCO Gas furnace costs during Calgary's long winter. Just plan for separate basement heating rather than expecting the insert to heat multiple levels. Installation requires a flexible gas line connection, aluminum or stainless steel chimney liner, and a gas permit with Safety Codes Officer inspection.

Need help finding a fireplace installer for either an upstairs gas insert or a dedicated basement fireplace solution? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local contractors who understand Calgary's heating challenges and can recommend the most effective approach for your specific home layout.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- The Original Workshop
- WestAim Construction Ltd.
- G.D.K Drywall LTD.
- Mr & Mrs Paintastic Inc

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Q21

How much heat does a gas fireplace insert produce compared to an open fireplace?

A gas fireplace insert produces dramatically more usable heat than an open masonry fireplace — typically 70-85% efficiency versus just 10-15% for an open fireplace. This means a gas insert can deliver 4-6 times more heat to your room from the same amount of energy input.

Heat Output Comparison

An open masonry fireplace is essentially a decorative feature that actually removes more heat from your home than it provides. Most of the heat goes straight up the chimney along with massive amounts of your home's warm air — up to 300 cubic feet per minute gets sucked out of your house and replaced by cold outdoor air. During Calgary's -25°C winter nights, an open fireplace can actually make your furnace work harder to maintain comfortable temperatures.

A gas insert transforms that same firebox into a genuine heating appliance. **Most gas inserts produce 20,000-35,000 BTU of heat output**, which is enough to comfortably heat 800-1,200 square feet depending on your home's insulation and ceiling height. The sealed combustion system draws air from outside for burning and uses a fan to circulate room air over the heat exchanger, delivering warm air back into your living space instead of up the chimney.

Calgary Climate Benefits

In Calgary's extreme winter conditions, this efficiency difference becomes critically important. A quality gas insert can provide meaningful supplemental heat during those extended cold snaps when outdoor temperatures stay below -20°C for days. **At current ATCO Gas rates of approximately \$3.50-\$5.00 per GJ, running a gas insert costs roughly \$0.75-\$1.25 per hour** — significantly cheaper than electric baseboard heating and far more effective than burning wood in an open fireplace.

The sealed combustion also eliminates the draft problems that plague open fireplaces during Calgary's chinook events, when rapid pressure changes can cause smoke backdrafting into your home.

Installation Requirements

Converting from an open fireplace to a gas insert requires a **flexible aluminum or stainless steel liner** installed up your existing chimney (\$800-\$1,500), a gas line connection by a licensed gas fitter, and a gas permit from the City of Calgary. The existing damper is typically sealed, and the insert vents through the new liner system. Total project cost typically ranges **\$2,500-\$5,500 installed**, depending on the insert model, liner requirements, and gas line distance.

Professional Installation Essential

This conversion requires a licensed gas fitter and gas permit — never attempt DIY gas line work. The Safety Codes Officer inspection ensures proper venting, gas connections, and clearances. Many Calgary homeowners also

appreciate that quality gas inserts continue operating during power outages if equipped with a standing pilot or battery backup system.

Need help finding a qualified fireplace contractor for your insert project? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local professionals who specialize in fireplace conversions and understand Calgary's specific installation requirements.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Dealtwith.
- PLATINUM Pool & Spa Services Ltd
- Radon Lab
- Onsite Contracting and Electrical Services

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Do I need a gas permit for a fireplace insert installation in Calgary?

Yes, you absolutely need a gas permit for any gas fireplace insert installation in Calgary. This is a legal requirement under the Alberta Building Code, and the work must be performed by a licensed gas fitter who will obtain the permit and arrange for the mandatory Safety Codes Officer inspection.

Gas permits are required for all gas appliance installations in Calgary, including gas fireplace inserts that slide into existing masonry fireplaces. The permit covers the gas line connection to the insert, the flexible aluminum or stainless steel liner that runs up your existing chimney, and the overall installation to ensure it meets Alberta safety standards. The gas fitter will typically handle obtaining the permit as part of their service, but you should confirm this when getting quotes.

The permit process involves several steps: First, your licensed gas fitter applies for the gas permit from the City of Calgary (permit fees are typically \$100-\$200). They complete the installation work including connecting the gas line to the insert, installing the chimney liner, and ensuring proper clearances and venting. Finally, a certified Safety Codes Officer inspects the completed work to verify gas connections, venting integrity, clearances from combustible materials, and overall code compliance. Only after passing inspection can you legally operate your new gas insert.

Calgary's extreme winter conditions make proper installation critical — your gas insert will likely run for 4-6 months of heavy use during the heating season, accumulating far more operating hours than fireplaces in milder climates. A properly permitted and inspected installation ensures safe operation during those long Calgary winters when you're relying on the insert for supplemental heat during -25°C to -35°C cold snaps.

Skipping the gas permit creates serious risks: unpermitted gas work is a safety hazard that could cause gas leaks or carbon monoxide poisoning, your home insurance may not cover damage from unpermitted work, and unpermitted installations will be flagged during home inspections if you sell your property. The permit and inspection process typically adds only 1-2 days to your project timeline but provides essential safety verification.

When getting quotes from fireplace contractors, confirm that they will handle the gas permit process and that the quoted price includes permit fees and the Safety Codes Officer inspection. A reputable installer will automatically include permitting as part of their service — if someone suggests skipping the permit to save money, find a different contractor immediately.

Need help finding a licensed fireplace installer who handles permits properly? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local professionals who follow Alberta Building Code requirements and handle the permitting process correctly.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Dealtwith.
- Keystone Exteriors
- Calgary Garage Builders Ltd
- New Earth Waste Services Ltd

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Can I install a gas insert in a zero-clearance fireplace in my Calgary home?

Yes, you can install a gas insert in a zero-clearance fireplace, but it requires specific considerations for the existing firebox construction and venting system. Zero-clearance fireplaces are factory-built metal units designed to be installed close to combustible materials, and they can accommodate gas inserts with proper sizing and installation.

Understanding Zero-Clearance Fireplace Conversion

Zero-clearance fireplaces (also called factory-built or prefab fireplaces) are different from traditional masonry fireplaces. They consist of a metal firebox with insulated walls that allow installation directly against wood framing. When converting to a gas insert, the existing metal firebox becomes the housing for the new gas unit. The key is ensuring the gas insert fits properly within the existing firebox dimensions and that the venting system can be adapted or replaced.

Most zero-clearance fireplaces in Calgary homes were originally designed for wood burning and have a Class A insulated chimney system. For gas insert installation, you'll typically need to install a flexible aluminum liner down the existing chimney to properly vent the gas unit. This liner connects the gas insert to the top of the chimney and ensures safe exhaust of combustion gases. The existing damper is usually removed or permanently opened during this conversion.

Calgary-Specific Installation Requirements

In Calgary, converting a zero-clearance fireplace to gas requires a gas permit from the City of Calgary and installation by a licensed gas fitter. The gas line must be run to the fireplace location, which may involve running

pipe through the basement or crawl space. A Safety Codes Officer will inspect the completed installation to verify proper gas connections, venting, and clearances before approving the work.

The installation cost typically ranges from \$2,500 to \$5,500, including the gas insert unit, flexible liner, gas line connection, and labor. Popular gas insert brands for Calgary installations include Napoleon, Regency, and Valor, which offer units specifically designed to fit standard zero-clearance fireboxes. These inserts typically provide 20,000-35,000 BTU of heat output, making them excellent supplemental heating during Calgary's long winter season when temperatures regularly drop below -25°C.

Practical Considerations and Professional Requirements

Before proceeding, have a qualified fireplace professional inspect your existing zero-clearance unit to assess the firebox condition and chimney system. Some older zero-clearance fireplaces may have deteriorated fireboxes or damaged chimney components that need repair before gas insert installation. The inspection should also verify that your existing chimney height and termination meet current Alberta Building Code requirements for gas appliance venting.

Never attempt this conversion as a DIY project. Gas line work must be performed by a licensed gas fitter, and the chimney liner installation requires specific knowledge of venting requirements and clearances. Improper installation can result in carbon monoxide poisoning, gas leaks, or fire hazards. Additionally, unpermitted gas work creates insurance liability and will be flagged during future home inspections.

Need help finding a qualified fireplace installer for your zero-clearance conversion? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local gas insert specialists who understand Calgary's specific requirements and climate considerations.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Wise Abatement
- Mike's Restoration Service
- Mr & Mrs Paintastic Inc
- Jk Stucco

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Information is current as of May 10, 2026 and may change. Visit calgaryfireplaces.com for the latest answers.