TORONTO BATH REMODELING

Condo Bathroom Renovations

Condo-specific bathroom renovation constraints including stack plumbing, noise bylaws, elevator booking, building management approval, and high-rise logistics

18 Expert Answers from Bathroom IQ

torontobathremodeling.com/construction-brain

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Q1

Is it possible to add an in-floor drain to a condo bathroom that currently only has a tub drain?

Adding an in-floor drain to a condo bathroom is technically possible but involves significant challenges and costs that make it impractical in most GTA condo situations. The biggest obstacle is that condo bathrooms have shared plumbing stacks with carefully engineered drain connections, and adding a new floor drain requires tying into the existing drainage system below your unit's floor slab.

The technical requirements for a new floor drain are substantial. The drain must connect to your unit's existing waste line or the building's main stack, which typically means breaking through the concrete floor slab to access the plumbing below. In most GTA condos built after 1990, the bathroom floor is a concrete slab with the plumbing rough-in cast in place during construction. Adding a new drain connection requires core drilling through this slab and connecting to the waste line that serves your toilet and tub — a complex job requiring professional assessment of the existing plumbing layout.

Condo corporation approval is mandatory for this type of work and often the biggest hurdle. Most condo boards require engineering drawings, structural assessments, and detailed plans before approving any work that affects the building's plumbing infrastructure or structural elements. The approval process alone can take 6-12 weeks and cost $2,000-$5,000 in engineering fees, architectural drawings, and application costs before any actual work begins. Some condo corporations have blanket policies against floor penetrations or modifications to shared plumbing systems.

The waterproofing implications are critical in a condo setting. Adding a floor drain means creating a sloped floor that directs water to the drain location — this typically requires building up the floor with a lightweight concrete or mortar bed, then applying a complete waterproof membrane system over the entire bathroom floor. Any waterproofing failure in a condo affects the unit below, creating liability issues and potentially expensive damage claims. The waterproofing must extend up the walls to create a "bathtub" effect that contains any water within your unit.

Cost considerations make floor drain additions expensive in condo bathrooms. Expect $8,000-$15,000 for the complete project including engineering approval, core drilling, plumbing connections, floor slope creation, waterproofing, and tile installation. This doesn't include potential costs for repairing the unit below if water damage occurs during construction, or the logistics costs of working in a condo (elevator booking, material delivery restrictions, noise bylaw compliance).

Alternative solutions are often more practical for condo bathrooms. If you're concerned about water containment during shower use, consider a **curbless shower with a linear drain** integrated into the shower area itself rather

than a separate floor drain. Linear drains like Schluter Kerdi-Line or similar systems can be installed during a shower renovation without affecting the main bathroom floor or requiring building approvals. A **shower niche with bench seating** can also improve water management while staying within the existing plumbing footprint.

When floor drains make sense in condos is primarily during complete gut renovations where you're already breaking through the floor slab for other plumbing modifications, or in luxury buildings where the original construction included rough-in provisions for optional floor drains. Some high-end GTA condos built after 2010 have capped floor drain rough-ins that can be activated during renovation.

Professional assessment is essential before pursuing this project. A licensed plumber familiar with condo plumbing systems needs to evaluate your specific unit's drainage layout, determine connection feasibility, and provide cost estimates. The plumber should also coordinate with your condo management to understand the approval requirements and any building-specific restrictions on plumbing modifications.

For most GTA condo bathroom renovations, focusing on proper shower waterproofing, adequate ventilation, and quality tile installation provides better water management results at a fraction of the cost and complexity of adding a floor drain.

Q2

Do I need condo board approval to renovate my bathroom in a Toronto condo?

Yes — virtually every Toronto condo requires board or property management approval before you can start a bathroom renovation, and starting work without approval can result in stop-work orders, fines, and even legal action from the condominium corporation. The approval process varies by building but typically involves submitting renovation plans, contractor documentation, insurance certificates, and paying a deposit before receiving permission to begin.

This is one of the most important things GTA condo owners need to understand about bathroom renovations: **your timeline starts with the approval process, not with choosing tile or hiring a contractor.** In many Toronto condo buildings, the approval process takes **2–6 weeks**, and some buildings have renovation blackout periods, seasonal restrictions, or waiting lists for construction elevator access.

What You Need to Submit

Most Toronto condo corporations require the following documents before approving a bathroom renovation:

- **Renovation application form** — the building's standard form detailing the scope of work, estimated timeline, and areas affected. Your property management office (Brookfield, FirstService, Del, Crossbridge, or whichever company manages your building) will provide this
- **Detailed scope of work** — a written description or drawings showing exactly what is being changed. For bathrooms, this must specify whether plumbing is being relocated, drains modified, or walls removed. Any work affecting the building's **shared plumbing stack** or structural elements will trigger additional engineering review requirements
- **Contractor insurance certificates** — your contractor must provide proof of **commercial general liability insurance** (typically $2–$5 million minimum depending on the building) and **WSIB clearance certificates** for all workers. Many Toronto condos will not accept a contractor without these documents
- **Renovation deposit** — typically **$1,000–$5,000** (refundable upon satisfactory completion and inspection). This protects the building against damage to common areas during the renovation. Some buildings also charge a **non-refundable administration fee** of $200–$500
- **Working hours agreement** — most Toronto condos restrict construction to **Monday–Friday, 9 AM to 5 PM**, with some allowing **Saturday work from 10 AM to 4 PM**. No work on Sundays or statutory holidays. Demolition and noisy work may be further restricted to specific hours. Violating noise hours leads to complaints, fines, and potential stop-work orders

Plumbing Stack Considerations

Bathroom renovations in Toronto condos involve unique plumbing challenges because your bathroom shares a **vertical plumbing stack** with every unit above and below you. The drain stack, vent stack, and sometimes the supply lines are common elements owned by the corporation, not the individual unit owner.

If your renovation involves **any modification to drain connections, vent connections, or supply line connections** to the stack, most condo boards will require a **licensed plumber's engineered plan** and may require a **plumbing engineer's review**. Some buildings require the unit owner to hire the building's preferred plumber for any stack-related work. This is to protect the entire building — a botched drain connection in one unit can cause leaks, sewer backups, or pressure problems in multiple other units.

Cosmetic renovations that do not touch the plumbing stack — replacing tile, vanity, toilet (in the same location), fixtures, lighting, and paint — generally receive faster approval because the risk to common elements is minimal. However, approval is still required even for cosmetic work because of noise, debris, and common area usage (elevators, hallways).

Elevator and Access Logistics

Materials for a bathroom renovation — tile, vanity, tub, cement board, thinset — must come through the building's **service elevator**. Most Toronto condos require you to **book the service elevator in advance** at a cost of **$200–$500 per booking**, with specific delivery windows (often 2-hour blocks). Your contractor needs to coordinate material deliveries to match elevator availability, which affects scheduling and can add days to the project timeline.

Demolition debris must also leave via the service elevator. Many buildings require debris to be **bagged, sealed, and transported in covered carts** to prevent dust in hallways and elevators. Some buildings mandate that the contractor lay **floor protection (Masonite or Ram Board)** from the unit door to the elevator for the duration of the project.

Bottom Line

Start the condo approval process **4–8 weeks before you want construction to begin**. Have your contractor's insurance and WSIB documents ready, your scope of work clearly written, and your deposit cheque prepared. Working with a bathroom contractor who has experience in Toronto condo renovations makes a significant difference — they know the approval requirements, building management expectations, and logistical constraints that come with high-rise bathroom work.

Q3

Can I move the toilet or shower location in my condo unit, or am I locked into the existing plumbing stack?

In most Toronto condos, you are largely locked into the existing plumbing stack location for your toilet, but you do have some flexibility with shower and sink positioning — within limits. The plumbing stack is a shared vertical pipe that runs through every unit on your line, and it is owned and maintained by the condo corporation. Moving a toilet more than a few inches from the stack centre is extremely difficult in a condo because the toilet drain requires a 3-inch or 4-inch pipe with a minimum 1/4-inch-per-foot slope to the stack connection. In a typical Toronto condo with a concrete slab floor, there is very little depth available to create that slope over any significant distance.

The practical reality is that your toilet will almost always stay within 6 to 12 inches of its original location. Some contractors can shift a toilet slightly by using an offset flange or by carefully routing the drain within the existing slab depression, but anything beyond that typically requires cutting into the concrete slab — which most Toronto condo corporations will not approve because it affects the building's structural integrity and the waterproofing membrane between floors.

Shower and Sink Flexibility

Shower and sink drains are smaller (2-inch drain for showers, 1.25 to 1.5-inch for sinks) and need less slope, which gives you more room to reposition them. A shower can often be moved 3 to 5 feet from the original location if the contractor can route the drain with proper slope back to the stack. Some modern Toronto condos built after 2005 have a raised slab or dedicated drainage channels that make repositioning easier. Older buildings from the 1970s and 1980s typically have less flexibility because the drain routing was cast directly into the concrete.

Before planning any fixture relocation, you need to get your condo corporation's written approval. Most Toronto condo boards require a plumbing drawing prepared by a licensed plumber or engineer showing the proposed changes, and some buildings require an engineering review to confirm the work will not affect the stack or slab. This approval process can take 2 to 6 weeks and may involve a refundable deposit of $1,000 to $5,000.

Cost Considerations

Relocating plumbing in a condo bathroom adds $2,000 to $5,000 to your renovation budget compared to keeping fixtures in their original positions. The cost depends on the distance of the move, whether the slab needs to be modified, and the complexity of the drain routing. In the GTA market, a licensed plumber will charge $85 to $150 per hour for this type of work, and condo plumbing modifications typically take 2 to 4 days.

The smartest approach for most condo bathroom renovations in Toronto is to work with the existing plumbing layout and focus your budget on upgraded fixtures, quality tile work, and better waterproofing rather than fighting the building's plumbing infrastructure. If you do want to explore relocation, have a licensed plumber assess your specific unit before committing to a design — what is possible varies significantly between buildings and even between floors in the same building.

Q4

What are typical noise and construction hour restrictions for bathroom renovations in Toronto condos?

Most Toronto condo buildings restrict noisy renovation work to weekdays from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, with some buildings allowing Saturday work from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Sunday and statutory holiday work is almost universally prohibited. These hours are set by your condo corporation's rules and declaration, and they are typically stricter than the City of Toronto's general noise bylaw, which prohibits construction noise in residential areas from 7:00 PM to 7:00 AM on weekdays and from 7:00 PM to 9:00 AM on weekends.

Your condo's specific rules take priority because they govern what happens inside the building. Some newer Toronto condo buildings have even tighter restrictions — certain luxury buildings in the downtown core and waterfront limit noisy work to 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM on weekdays only, with no weekend work permitted at all. Always check your condo's declaration and rules before scheduling a bathroom renovation, because violating noise restrictions can result in fines, stop-work orders from building management, and complaints from neighbours that create lasting friction.

What Counts as "Noisy Work"

Bathroom demolition is the loudest phase of any renovation — removing old tile, breaking out a tub surround, and cutting into walls generates significant noise and vibration that travels through concrete floors and walls to adjacent and lower units. Tile cutting with a wet saw, hammer drilling for anchors, and even running an impact driver for extended periods all fall under noisy work restrictions. Quieter tasks like painting, caulking, installing hardware, and some fixture installation can typically be done outside the restricted noise hours, but confirm this with your building management.

Most Toronto condo buildings require you to notify neighbours in adjacent and lower units before starting a bathroom renovation. Some buildings handle this notification for you; others require you to deliver written notices yourself. A typical condo bathroom renovation takes 2 to 4 weeks, and your neighbours will appreciate knowing the expected timeline and the noisiest days (usually the first 2 to 3 days of demolition and the tile installation days).

Impact on Your Renovation Timeline and Cost

The restricted working hours in Toronto condos directly affect your renovation timeline and cost. Your contractor's crew can only do productive noisy work for about 7 hours per day (compared to 8 to 10 hours on a house renovation), and the setup and cleanup time required by condo buildings — protecting common hallways with floor runners, using elevator pads, and keeping the building clean — adds overhead to every workday. This is one of the reasons condo bathroom renovations in the GTA typically cost 15 to 25 percent more than equivalent renovations in

houses.

Elevator booking is another scheduling constraint. Most Toronto condo buildings require you to book the service elevator for material deliveries and debris removal, often with 48 to 72 hours advance notice. Elevator booking fees range from $200 to $500 per booking in the GTA. Your contractor should coordinate elevator bookings to consolidate material deliveries and minimize the number of bookings needed — an experienced condo renovation contractor will plan this into the project schedule from the start.

Choosing a contractor who has experience with condo renovations in Toronto is essential. They will understand the noise restrictions, elevator logistics, building management requirements, and how to plan the work sequence to maximize productivity within the allowed hours.

Q5

How do I renovate a bathroom in a 1970s Toronto high-rise without damaging the original plumbing stack?

Renovating a bathroom in a 1970s Toronto high-rise requires careful attention to the original cast iron plumbing stack, which is likely 50+ years old and may be corroded or brittle. The key principle is simple: do not touch, lean on, hang from, or apply any lateral force to the stack during demolition or construction. Cast iron stacks in buildings from that era have been subjected to decades of thermal cycling and internal corrosion, and a careless swing of a demolition hammer can crack a fitting or dislodge a joint — creating a catastrophic leak that affects every unit below you.

The most dangerous phase for the stack is demolition. When your contractor removes old tile, drywall, and fixtures around the stack area, they must use hand tools and careful cutting techniques rather than aggressive demolition methods. A good condo renovation contractor will expose the stack carefully, inspect its condition, and protect it with padding or temporary bracing before proceeding with the rest of the demolition. If the stack shows signs of significant corrosion, pitting, or cracking at joints, this needs to be reported to your condo corporation immediately — stack replacement is the corporation's responsibility, not yours.

Working Around the Stack

In most 1970s Toronto high-rises, the plumbing stack is located behind the toilet and often runs through a chase or boxed-in area that also contains the drain connections for the tub/shower and sink. When designing your new bathroom layout, plan to keep all fixtures in their original positions relative to the stack. This is not just about convenience — it is about protecting a shared building system that serves every unit on your line.

Your licensed plumber should make the connections to the stack using proper fittings and techniques. If the original connections used lead-caulked joints (common in 1970s construction), your plumber may recommend replacing the connection fittings with modern rubber-gasket or no-hub couplings. This upgrade is worthwhile because it provides a more reliable seal and is easier to service in the future. The connection work should be done gently, without applying torque or stress to the main stack itself.

Waterproofing Is Critical

In a 1970s high-rise, the original waterproofing behind the tub or shower may have degraded significantly. When you remove the old tile surround, expect to find moisture damage, possible mould, and deteriorated backer material. This is your opportunity to install a proper modern waterproofing system — Schluter Kerdi membrane, liquid-applied membrane like RedGard, or equivalent — that will protect both your unit and the unit below you for decades. In the GTA condo renovation market, proper waterproofing adds $1,500 to $3,000 to the project cost but is absolutely non-negotiable.

The Ontario Building Code requires waterproofing behind all shower and tub surrounds, and your condo corporation's insurance will not cover water damage to lower units if your renovation's waterproofing fails due to improper installation.

Budget and Planning

A bathroom renovation in a 1970s Toronto high-rise typically costs $15,000 to $35,000 depending on the scope and finish level. Factor in an additional $1,000 to $3,000 for building-related costs including elevator booking fees, security deposits, and the approval process. Get your condo corporation's written approval before starting, provide them with your contractor's insurance certificate and WSIB clearance, and ensure your contractor carries at least $2 million in commercial general liability insurance — most Toronto condo buildings require this minimum.

Have your contractor inspect the subfloor condition around the toilet base and tub perimeter carefully. After 50 years, water infiltration may have damaged the area around fixture bases even if it is not visible from above.

Q6

Who is responsible for waterproofing in a condo bathroom — the unit owner or the condo corporation?

In almost all Toronto condos, the unit owner is responsible for waterproofing within their bathroom during a renovation, while the condo corporation is responsible for the building's original waterproofing systems

and shared structural elements. The specific division of responsibility depends on your condo's declaration, which defines the boundary between the unit and the common elements — but in practical terms, if you are renovating your bathroom, the waterproofing behind your new tile, under your shower base, and around your fixtures is your responsibility and your cost.

The condo declaration typically defines your unit as everything from the interior surface of the concrete slab and walls inward. This means the drywall, backer board, waterproof membrane, tile, fixtures, and all finishes within your bathroom are your property and your maintenance responsibility. The concrete structure itself — the slab between floors, the structural walls, and the plumbing stack — is a common element maintained by the corporation.

Why This Matters for Your Renovation

When you renovate your condo bathroom in Toronto, you are taking on the obligation to install proper waterproofing that protects not just your unit but the units and common areas below you. If your shower waterproofing fails and water leaks through the slab into the unit below, you are liable for the damage — both under the Condominium Act and through your personal condo insurance policy. This is one of the most important reasons to hire experienced professionals for condo bathroom waterproofing rather than cutting corners.

The Ontario Building Code requires a continuous waterproof membrane behind all shower and tub surrounds. In a condo, this requirement carries extra weight because a failure does not just damage your own home — it damages someone else's. Your waterproofing system should include a sheet membrane (such as Schluter Kerdi) or liquid-applied membrane (such as RedGard or Mapei AquaDefense) covering the entire shower area from the base to at least 6 inches above the showerhead rough-in. The shower floor must have a waterproof pan membrane that directs any water that penetrates the tile and grout to the drain.

Insurance Implications

Every condo owner in Ontario should carry unit owner insurance (often called an HO-6 policy) that includes coverage for improvements and betterments — this covers your renovated bathroom, including fixtures, finishes, and installed materials. Critically, your policy should also include personal liability coverage and coverage for damage to other units caused by your unit, including water damage from a bathroom leak.

Before starting a condo bathroom renovation, review your insurance policy and consider increasing your improvements and betterments coverage to reflect the value of the renovation. A $25,000 to $40,000 bathroom renovation should be covered by your policy. Many Toronto condo corporations also carry a master policy with a deductible that can be charged back to the unit owner who caused the damage — these deductibles can range from $10,000 to $50,000 in GTA condo buildings.

Practical Steps

Before demolishing your existing bathroom, document the current condition with photos and video, including the condition of the subfloor and any visible waterproofing. During the renovation, have your contractor document the waterproofing installation with detailed photos showing complete membrane coverage, sealed seams, and proper integration with the drain. These records protect you if a future leak is attributed to your renovation. Ensure your contractor provides a written warranty on the waterproofing installation — reputable GTA bathroom renovation contractors typically warranty their waterproofing work for 5 to 10 years.

Q7

What should I check on the status certificate before starting a condo bathroom renovation?

Before starting a condo bathroom renovation in Toronto, you should review the status certificate for renovation rules, reserve fund health, pending special assessments, and any building-wide plumbing or waterproofing projects that could affect your timeline or budget. The status certificate is a package of documents that reveals the legal, financial, and physical condition of your condo corporation — and several sections directly impact your bathroom renovation plans.

The status certificate costs $100 under the Ontario Condominium Act and must be provided within 10 days of your request. Even if you already own the unit and received one when you purchased, request a current version before planning a major renovation — the financial picture and planned maintenance projects may have changed significantly.

Rules and Declaration

The condo's **rules and declaration** section outlines the renovation approval process, permitted construction hours, contractor requirements (insurance minimums, WSIB clearance), and any restrictions on the type of work allowed. Some Toronto condo buildings require that all renovation contractors carry a minimum of $2 million in commercial general liability insurance and provide a WSIB clearance certificate. Others require a refundable damage deposit ($1,000 to $5,000 is typical in the GTA) and may charge elevator booking fees.

Look specifically for rules about plumbing modifications, waterproofing requirements, and whether the building requires an engineering review for bathroom renovations that affect the plumbing stack or slab. Some older Toronto condo corporations have adopted strict renovation standards that specify acceptable waterproofing methods, require a pre-renovation and post-renovation inspection by the building's engineer, or mandate that specific licensed trades be used.

Reserve Fund Study

The **reserve fund study** is critical reading before a bathroom renovation. This document outlines the building's planned major repairs and replacements over the next 30 years. If the building has a plumbing stack replacement scheduled in the next 2 to 5 years, you may want to delay your bathroom renovation — stack replacement typically requires access through unit bathrooms, and your brand-new tile and fixtures could need to be partially demolished and rebuilt during the stack work. In many 1970s and 1980s Toronto high-rises, cast iron stack replacement is a looming major expense.

Similarly, check whether the building has planned any waterproofing remediation, balcony repairs adjacent to bathrooms, or common-area plumbing upgrades that could disrupt your renovated bathroom. A well-timed renovation coordinates with the building's maintenance schedule rather than conflicting with it.

Financial Health

Review the **financial statements and reserve fund balance** for signs of underfunding. If the reserve fund is significantly below the recommended level in the reserve fund study, a special assessment may be coming — and special assessments for major building systems like plumbing stacks can range from $5,000 to $30,000+ per unit in GTA condos. You do not want to commit $30,000 to a bathroom renovation and then receive a $15,000 special assessment notice two months later.

Also check for any **ongoing litigation** involving water damage, construction defects, or contractor disputes — these can indicate building-wide issues that may affect your unit's bathroom.

Practical Application

Armed with the information from the status certificate, you can make informed decisions about timing, scope, and budget for your condo bathroom renovation. Share the relevant renovation rules with your contractor before they provide a quote so they can factor in building-specific requirements, insurance costs, and scheduling constraints. An experienced Toronto condo renovation contractor will be familiar with the approval process and can help you navigate it efficiently.

Q8

Can I install heated floors in my condo bathroom, or will it affect the unit below?

Yes, you can install electric radiant heated floors in most Toronto condo bathrooms without affecting the unit below — electric heating mats and cables are installed within your tile assembly and do not penetrate the concrete slab. This is one of the most popular upgrades in GTA condo bathroom renovations, and when installed properly, it has zero impact on neighbouring units.

Electric radiant floor heating for bathrooms uses thin heating cables or pre-made mats (brands like Nuheat, Ditra-Heat, and Schluter are widely available through GTA tile suppliers) that are embedded in the thinset mortar layer directly beneath your floor tile. The entire heating system sits within the tile installation — typically adding only 3/16 to 1/4 inch of height to the floor assembly. The heat radiates upward through your tile and does not transfer meaningful warmth downward through the concrete slab to the unit below.

Electrical Requirements

Electric heated bathroom floors require a **dedicated electrical circuit** with GFCI protection, as required by the Ontario Electrical Safety Code. A typical condo bathroom heated floor draws 10 to 12 watts per square foot, so a 40-square-foot heated area uses about 400 to 480 watts — roughly the same as a few light bulbs. This is well within the electrical capacity of any Toronto condo unit.

You will need a licensed electrician to run the dedicated circuit from your electrical panel to the bathroom, install the thermostat (usually mounted on the wall near the light switch), and connect the heating mat. This electrical work requires an ESA (Electrical Safety Authority) permit and inspection. Your electrician should arrange the ESA inspection before the floor tile is installed so the heating element can be verified while still accessible. Budget $500 to $1,000 for the electrical work including the permit.

Installation Cost

In the GTA market, electric radiant floor heating adds **$8 to $15 per square foot** to your bathroom floor installation cost for the heating mat or cable, plus the electrical work. For a typical condo bathroom with 30 to 50 square feet of heated floor area, the total added cost is $800 to $1,500 for the heating system materials plus $500 to $1,000 for electrical — so roughly $1,300 to $2,500 total on top of your tile installation cost.

The operating cost is minimal — heating a 40-square-foot bathroom floor for 8 hours per day during Toronto's heating season costs approximately $15 to $25 per month at current Ontario electricity rates. Most homeowners use a programmable thermostat to run the heated floor during morning and evening bathroom use, reducing operating costs further.

Condo Approval

Most Toronto condo corporations approve electric heated bathroom floors without issue because the system is entirely within the unit boundary and does not affect common elements. However, you should still include it in your renovation application to building management, particularly the electrical component. Some buildings want to verify that the new circuit will not overload the unit's electrical panel — this is rarely an issue but is worth confirming.

The one scenario where heated floors can be problematic in a condo is if installing them requires raising the bathroom floor height enough to affect the door clearance or create a transition issue with the hallway floor. In most cases, the 1/4-inch height addition is negligible, but in older Toronto condos with already-tight door clearances, confirm the measurements before committing.

Heated bathroom floors are one of the highest-satisfaction upgrades in Toronto bathroom renovations — the comfort during our long winters, from November through April, makes stepping onto a warm tile floor one of those small luxuries that homeowners consistently say was worth every dollar.

Q9

How do I maximize storage in a small 5x7 condo bathroom?

A 5x7 condo bathroom — just 35 square feet — is one of the most common bathroom sizes in Toronto condos, and maximizing storage requires thinking vertically, using every wall surface, and choosing fixtures that do double duty. The good news is that thousands of GTA condo owners have the same challenge, and there are proven strategies that work within these tight dimensions without making the room feel cramped.

The single most impactful storage upgrade is replacing a standard mirror with a **recessed medicine cabinet**. A recessed cabinet sits inside the wall cavity between studs, so it does not project into the room and steal space. In a condo with standard 2x4 stud walls, you can recess a cabinet about 3.5 inches deep — enough for toiletries, medications, and daily essentials. A 24 to 30-inch-wide recessed medicine cabinet with mirrored doors provides substantial hidden storage while maintaining the clean look of a wall mirror. Expect to pay $200 to $800 for the cabinet plus $200 to $400 for installation in the GTA.

Vanity Selection

In a 5x7 bathroom, your vanity choice makes or breaks your storage capacity. A **floating (wall-mounted) vanity** is ideal because it creates visual space below while still providing drawer and cabinet storage. A 30 to 36-inch floating vanity with drawers rather than doors is the most practical configuration — drawers let you access items at the back without reaching past everything in front, which is crucial when every inch of storage matters.

Consider a vanity with a **built-in organizer system** — tiered drawer inserts, pull-out trays, and dividers keep toiletries organized and prevent the common problem of small bathrooms feeling cluttered even when they have adequate storage volume. In the GTA market, a quality floating vanity with organizer drawers runs $800 to $2,000.

Vertical Storage

The walls above the toilet and beside the shower are often unused in small condo bathrooms. **Open shelving above the toilet** (floating shelves at 12-inch intervals) provides accessible storage for towels, decorative items, and baskets containing toiletries. Use 8 to 10-inch-deep shelves to keep items secure without projecting too far into the room. An **over-toilet cabinet** is another option if you prefer concealed storage — wall-mounted units designed for this space are available from $100 to $400.

Inside the shower, **recessed niches** built into the wall during your renovation provide shampoo and soap storage without any shelf projecting into the shower space. A standard niche is 12 inches wide by 24 inches tall, recessed between studs. Adding two niches at different heights (one at chest height, one lower) costs $300 to $600 during a renovation and eliminates the need for hanging shower caddies that obstruct the space.

Door and Hardware Strategies

In a 5x7 bathroom, a standard swinging door consumes about 8 square feet of usable floor space when open. Switching to a **pocket door** or **barn door** reclaims that space entirely. A pocket door installation costs $500 to $1,200 in the GTA including the frame modification, while a barn door runs $300 to $800 for hardware and door. In a condo, confirm with building management before modifying the door framing.

Finally, use the back of the bathroom door for storage — an over-door rack or mounted hooks provide space for towels and robes without using any wall space. **Heated towel bars** mounted on the wall serve double duty as both storage and a luxury feature during Toronto's cold months, starting at $150 to $400 installed.

Q10

Are there special insurance requirements for a condo bathroom renovation in Ontario?

Yes, condo bathroom renovations in Ontario involve insurance requirements that go beyond what you would need for a house renovation — both your personal condo insurance and your contractor's insurance need to be properly aligned before any work begins. Getting the insurance right protects you from potentially devastating financial exposure if something goes wrong during or after the renovation.

The most important insurance requirement is that your **contractor must carry commercial general liability (CGL) insurance** with a minimum coverage amount that meets your condo corporation's requirements. Most Toronto condo buildings require a minimum of $2 million in CGL coverage, and some newer or high-end buildings require $5 million. Your contractor should provide a certificate of insurance naming the condo corporation as an additional insured for the duration of the project. Request this certificate before your contractor starts work and submit it to your building management as part of the renovation approval package.

Your Unit Owner Insurance

Every condo owner in Ontario should carry **unit owner insurance** (sometimes called condo unit insurance or an HO-6 policy). Before starting a bathroom renovation, review your policy for three critical coverages.

First, **improvements and betterments coverage** — this covers the value of upgrades and renovations you make to your unit beyond the original standard finishes. If your bathroom renovation costs $25,000 to $40,000, your improvements and betterments coverage should be at least that amount. Many default policies have low limits ($25,000 to $50,000) that may not be sufficient if you have renovated multiple rooms. Contact your insurance provider to increase this coverage before starting the renovation — the cost increase is typically modest, around $50 to $150 per year.

Second, **personal liability coverage** — this protects you if your renovation causes damage to another unit or common elements. A water leak from your bathroom renovation that damages the unit below could result in a claim of $20,000 to $100,000 or more. Ensure your liability coverage is at least $1 million, and consider $2 million for peace of mind.

Third, **loss assessment coverage** — this covers your share of the condo corporation's insurance deductible if a claim originates from your unit. Many Toronto condo corporations have master policy deductibles of $25,000 to $100,000, and the corporation can charge this deductible back to the unit owner responsible for the loss. Loss assessment coverage in your unit owner policy protects you from this charge.

WSIB Coverage

In Ontario, contractors and subcontractors working on your property should carry **WSIB (Workplace Safety and Insurance Board) coverage**. If an uninsured worker is injured during your bathroom renovation, you as the property owner could be held liable for their medical costs and lost wages. Request a WSIB clearance certificate from your contractor before work begins — this confirms they are registered with WSIB and their premiums are current. Your condo corporation will likely require this as part of the renovation approval process.

Practical Steps

Before starting your condo bathroom renovation, create an insurance checklist: confirm your contractor's CGL coverage meets the building's minimum, obtain the certificate of insurance, verify WSIB clearance, review and update your unit owner insurance for improvements and betterments, confirm adequate liability coverage, and add loss assessment coverage if you do not already have it. The total cost of proper insurance coverage is a small fraction of your renovation budget and protects you from risks that could cost tens of thousands of dollars.

Q11

What happens if my condo bathroom renovation causes a water leak that damages the unit below me?

If your condo bathroom renovation causes a water leak that damages the unit below, you are almost certainly financially responsible for the repairs — both to the affected unit and potentially for the condo corporation's insurance deductible. This is one of the most serious risks of condo bathroom renovations in Toronto, and understanding the liability chain before you start work is essential for protecting yourself.

Under the Ontario Condominium Act and most condo declarations, the unit owner who causes damage to another unit or to common elements is responsible for the cost of repairs. If water from your bathroom renovation — whether from a plumbing connection failure, inadequate waterproofing, or a construction accident — leaks through the concrete slab and damages the ceiling, walls, flooring, or belongings in the unit below, the affected owner will look to you (and your insurance) for compensation.

How the Liability Chain Works

The typical sequence after a water leak from a condo bathroom renovation in the GTA follows a predictable pattern. The affected unit owner reports the damage to building management and files a claim with their own unit owner insurance. Their insurance company pays for the repairs and then pursues **subrogation** — recovering the cost

from the party responsible for the damage, which is you. Simultaneously, the condo corporation may file a claim against the building's master insurance policy for damage to common elements (the concrete slab, shared plumbing, hallway damage from water migration), and the master policy deductible — which can range from $10,000 to $100,000 in Toronto condos — may be charged back to your unit.

This means you could face costs from three directions: the repair claim from the unit below, the condo corporation's deductible charge-back, and your own repair costs to fix the source of the leak in your bathroom.

How Your Insurance Protects You

This is why proper condo unit owner insurance is critical before starting a bathroom renovation. Your **personal liability coverage** pays for damage claims from the affected unit owner. Your **loss assessment coverage** pays for the condo corporation's deductible charge-back. And your **improvements and betterments coverage** pays to repair the damage to your own renovated bathroom. Without adequate coverage in all three areas, a single water leak incident can cost a Toronto condo owner $30,000 to $100,000 or more out of pocket.

If your contractor caused the leak through negligent work, your contractor's commercial general liability insurance should cover the damage claims. However, pursuing a claim against your contractor's insurance can be a lengthy process, and you may need to cover costs through your own insurance first and then seek recovery. This is another reason why verifying your contractor's insurance coverage and WSIB status before starting work is non-negotiable.

Prevention Is Everything

The best protection against water damage claims is preventing leaks in the first place. Insist on **proper waterproofing** — a continuous membrane system (Schluter Kerdi, liquid-applied membrane, or equivalent) behind all shower tile, under the shower base, and around the tub. Have your contractor **flood-test the shower pan** before installing tile — fill the shower base with water and monitor for 24 hours to confirm the waterproof membrane is intact. Document the waterproofing installation and flood test with photos and video.

Use a **licensed plumber** for all plumbing connections and have the work inspected before closing walls. Test all supply connections and drain joints under pressure before finishing. These precautions cost a fraction of what a water damage claim would cost and protect both you and your neighbours in the building.

Q12

Can I upgrade to a larger bathtub or add a soaker tub in my condo unit?

You can often upgrade to a soaker tub in a Toronto condo, but you need to verify two critical factors first: the structural load capacity of your floor slab and the available space for the tub dimensions you want. A filled soaker tub with a person in it can weigh 600 to 1,000 pounds or more, and while concrete condo slabs are generally strong, the load is concentrated in a relatively small footprint that must be within the building's design capacity.

A standard alcove tub holds about 40 to 50 gallons of water and weighs approximately 400 to 500 pounds when full with a bather. A freestanding soaker tub typically holds 55 to 80 gallons and can weigh 600 to 900 pounds when full. Deep Japanese-style soaking tubs can hold over 100 gallons, pushing the weight above 1,000 pounds. The weight difference between your old tub and the new one is what matters — and in most post-1970s Toronto concrete condos, the slab is engineered to handle standard residential loads including bathtub weight.

However, if you are upgrading from a standard 5-foot alcove tub to a significantly larger or deeper freestanding soaker, some Toronto condo corporations require an **engineering assessment** confirming the slab can handle the additional concentrated load. This is especially relevant in older buildings (1960s-1970s) where slab thickness and reinforcement may be less than modern standards. An engineering assessment costs $500 to $1,500 in the GTA and is a wise investment for your peace of mind and liability protection.

Space and Plumbing Considerations

The bigger challenge in most Toronto condo bathrooms is physical space. A freestanding soaker tub needs clearance on all sides — the Ontario Building Code requires a minimum of 21 inches of clear space in front of the tub for access, and you need enough room to comfortably step in and out. In a typical 5x8 condo bathroom, fitting a freestanding tub means removing the existing alcove tub and potentially reconfiguring the layout.

Popular freestanding tub sizes for GTA condos include 55-inch and 60-inch models that fit in the same general footprint as a standard alcove tub but provide a deeper soaking experience. Compact Japanese soaking tubs (as small as 41 inches long but 25 inches deep) are growing in popularity for Toronto condos where floor space is limited but homeowners want a true soaking experience.

Plumbing for a freestanding tub requires a **floor-mounted drain** and either floor-mounted or wall-mounted supply connections, which differ from the standard alcove tub's wall-drain and wall-supply setup. Your plumber will need to relocate the drain to the centre of the tub position and route supply lines to the freestanding faucet location. In a condo with a concrete slab, this work must be done within the existing slab channels or the raised floor area — budget $1,000 to $3,000 for the plumbing modifications in the GTA market.

Cost Breakdown

A freestanding soaker tub upgrade in a Toronto condo typically costs **$2,500 to $8,000 all-in**, broken down as follows: the tub itself ($1,000 to $5,000 depending on material and brand — acrylic is most common and affordable, while stone resin and cast iron are premium options), freestanding tub faucet ($300 to $1,500), plumbing modifications ($1,000 to $3,000), and floor finishing around the tub ($500 to $1,500).

Before ordering a tub, confirm the delivery logistics. A freestanding soaker tub must fit through your condo's hallways, elevator, and unit doorways. Measure every passage — including the elevator door opening — and compare to the tub's packaged dimensions. Some larger tubs require freight elevator access or may not fit through standard 30-inch condo doorways. Your contractor should verify delivery feasibility before you commit to a purchase.

Q13

How do I deal with the tiny builder-grade exhaust fan in my condo bathroom?

Replacing a builder-grade exhaust fan is one of the most impactful upgrades you can make in a condo bathroom — and in most Toronto high-rises, it is also one of the most misunderstood. Builder-grade fans installed by developers are typically the cheapest units available, rated at 50 CFM or less, and they are often noisy enough that residents avoid using them altogether. That combination of low airflow and low usage is the leading cause of chronic moisture problems, peeling paint, and mould growth in GTA condo bathrooms.

Before you rush out and buy a more powerful fan, you need to understand how condo exhaust systems work. Most Toronto condos built after the mid-1990s use a **centralized exhaust system** where individual bathroom fans connect to a shared building duct that runs vertically through the building. Your fan connects to this shared duct through a specific duct size — typically 4-inch or 6-inch — and must work against the static pressure created by the shared system. This means you cannot simply install any fan you want; you need a unit that is compatible with your building's ductwork and backdraft damper configuration. Installing a fan that is too powerful can actually push air into neighbouring units through the shared duct system.

What You Can Do

Start by checking your existing duct connection. Remove the fan cover and note the duct size and how the fan connects to the building duct. Most condo bathroom fans in the GTA connect via a 4-inch round duct. Once you know the duct size, look for a **replacement fan rated for 80-110 CFM with a low sone rating** (1.0 sones or less). Panasonic WhisperCeiling and Broan InVent series are popular choices among GTA condo renovators because they move adequate air quietly. Expect to pay **$150-$400 for the fan** and **$200-$500 for professional installation** including electrical connection.

A critical upgrade to consider is a **fan with a humidity sensor or built-in timer**. Humidity-sensing fans turn on automatically when moisture levels rise and shut off when the air dries out. This eliminates the problem of residents forgetting to turn the fan on — or turning it off too soon after a shower. In Toronto's humid summers, when ambient humidity inside condos can sit at 60-70%, a humidity-sensing fan provides continuous moisture management that a manual switch simply cannot match.

Permits and Building Rules

Replacing a bathroom exhaust fan in a condo does require some consideration of your building's rules. Most condo boards do not require a formal renovation application for a simple fan swap, but **any electrical work requires an ESA (Electrical Safety Authority) permit** under Ontario regulations. If you are adding a new circuit for a more powerful fan, or modifying existing wiring, a licensed electrician must do the work and arrange for ESA inspection.

Check with your building management before scheduling any work — some buildings require advance notice even for minor trades.

The bottom line is that a quiet, properly sized exhaust fan that runs consistently is your condo bathroom's best defence against moisture damage, and the $400-$800 total cost of a professional upgrade is one of the best investments you can make in a GTA condo bathroom.

Q14

Is it possible to combine a small ensuite and closet into one larger bathroom in a condo?

Yes, combining a small ensuite and adjacent closet into a larger bathroom is possible in many Toronto condos, but it requires careful planning around structural walls, plumbing stack locations, and condo board approvals before any demolition begins. This is one of the most popular layout modifications in GTA condo renovations, particularly in units from the 2000-2015 era where developers squeezed in tight three-piece ensuites alongside narrow closets.

The first thing to determine is whether the wall between the ensuite and the closet is **structural or a partition wall**. In most concrete-frame Toronto condos, interior walls between rooms within your unit are non-load-bearing steel stud partitions that can be removed or relocated. However, some walls contain building services — electrical conduit, plumbing risers, or HVAC ductwork — that complicate removal. You will need a **professional assessment** , and your condo corporation will almost certainly require an **engineering review** from a licensed structural engineer before approving the work. Budget **$500-$1,500 for the engineering report** alone.

The Condo Approval Process

This type of renovation falls squarely into the category of work that requires **full condo board approval** in virtually every Toronto building. You will need to submit architectural drawings showing the proposed layout, the engineer's report confirming no structural concerns, your contractor's insurance certificates (minimum $2 million liability is standard), and WSIB clearance. Most buildings also require a **refundable damage deposit** ranging from $1,000 to $5,000. The approval process typically takes **3-6 weeks**, and some buildings only review renovation applications at monthly board meetings, so plan accordingly.

You will also need a **building permit from the City of Toronto** if the project involves moving or adding plumbing fixtures, which it almost certainly will if you are expanding the bathroom footprint. Relocating a toilet, adding a new drain, or extending supply lines all require plumbing permits.

Plumbing and Layout Considerations

The biggest constraint is the **plumbing stack location**. In condo buildings, the main drain stack is a vertical pipe shared by all units above and below you, and your toilet, shower, and vanity drain into it. Expanding the bathroom into the closet space gives you more room for fixtures, but every fixture must still drain back to that stack. The further you move fixtures from the stack, the more slope the drain pipe needs — and in a condo where your floor is another unit's ceiling, there is limited space for drain pipe slope. A skilled plumber can typically extend drains **3-5 feet from the stack** by building up a small section of floor to accommodate the pipe slope, but this creates a slight step that needs to be planned into the design.

Expect to pay **$25,000-$50,000** for a combined closet-to-bathroom expansion project in a GTA condo, including demolition, structural modifications, plumbing relocation, waterproofing, tiling, fixtures, electrical, and all finishing. The result is a dramatically more functional bathroom that can add meaningful value to your unit — a well-executed ensuite renovation in a Toronto condo typically recoups 60-75% of its cost at resale.

Q15

What are the best space-saving fixtures for a compact condo bathroom in Toronto?

The right space-saving fixtures can transform a cramped Toronto condo bathroom from frustrating to functional, and the good news is that manufacturers now offer a wide range of compact options specifically designed for the tight footprints common in GTA high-rise and mid-rise units. The key is selecting fixtures that reduce physical bulk without sacrificing usability.

Wall-hung toilets are the single most effective space-saving fixture for compact condo bathrooms. By concealing the tank inside the wall cavity using a carrier frame, a wall-hung toilet saves approximately 10-12 inches of floor depth compared to a standard two-piece toilet. The visual effect is even more dramatic — the open floor beneath the bowl makes the room feel larger and makes cleaning effortless. In the GTA market, expect to pay **$1,000-$2,500 installed** including the concealed carrier frame. The wall must be built out with 2x6 framing to house the carrier, which uses about 3.5 inches of room depth but gains back far more in visual and functional space. Duravit, Toto, and Geberit are the most common brands available through GTA plumbing suppliers.

Corner sinks and narrow-profile vanities make a significant difference in tight layouts. Standard vanities are 21 inches deep, but narrow-profile models at 16-18 inches deep are available from multiple manufacturers and free up crucial inches in front of the toilet and shower entry. Floating wall-mounted vanities in the 24-30 inch width range

are particularly effective in small spaces because the open floor beneath them creates a visual sense of openness. Budget **$600-$2,000** for a compact floating vanity with a narrow-depth top and undermount or integrated sink.

Shower Solutions

Sliding or bi-fold shower doors eliminate the swing clearance required by hinged doors, which is critical when the shower door would otherwise conflict with the toilet, vanity, or bathroom entry door. A frameless sliding door on a compact 32x48 or 36x36 shower costs **$800-$1,800 installed** in the GTA. For extremely tight layouts, a **curved sliding shower enclosure** fits into a corner with a neo-angle footprint that maximizes usable shower space while minimizing the enclosure's intrusion into the room.

Recessed shower niches eliminate the need for bulky shower caddies and corner shelves that eat into standing space. A standard 12x24-inch niche built into the shower wall during renovation adds zero footprint and costs only **$200-$500 in additional labour and materials** during a tile installation. Plan niche locations carefully — they cannot be placed on walls that contain plumbing stacks or structural elements.

Other Smart Choices

Pocket doors or barn doors for the bathroom entry eliminate the 30-inch swing arc of a standard hinged door, freeing up usable floor space inside the bathroom. A pocket door installation runs **$400-$800** for the hardware and installation. In condos with steel stud walls, confirm that the wall cavity can accommodate a pocket door frame before committing.

Compact soaker tubs in the 54-60 inch range (versus the standard 66 inches) fit into smaller alcoves while still providing a comfortable bathing experience. Japanese-style deep soaker tubs are only 40-48 inches long but offer deeper water immersion. These run **$800-$2,500** for the tub plus installation.

The Ontario Building Code still requires minimum clearances even in compact layouts — **15 inches from the toilet centre to any side wall** and **21 inches of clear space in front of the toilet**. Work with your contractor to verify that every fixture meets code clearances before ordering, because returns and restocking fees on specialty compact fixtures can be costly.

Q16

How do contractor deposits and payment schedules typically work for condo bathroom renovations in the GTA?

A well-structured payment schedule for a condo bathroom renovation in the GTA typically involves 3-4 milestone-based payments, with no more than 10-15% as an upfront deposit. Understanding what is normal — and what is a red flag — protects you from both unfinished work and contractors who disappear mid-project.

The most common payment structure for a GTA condo bathroom renovation in the **$15,000-$40,000 range** follows this pattern: **10-15% deposit upon signing the contract** to secure your spot in the contractor's schedule and allow them to order materials, **30-35% at demolition and rough-in completion** (plumbing, electrical, and waterproofing are done and inspected), **30-35% at tile and fixture installation completion**, and **the final 15-20% upon project completion and your walkthrough approval**. This structure ensures the contractor has cash flow for materials and labour at each stage while keeping you protected — the largest payments only come after verifiable work milestones.

Be cautious of any contractor requesting more than 30% upfront. Ontario's Consumer Protection Act provides some protections for home renovation contracts, but the best protection is a payment schedule that keeps you in control. A contractor who demands 50% or more before starting work is either undercapitalized (a business risk) or presenting a potential fraud risk. Reputable GTA bathroom contractors have supplier accounts and do not need your money to buy materials before the project begins.

What Should Be in the Contract

Every payment milestone should be **clearly defined in a written contract** that specifies exactly what work must be completed before each payment is due. The contract should include the total project price, a detailed scope of work listing every fixture, material, and finish, the specific payment milestones, the estimated start and completion dates, the process for handling change orders (with pricing), warranty terms, and confirmation of the contractor's insurance and WSIB coverage.

For condo renovations specifically, the contract should also address **who is responsible for the building's renovation deposit** (typically $1,000-$5,000, refundable upon satisfactory completion), elevator booking fees, and any building-imposed working hour restrictions that may affect the project timeline.

Change Orders and Budget Overruns

Bathroom renovations in older Toronto condos frequently encounter **surprises behind walls** — corroded pipes, inadequate waterproofing from the original build, or deteriorated subfloor under old tile. A good contract includes a

clause explaining how change orders are handled: the contractor must notify you in writing of any additional work needed, provide a cost estimate, and receive your written approval before proceeding. Never agree to open-ended "time and materials" billing for discovery work — insist on a quoted price for each change order.

Protecting Yourself

Pay by **cheque or e-transfer** (not cash) so you have a paper trail. Verify that the contractor carries **$2 million minimum liability insurance** and current **WSIB clearance** — request certificates directly, not just verbal assurance. For condo renovations, your building management will typically require copies of these documents as part of the renovation approval process anyway.

Never make the final payment until you have done a **thorough walkthrough** with the contractor, tested every fixture (run every faucet, flush the toilet, test the shower at full pressure, check the exhaust fan operation, verify GFCI outlets trip properly), and confirmed that all punch-list items are addressed. The final 15-20% holdback is your leverage to ensure the project is truly complete.

Q17

Does my condo building's age affect what materials or methods I can use in a bathroom renovation?

Absolutely — your condo building's age has a significant impact on the materials, methods, and even the fixtures you can use in a bathroom renovation. Toronto's condo market spans buildings from the 1960s through to brand-new construction, and each era presents different constraints and opportunities that directly affect your renovation planning.

Older Toronto condos (1960s-1980s) present the most challenges. These buildings were typically constructed with cast iron drain stacks and copper supply lines, both of which may be nearing the end of their service life after 40-60 years. When renovating a bathroom in a building of this era, your plumber needs to assess the condition of the existing plumbing connections carefully. Cast iron stacks can be corroded internally, and connecting new ABS drain pipes to deteriorated cast iron requires specialized fittings (Fernco couplings or mission bands) and experienced workmanship. The supply lines entering your unit may be original copper with old-style compression fittings that can be fragile. Budget an extra **$1,000-$3,000 for plumbing contingencies** in buildings of this vintage.

These older buildings also tend to have **concrete block or poured concrete walls** rather than the steel stud partitions found in newer construction. This affects how you mount fixtures — wall-hung vanities, grab bars, and accessories require **Tapcon screws or concrete anchors** rather than standard wood screws or toggle bolts.

Installing a wall-hung toilet carrier in a concrete wall is significantly more labour-intensive than in a stud wall, adding **$500-$1,000 to the installation cost**.

Mid-Era Condos (1990s-2000s)

Buildings from this period typically have **ABS drain systems and copper supply lines**, which are generally in good condition and compatible with modern renovation materials. The main consideration with these buildings is the **exhaust ventilation system**. Many 1990s condos have centralized exhaust systems with 4-inch duct connections and building-controlled fan schedules. When upgrading your bathroom exhaust fan, you must use a unit compatible with the building's shared ductwork — installing a fan that is too powerful can create pressure imbalances affecting other units.

Floor construction in these buildings is typically **6-8 inch concrete slab**, which means you have limited ability to modify drain locations. Moving a toilet more than a few inches from its original position requires building up a section of floor to accommodate the drain pipe slope, which reduces ceiling height and creates a step. This is a common constraint in GTA condo bathroom renovations across all building eras.

Newer Condos (2010-Present)

Modern Toronto condos generally offer the most flexibility for bathroom renovations. They feature **PEX supply lines, ABS drains, steel stud interior walls**, and standardized plumbing stack locations. However, newer buildings often have **stricter renovation policies** — detailed application processes, mandatory engineering reviews for any wall modifications, specific approved contractor lists, and strict construction hour restrictions (typically 9 AM-5 PM weekdays only, with some buildings allowing Saturday mornings).

One material consideration specific to newer condos: many buildings built after 2015 have **hydronic radiant ceiling heating** or in-floor heating systems embedded in the concrete slab. If your building has in-slab heating, you must verify the exact location of heating loops before drilling into the floor for any reason. Penetrating a hydronic loop is an expensive and disruptive repair affecting units above and below you.

Regardless of building age, always **check your condo's declaration and bylaws** for renovation restrictions, and submit your plans to building management early in the process. Some buildings restrict specific materials (certain adhesives, specific flooring types) or require particular installation methods. Getting this information before you purchase materials saves costly returns and project delays.

Q18

Can I add a second bathroom or convert a closet to a powder room in my Toronto condo?

Adding a second bathroom or converting a closet to a powder room in a Toronto condo is technically possible but involves significant plumbing, structural, and approval challenges that make it one of the most complex condo renovation projects you can undertake. The feasibility depends almost entirely on your unit's proximity to the existing plumbing stack and your condo board's willingness to approve the work.

The **plumbing stack is the deciding factor**. Every plumbing fixture needs to drain into a vertical waste stack, and in a condo, this stack is shared by every unit above and below you. A new powder room needs, at minimum, a toilet drain (3-inch pipe) and a sink drain (1.5-inch pipe), both of which must connect to the building's waste stack. The critical constraint is **drain slope** — the pipe from your new toilet to the stack needs a minimum slope of 1/4 inch per foot, and in a condo where your floor is another unit's ceiling, there is typically only 1-2 inches of space available between the finished floor surface and the concrete slab below. This limits how far you can practically run a toilet drain from the stack to roughly **6-8 feet** without building up the floor significantly.

If your proposed powder room location is within that distance of the existing plumbing stack, the project is likely feasible from a plumbing perspective. If it is on the opposite side of the unit, 15-20 feet from the stack, the plumbing becomes either impractical or requires a **macerating toilet system** (like Saniflo) that grinds waste and pumps it to the stack through small-diameter pipe. Macerating systems cost **$1,500-$3,000 for the unit** and are noisier than gravity-drain toilets, but they solve the distance-from-stack problem when conventional plumbing is not feasible.

Approvals and Permits

This project requires **multiple layers of approval** in Toronto. First, your condo corporation must approve the renovation — adding a bathroom is a significant modification that most boards will scrutinize carefully. You will need **architectural drawings** from a designer or architect, a **structural engineering report** confirming the floor can support the additional fixture weight and that proposed modifications do not affect structural elements, and a **plumbing engineering assessment** confirming the building's waste stack can handle the additional fixture load. These reports alone cost **$2,000-$5,000**.

You will also need a **building permit from the City of Toronto Building Division** for the new plumbing connections. Plumbing permits require that the work be done by a licensed plumber and inspected before walls are closed. An **electrical permit** is required for the new bathroom's lighting, exhaust fan, and GFCI outlet, with ESA inspection.

Realistic Costs

A closet-to-powder-room conversion in a Toronto condo typically costs **$15,000-$30,000** depending on the distance to the plumbing stack, the extent of floor and wall modifications, fixture selections, and finishing. This includes all engineering and permit costs, plumbing rough-in, electrical, ventilation (you must provide mechanical exhaust per Ontario Building Code), flooring, wall finishing, fixtures, and a pocket or barn door to maximize usable space in the small room.

The value proposition can be strong — in the competitive GTA condo resale market, **adding a second bathroom to a one-bathroom unit can increase resale value by $20,000-$40,000** depending on the building and neighbourhood. For families or roommate situations, the functional value of a second bathroom is even higher. Consult with a contractor experienced in condo plumbing modifications early in the planning process to assess feasibility before investing in engineering reports and architectural drawings.
