

2026 Community Wood Smoke Reduction Program

Program Guidelines

Updated January 31, 2026

Program Background

The Cowichan Valley Community Wood Smoke Reduction Program (the Program) is funded by the BC Lung Association (BC Lung) and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (ENV). The program provides financial assistance to replace or remove old wood-burning appliances to reduce smoke pollution and improve air quality on a first come, first serve basis.

Program Objective

The goal of the Program is to improve local air quality by **reducing wood smoke** and thereby fine particulate matter that is smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM_{2.5}). According to the BC Lung Association, communities within the Cowichan Valley rank among the 20 worst polluters in British Columbia for PM_{2.5} emissions.

Health Impacts

Because of its small size, PM_{2.5} can bypass our bodies' natural defenses and travel deep into our lungs. It can then cause structural damage and chemical changes that lead to a range of lung and heart diseases. Data from Island Health indicates that **hospital admission rates for children with respiratory disease average 70% higher in the Cowichan Valley** than in other places in the province. In addition, **chronic respiratory illnesses for people over age 45 are 50% more common** in the Cowichan Valley than in BC as a whole.

How the 2026 Program Works

The 2026 Program commences March 2, 2026, and concludes November 30, 2026. Like last year, the 2026 Program offers two types of incentives for replacing AND removing wood-burning appliances with the Wood-Burning Appliance Exchange Program and the Wood-Burning Appliance Bounty Program.

Wood-Burning Appliance Exchange Program

The Wood-Burning Appliance Exchange Program offers financial incentives for replacing wood-burning appliances with more fuel-efficient and healthier-heating appliances (for more details, see the replacement matrix in Appendix B of this Guide).

Replacement Incentives:

- **Heat Pump: \$2,150 total**
 - Replacing a wood-burning appliance with a heat pump.
 - \$2,000 is provided by the CVRD and a \$150 discount should be offered by participating retailers.
- **Pellet Appliance: \$1,550**
 - Replacing a wood-burning appliance with an EPA- or CSA-certified pellet stove or pellet boiler.

- \$1,500 is provided by the CVRD and a \$50 discount should be offered by participating retailers.
- **Wood-Burning Appliance: \$650 total**
 - Replacing an uncertified wood-burning appliance; or, an EPA- or CSA-certified wood stove that is at least 5 years old for an EPA-certified wood stove.
 - \$600 is provided by the CVRD and a \$50 discount should be offered by participating retailers.

Rebate Conditions:

1. Only one (1) CVRD rebate is permitted per taxable residence per year.
2. **Rebates are offered on a first-come, first-served basis.** The CVRD will issue a tracking number to secure a rebate, subject to satisfaction of program requirements. To secure a rebate, please reach out to environment@cvrld.bc.ca
3. For the homeowner to qualify:
 - a. The homeowner must live within the Cowichan Valley; and,
 - b. The wood-burning appliance being replaced must presently be used as the primary heating source in a residential home. To learn what appliances are eligible in the program, see Appendix A.
4. Retailers are authorized to sign off on each requirement listed in the Program brochure. The retailer must confirm the following to the CVRD:
 - a. The purchase and proper installation of the new heating appliance by providing an invoice marked "Paid" showing:
 - i. The homeowner's name and address;
 - ii. The make and model of the heating appliance being purchased (provide the AHRI number for heat pumps) and the model of the woodstove being removed;
 - iii. The name, signature and certification of the retailer's Wood Energy Technology Transfer (WETT) Technician certifying that the old woodstove has been removed and that the new heating unit has been installed and is functioning properly; and,
 - iv. A photo of the new heating appliance installed at the homeowner's house. If the new appliance is a heat pump, a photo of the outdoor unit should be provided.
5. Disposal of the old appliance:
 - a. Residents installing a new heat pump may have the option to keep the old wood-burning appliance if:
 - i. The existing wood stove is EPA- or CSA-certified and is currently in use.
 - ii. The applicant signs a [Clean Burning Pledge](#) to use the wood stove only in specific conditions (e.g. power outages) and apply clean-burning practices.
 - b. If the applicant is exchanging an old wood-burning appliance for a new wood-burning appliance, or does not meet these criteria, the wood-burning appliance must be permanently disabled and dropped off at a CVRD Recycling Centre.
 - i. Note that the Program brochure must be signed off by a CVRD recycling attendant and returned to the retailer and that before the woodstove is dropped off for recycling, the woodstove must be permanently disabled by completing the following steps:
 1. Remove the ash and brick liner;

2. Remove the doors and bludgeon the door hinges; and,
 3. Bludgeon the flue collar.
 - ii. The retailer may render the homeowner's old wood-burning appliance unusable by carrying out the steps listed above. If the retailer provides this service, it must ensure that the Program brochure has been signed off by a CVRD recycling attendant and recycled as a Program requirement.
 - iii. If the homeowner wants to deliver the old woodstove to a CVRD Recycling Centre themselves, the homeowner must provide the retailer with a copy of the CVRD Program brochure signed off by a CVRD recycling attendant.
6. All applicants are required to complete the [Program survey](#).
7. Application deadline:
 - a. To qualify for the rebate, the homeowner must ensure that the purchase, installation and inspection of the new appliance and the disposal of the old appliance takes place between March 2, 2026, and November 30, 2026.
 - b. Incomplete applications or applications received after the deadline will not be eligible for a rebate.
 - c. Personal information supplied by you on the application form is collected under the authority of [s. 26 \(c\)](#) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, (the *Act*). Personal information collected, (name, mailing address, contact number/email), will be used for the purpose of rebate distribution to eligible applicants and may be shared with the province in conjunction with the [Community Wood Smoke Reduction Program Participant Survey](#). By submitting this form you consent to the release of your personal information pursuant to [s. 33 \(2\) \(c\)](#) of the *Act*. If you have concerns regarding the collection, use or disclosure of your personal information please contact the CVRD Information & Privacy Officer by [email](#), phone: 250.746.2500 or toll free at: 1.800.665.3955 during regular business hours, 8 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday to Friday, excluding statutory holidays.

Additional Rebate Conditions for Homeowners Exchanging an Old Wood-Burning Appliance for a New Wood-Burning Appliance

1. Homeowners must ensure the new wood-burning appliance meets one of the following emissions standards:
 - a. EPA 2020
 - b. CSA 64515.1
 - c. For more information about applicable exchanges, see the replacement matrix in Appendix A.
2. Complete the [online wood smoke education course](#) and submit a certificate of completion with their rebate application. The course takes 40 - 60 minutes to complete and was developed by the Fraser Basin Council in support of ENV.

Wood-Burning Appliance Bounty Program

The CVRD is providing a separate incentive for residents to remove existing non-EPA or CSA-certified wood-burning appliances without installing new heating appliances. The \$300 one-time incentive is limited to one appliance per household.

Rebate Conditions

To be eligible for the rebate, applicants must:

1. Remove an existing operational wood-burning appliance that is older than 2005 and is non-EPA or CSA certified. To learn what appliances are eligible for the program, see Appendix A.
2. Provide “before” photos that demonstrate that the appliance was operational. Uninstalled appliances are not eligible.
3. Permanently disable and provide “after” photos of the old wood-burning appliance before dropping it off for recycling at a CVRD Recycling Centre. Disable the old wood-burning appliance by:
 - a. Removing the doors and bludgeoning the hinges
 - b. Removing the ash and brick liner
 - c. Bludgeoning the flue collar
4. Get the application signed off by a CVRD Recycling Attendant.
5. All applications must be completed and submitted by November 30, 2026. Incomplete applications or those received after the deadline will not be eligible for a rebate.

Information for Retailers

To participate in the Wood Smoke Reduction Program, the retailer must:

1. Advertise over and above what the CVRD does to promote the Program;
2. Work with the CVRD to distribute educational and promotional materials about the Program (the CVRD may share Program posters and social media messages) and;
3. Sign the registration form acknowledging that the retailer and the retailer’s staff have read and understood the program guidelines and pledge to ensure that the old woodstoves are destroyed and paperwork is completed in a timely fashion.

Appendix A

Old Wood Burning Appliances that Qualify for Rebate:

- ✓ A free-standing non-EPA- or non-CSA-certified “stove”
- ✓ An EPA- or CSA-certified stove that is at least (5) years old
- ✓ A “homemade” or “barrel’ stove
- ✓ An outdoor wood boiler
- ✓ An “airtight” non-EPA- or non-CSA-certified fireplace insert or tube-type heat exchanger with a faceplate and door (like the ‘Free Heat Machine’ or Welenco) that is currently installed in an open-hearth fireplace
- ✓ A non-EPA- or non-CSA-certified “wood furnace” (ducted, forced air, home heating appliance) - may only be replaced by an EPA- or CSA-certified wood furnace or pellet furnace or a non-polluting option such as a heat pump
- ✓ A wood-burning cookstove

Ineligible Replacement Appliances:

- ✗ New inserts to an existing open-hearth fireplace that do NOT currently have inserts installed in them (a replacement of an existing wood appliance must take place).
- ✗ Electric stoves or fireplaces.
- ✗ Factory-built (“zero clearance”) fireplaces.
- ✗ Outdoor appliances (replacement unit must be installed in an area with four (4) walls, ceiling and a door).
- ✗ Tin heaters/tent stoves - something NOT used in a residential application.

Learn more about this incentive program [here](#).

Appendix B

Community Wood Smoke Reduction Program Replacement Matrix

| Old Wood Burning Appliance to be Replaced | New Heating Appliance Options |
|--|--|
| Wood Stove – freestanding, uncertified ⁱ , homemade or barrel | Electric heat pump ⁱⁱ 2020 EPA ⁱⁱⁱ or CSA ^{iv} -certified wood stove or insert 2020 EPA or CSA-certified pellet stove or insert |
| Wood Stove – CSA- or EPA-certified but at least 5 years old | Electric heat pump 2020 EPA or CSA-certified wood stove or insert 2020 EPA or CSA-certified pellet stove or insert |
| Wood-Burning Insert - uncertified and installed in an open hearth | Electric heat pump Electric fireplace insert ^v 2020 EPA or CSA-certified wood insert 2020 EPA or CSA-certified pellet insert |
| Wood-Burning Furnace - uncertified | Electric heat pump 2020 EPA or CSA-certified wood or pellet furnace 2020 EPA or CSA-certified wood stove 2020 EPA or CSA-certified pellet stove |
| Wood Cookstove | Electric heat pump 2020 EPA or CSA-certified wood stove 2020 EPA or CSA-certified pellet stove 2020 EPA-certified cookstove |
| Pellet Stove – CSA- or EPA-certified but over 5 years old | Heat pump |
| Open Hearth Fireplace | Electric fireplace insert |
| Outdoor Wood Boiler | Electric heat pump 2020 EPA- or CSA-certified pellet stove |

ⁱ **Uncertified** means an appliance without emissions certification from the CSA or the EPA. Uncertified appliances may have safety certification from the CSA, ULC and/or other certification bodies.

ⁱⁱ **Electric heat pump** means a heat pump that meets the criteria for [BC's Home Renovation Rebate and Efficiency BC Program](#).

ⁱⁱⁱ **EPA certified** means an appliance that is certified to meet the latest emissions levels of the [EPA NSPS for Wood Heaters \(currently 2020\)](#). More information on the NSPS is found [here](#).

^{iv} **CSA-certified** means an appliance that meets the latest emission limits of the CSA B415.1 standard. There is no central repository or database of appliances that meet this standard. B415.1 should not be confused with other CSA standards for safety/installation/construction. The CSA certification is currently being updated.

^v **Electric fireplace** insert refers to an electric fireplace that is not freestanding and is designed only to be installed and operated in an existing open-hearth fireplace.

^{vi} Most **cook stoves** are exempt appliances that do not meet EPA or CSA emission levels. These may not be installed as qualifying replacement appliances. However, there are now some EPA-certified appliances on the market that are designed and marketed as cook stoves.