TORONTO BATH REMODELING

Permits & Building Codes

Ontario Building Code requirements, City of Toronto building permits, plumbing permits, electrical permits, ESA inspection, and condo approval processes

19 Expert Answers from Bathroom IQ

torontobathremodeling.com/construction-brain

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Q1

What's the Ontario Building Code rule on the minimum distance between a toilet and the side wall or vanity cabinet?

The Ontario Building Code requires a minimum of 15 inches from the toilet centreline to any side wall or obstruction, though 18 inches is recommended for comfort and accessibility.

This 15-inch minimum clearance is measured from the centre of the toilet drain (and therefore the centre of the toilet bowl) to the nearest wall, vanity cabinet, or other permanent fixture. While 15 inches meets code, most bathroom designers and contractors in the GTA recommend 18 inches when space allows — the extra 3 inches makes a noticeable difference in daily comfort and ease of use.

The code also requires 21 inches of clear space in front of the toilet (measured from the front edge of the toilet bowl), though 24 inches is preferred for comfortable access. This front clearance cannot be obstructed by vanity cabinets, doors that swing into the space, or other fixtures.

These clearance requirements become critical in **GTA condo bathrooms and older Toronto homes** where space is at a premium. Many pre-war Toronto homes have bathrooms as small as 5x6 feet, and modern condos often have bathrooms barely meeting code minimums. When planning a bathroom renovation in these tight spaces, every inch matters — choosing a round-front toilet instead of an elongated bowl saves 2 inches of depth, and selecting a wall-hung vanity instead of a floor-mounted cabinet can create the illusion of more space while maintaining proper clearances.

For accessibility and aging-in-place renovations, consider exceeding the minimum requirements. Universal design guidelines recommend 18 inches minimum to the side wall and 30 inches in front of the toilet to accommodate mobility aids like walkers or wheelchairs. Many GTA homeowners planning to age in their homes are incorporating these enhanced clearances during bathroom renovations.

When measuring existing bathrooms for renovation planning, always measure from the centre of the toilet flange (the drain connection) rather than the toilet itself, since you may be changing toilet models. The flange location determines your layout constraints — moving a toilet drain is expensive ($1,500-$3,000) and may not be feasible in condos with shared plumbing stacks.

If your existing bathroom doesn't meet current code clearances, you're not required to modify the layout unless you're moving plumbing or doing substantial structural work. However, if you're doing a complete renovation, it's wise to bring clearances up to current standards for comfort, resale value, and future accessibility needs.

Always verify measurements before ordering fixtures — a toilet that looks perfect in the showroom may not fit your specific layout constraints, especially in compact GTA bathrooms where every inch counts.

Q2

Do I need a building permit for a bathroom renovation in Toronto?

Whether you need a building permit depends entirely on the scope of your bathroom renovation. If you are doing a cosmetic refresh — swapping out the vanity, replacing tile, painting, and updating fixtures in the same locations — you generally do not need a building permit from the City of Toronto. However, the moment your project involves moving plumbing, adding new plumbing connections, modifying electrical wiring, or making structural changes, permits become mandatory.

The City of Toronto Building Division requires a **building permit** for any bathroom renovation that involves relocating or adding plumbing fixtures, modifying the drain/waste/vent (DWV) system, adding a new bathroom where none existed, or removing or altering load-bearing walls. This applies whether you are in a detached home in North York, a semi in the Beaches, or a condo in downtown Toronto. In practice, most mid-range to full bathroom renovations in the GTA involve at least some plumbing or electrical changes that trigger permit requirements.

Plumbing and Electrical Permits

In addition to the building permit, you may need **separate plumbing and electrical permits**. A plumbing permit is required for any new drain connections, supply line modifications, or fixture relocations — for example, moving your toilet to a different wall or adding a second sink. Electrical permits are required for new circuits, GFCI outlet installations, heated floor wiring, exhaust fan wiring, and any modifications to existing bathroom electrical. All electrical work in Ontario must be inspected by the **Electrical Safety Authority (ESA)** before it is concealed behind walls or finishes.

Why Permits Matter

Skipping permits might save a few hundred dollars upfront, but it creates serious problems down the road. When you sell your Toronto home, the buyer's home inspector or lawyer may flag unpermitted work. The municipality can require you to open walls for inspection or even undo and redo work to current Ontario Building Code standards — a far more expensive outcome than getting the permit in the first place. Unpermitted work can also void your home insurance coverage if water damage or an electrical fire results from improperly installed plumbing or wiring.

Condo Considerations

If you are renovating a bathroom in a Toronto condo, you have an additional layer of approvals beyond city permits. Most condo corporations require you to submit renovation plans, provide your contractor's insurance certificates and **WSIB** clearance, pay a deposit, and book elevator time for material deliveries. This approval process can add **2–6 weeks** to your timeline before any demolition begins. Your condo board may also require an engineering

review if your renovation affects the building's plumbing stack or structural elements.

The bottom line: for anything beyond a simple cosmetic refresh, budget $200–$500 for permit fees and factor an extra 2–4 weeks for the permit approval process. Your contractor should handle the permit applications as part of their scope — if a contractor suggests skipping permits, that is a significant red flag. A professional bathroom renovator working in the GTA will pull proper permits and schedule inspections as a standard part of the project.

Q3

What types of bathroom work require a permit versus what can be done without one in Ontario?

The dividing line is straightforward: cosmetic work that does not touch plumbing, electrical, or structure is permit-free, while anything that modifies these systems requires permits under the Ontario Building Code. Understanding this distinction helps you plan your GTA bathroom renovation timeline and budget accurately.

Work That Does NOT Require a Permit

You can freely replace your bathroom vanity, toilet, and faucets **in the same locations** without a permit, provided you are not modifying the plumbing connections — just disconnecting and reconnecting at the same rough-in points. Other permit-free work includes replacing tile on floors and walls (as long as you are not modifying the waterproof membrane system or subfloor structure), painting with mould-resistant bathroom paint, installing new mirrors or medicine cabinets, replacing bathroom hardware like towel bars and toilet paper holders, re-caulking around tubs and showers, and replacing a showerhead or hand shower on the existing arm.

Swapping a vanity faucet, replacing a toilet with one that matches the same rough-in measurement (typically 12 inches in most Toronto homes), or installing a new vanity cabinet with the sink drain in the same position — all of these are straightforward replacements that do not trigger permit requirements.

Work That DOES Require a Permit

Plumbing permits are required for: adding a new bathroom (including basement bathroom rough-ins), relocating a toilet, sink, or shower drain, modifying the drain/waste/vent system, adding new water supply connections, and installing a new backwater valve. In Toronto, plumbing permits are obtained through the City of Toronto Building Division, and the work must be performed by or under the supervision of a licensed plumber.

Electrical permits are required for: adding new GFCI outlets, installing heated floor circuits, wiring a new exhaust fan, adding or relocating vanity lighting circuits, and any modifications to existing bathroom wiring. All electrical

permits in Ontario require an **ESA (Electrical Safety Authority)** inspection before the work is concealed.

Building permits are required for: removing or modifying walls (especially load-bearing walls), enlarging a bathroom by taking space from an adjacent room, adding a new window or enlarging an existing one, and modifying floor structure to accommodate a curbless shower or new drain location.

The Grey Areas

Some projects fall into a grey area that homeowners find confusing. Replacing a tub with a custom tiled shower, for example, involves waterproofing modifications and potentially a new drain configuration — this typically requires a plumbing permit even though the fixture location has not changed significantly. Installing a bidet seat that requires a new electrical outlet needs an electrical permit for the new circuit. Converting a bathtub alcove to a walk-in shower with a linear drain involves modifying the drain location and subfloor — permit required.

When in doubt, call the **City of Toronto Building Division** at 416-397-5330 or visit their website. A five-minute call can confirm whether your specific project needs permits. Budget **$150–$500** for permit fees depending on scope, and allow **2–4 weeks** for approval on standard residential bathroom projects in the GTA.

Q4

How long does it take to get a bathroom renovation permit from the City of Toronto?

For a standard residential bathroom renovation, expect the City of Toronto Building Division to process your permit application in approximately 10 to 20 business days, though simple projects may be approved faster and complex ones can take longer. The timeline depends on the scope of work, the completeness of your application, and the current backlog at the building department.

For straightforward bathroom plumbing permits — such as relocating a fixture or adding a new bathroom with clearly documented plans — the City of Toronto targets a **10-business-day turnaround** for residential applications. Electrical permits through the ESA are often processed more quickly, sometimes within a few days for standard residential bathroom electrical work. However, if your project involves structural modifications, requires engineering drawings, or affects fire separations (common in semi-detached homes and townhouses in Toronto), the review period can extend to **4–6 weeks**.

What Affects Processing Time

The completeness of your application is the single biggest factor in how quickly your permit is approved. Submitting a complete application with accurate drawings, a clear scope of work, and all required supporting documents avoids the back-and-forth of revision requests that can add weeks to the process. Your contractor or designer should prepare the permit application package, which typically includes a site plan, floor plan showing existing and proposed layouts, plumbing diagrams for any drain/supply modifications, and electrical plans for new circuits.

Applications that are incomplete or have errors get flagged for revisions. Each revision cycle can add **5–10 business days** as the file goes back into the review queue. This is why experienced GTA bathroom contractors submit thorough applications the first time — they know that a rushed, incomplete application actually takes longer than doing it right.

Condo Permits — The Double Timeline

Toronto condo bathroom renovations face a **double approval process** that catches many homeowners off guard. Before you can even apply for a city building permit, you need approval from your condominium corporation. Most condo boards require submission of renovation plans, contractor insurance certificates, **WSIB** clearance, and a refundable damage deposit ($500–$2,000 is typical). This condo approval process takes **2–6 weeks** depending on how frequently the board meets and reviews renovation requests. Only after condo approval can you submit for the city building permit — so the total pre-construction approval period for a condo bathroom renovation in Toronto can be **6–10 weeks**.

Planning Your Timeline

Smart homeowners in the GTA start the permit process **well before** their desired construction start date. If you want to begin your bathroom renovation in April, submit your permit application in February. Use the permit review period to finalize material selections, order long-lead items like custom vanities or specialty tile, and coordinate with your contractor's schedule.

Permit fees for residential bathroom renovations in Toronto typically range from **$200 to $500** depending on the scope. Your contractor should handle the permit application as part of their project management — this is a standard service that experienced bathroom renovation professionals in the Greater Toronto Area provide. If a contractor asks you to pull the permits yourself, or worse, suggests skipping them entirely, consider that a warning sign about their professionalism.

Q5

What inspections are required during a bathroom renovation under the Ontario Building Code?

A permitted bathroom renovation in Toronto typically requires two to four inspections at specific stages of construction, and work cannot proceed past each stage until the inspector signs off. The exact inspections depend on your scope of work, but the most common are plumbing rough-in, electrical rough-in, and final inspections.

Plumbing Rough-In Inspection

If your bathroom renovation involves any new or modified drain, waste, or vent piping, or new water supply lines, the plumbing rough-in must be inspected **before walls and floors are closed up**. The City of Toronto plumbing inspector will verify that drain pipes are properly sized and sloped (minimum 1/4 inch per foot for horizontal runs), vent connections comply with Ontario Building Code requirements, supply lines are properly supported and insulated where necessary, and all connections are watertight. Your licensed plumber should schedule this inspection and be present when the inspector arrives. This is a critical inspection — covering up plumbing before it passes rough-in inspection can result in the city requiring you to open walls at your expense.

Electrical Rough-In Inspection (ESA)

All new or modified electrical work in Ontario bathrooms must be inspected by the **Electrical Safety Authority (ESA)** before being concealed behind drywall or tile. The ESA inspector verifies that GFCI protection is provided for

all bathroom receptacles, circuits are properly sized (dedicated 20-amp circuits for bathroom receptacles is standard), wiring is properly routed and supported, heated floor circuits are correctly installed with proper ground fault protection, and exhaust fan wiring meets code. Your licensed electrician arranges the ESA inspection as part of their scope. The inspection must happen after rough-in wiring is complete but **before** drywall, cement board, or backer board covers the work.

Framing Inspection

If your renovation involves structural modifications — removing a wall, enlarging a doorway, reinforcing floor joists for a heavy freestanding tub, or modifying the floor structure for a curbless shower — a framing inspection is required before the work is enclosed. The inspector verifies that structural modifications match the approved plans, proper headers and supports are in place, and fire-stopping is installed where required (especially important in semi-detached and row houses across Toronto where fire separations between units must be maintained).

Final Inspection

Once all work is complete — fixtures installed, tile finished, everything functional — a final inspection confirms that the completed bathroom meets Ontario Building Code requirements. The inspector checks fixture clearances (minimum 15 inches from toilet centreline to side wall, 21 inches clear space in front of toilet), hot water temperature limiting (maximum **49 degrees Celsius** at the fixture, requiring thermostatic or pressure-balance shower valves), exhaust fan operation and exterior venting, and overall compliance with the approved plans.

Practical Tips for GTA Homeowners

Inspection scheduling in Toronto typically requires **48 hours' notice**, though busy periods may require more lead time. Your contractor should coordinate inspections into the project schedule so there is minimal downtime — experienced GTA bathroom contractors know the inspection sequence and plan their work accordingly. Each failed inspection means corrective work and re-inspection, which adds time and potentially cost to your project.

Keep your permit documents and all inspection reports in a safe place. When you eventually sell your Toronto home, proof of permitted and inspected work adds value and avoids complications during the buyer's due diligence process. A clean permit history is especially important in the competitive GTA real estate market.

Q6

Can I get fined for doing bathroom plumbing or electrical work without a permit in Toronto?

Yes, absolutely — performing plumbing or electrical work without the required permits in Toronto carries real financial and legal consequences, and the fines can be substantial. The City of Toronto, the Ontario Building Code, and the Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) all have enforcement mechanisms for unpermitted work, and the consequences go well beyond a simple fine.

Under the Ontario Building Code Act, performing construction work that requires a permit without obtaining one can result in fines of up to **$50,000 for individuals** and up to **$100,000 for corporations** upon conviction. While maximum fines are rare for residential bathroom renovations, the City of Toronto Building Division does issue orders and penalties when unpermitted work is discovered — and it gets discovered more often than homeowners expect.

How Unpermitted Work Gets Caught

The most common way unpermitted bathroom work comes to light is during a **home sale**. When a buyer's home inspector or real estate lawyer reviews the property, they check the permit history with the city. If a bathroom was clearly renovated — new tile, modern fixtures, reconfigured layout — but no permits are on file, the buyer may demand that you obtain retroactive permits, open walls for inspection, or reduce the sale price to account for the risk. In Toronto's competitive real estate market, unpermitted bathroom work can delay or even derail a sale.

Neighbour complaints are another common trigger. If your contractor is doing noisy demolition work or plumbing modifications and a neighbour calls 311, a building inspector may visit and ask to see your permits. Insurance claims are the third major trigger — if you file a claim for water damage and the adjuster discovers that the plumbing work was unpermitted, your claim may be denied.

ESA Enforcement for Electrical Work

The ESA takes unpermitted electrical work particularly seriously because of the life-safety implications. All electrical work in Ontario bathrooms — GFCI outlets, heated floor circuits, exhaust fan wiring, lighting circuits — must be performed by a licensed electrician with proper permits and ESA inspection. The ESA can issue **orders to comply**, require that you hire a licensed electrician to inspect and potentially redo the work, and impose fines. If unpermitted electrical work causes a fire, your home insurance company can deny the claim entirely, leaving you personally liable for all damages.

The Real Cost of Skipping Permits

Beyond fines, the practical cost of unpermitted bathroom work adds up quickly. If the city discovers unpermitted plumbing modifications, they can require you to **open finished walls and floors** so the work can be inspected — meaning you pay for demolition, inspection, and then re-finishing. If the work does not meet Ontario Building Code standards (and DIY or unlicensed plumbing frequently does not), you pay for the remediation work on top of

everything else.

A plumbing permit for a residential bathroom renovation in Toronto costs approximately **$150–$400**. An electrical permit is typically **$100–$300**. Combined, permits for a standard bathroom renovation add $250–$700 to your project cost — a fraction of the potential fines, remediation costs, and insurance complications of doing the work without permits. Every reputable bathroom contractor in the GTA pulls proper permits as a standard part of their service. If your contractor suggests skipping permits to save money, that is a serious red flag about their professionalism and accountability.

Q7

Does a cosmetic bathroom update — new tile, vanity, paint — require any permits?

A purely cosmetic bathroom update — replacing tile, swapping the vanity, and painting — generally does not require building, plumbing, or electrical permits in Toronto, as long as you are not modifying any plumbing connections, electrical wiring, or structural elements. This is good news for GTA homeowners looking to refresh a dated bathroom without the added time and cost of the permit process.

The key word here is **cosmetic**. You are updating finishes and fixtures in their existing locations without changing the underlying systems. Specifically, you can do the following without permits: remove old floor and wall tile and install new tile in the same areas, replace the vanity cabinet and countertop with the sink drain connecting at the same location, swap the faucet on the existing supply lines, repaint walls and ceiling with mould-resistant semi-gloss paint, replace the mirror or medicine cabinet, install new bathroom hardware (towel bars, toilet paper holder, robe hooks), replace the toilet with a new one using the same rough-in measurement, and re-caulk around the tub and shower.

These are all straightforward replacements where the new components connect to the same plumbing and electrical points as the old ones. No new connections, no relocated drains, no modified wiring.

Where Cosmetic Becomes Permitted Work

The line between cosmetic and permitted work can blur quickly, and this is where Toronto homeowners need to pay attention. Here are common scenarios where a seemingly cosmetic update actually requires permits:

Adding a GFCI outlet where one does not currently exist requires an electrical permit and ESA inspection. If your older Toronto home has a bathroom with no GFCI protection — common in pre-1980s homes across Scarborough, Etobicoke, and North York — adding one is a smart safety upgrade, but it does require a permit. However, simply replacing an existing standard outlet with a GFCI outlet on the same circuit is typically considered maintenance and does not require a permit.

Installing a heated floor under new tile requires an electrical permit because you are adding a new dedicated circuit. This is one of the most popular upgrades in GTA bathroom renovations given Toronto's long winters, but it moves your project from cosmetic to permitted.

Replacing a tub with a walk-in shower involves modifying the drain location and subfloor — this requires a plumbing permit even though it might feel like a cosmetic change. The drain needs to be relocated, the subfloor may need modification for proper slope, and the waterproofing system changes entirely.

Upgrading the exhaust fan from a basic model to a higher-CFM unit is generally fine if you are using the existing wiring and vent duct. But if the upgrade requires a new circuit or new ductwork to the exterior, permits apply.

Budget for a Cosmetic Update in the GTA

A cosmetic bathroom refresh in the Greater Toronto Area typically costs **$8,000–$18,000** depending on the size of the bathroom and the quality of materials you choose. This includes demolition of old tile ($500–$1,500), new tile supply and installation ($2,000–$6,000), a stock or semi-custom vanity with countertop ($500–$2,500), a new toilet ($300–$600 installed), paint ($200–$500), and new hardware and accessories ($200–$600). Without the need for permits or licensed plumbing and electrical trades, you save both time and money compared to a full renovation — though hiring a skilled tile installer is still strongly recommended for professional results that last.

Q8

What's the HCRA, and does my bathroom contractor need to be registered with them?

The HCRA — Home Construction Regulatory Authority — is Ontario's regulatory body that licenses builders and vendors of new homes, and your bathroom renovation contractor does not need to be registered with the HCRA unless they are building or selling brand-new homes. This is a common point of confusion for Toronto homeowners, so it is worth understanding clearly.

The HCRA was established in 2021 as an administrative authority under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act. Its primary role is to license and regulate **new home builders and vendors** — companies that construct and sell new residential properties in Ontario. If a company is building a new house, new townhome, or new condo building, they must be licensed by the HCRA. The HCRA replaced the previous licensing function that was handled by Tarion.

HCRA and Renovation Contractors

Renovation contractors — including bathroom renovation specialists working across the GTA — are **not required** to be HCRA-licensed because they are renovating existing homes, not building new ones. There is currently no provincial licensing requirement for renovation contractors in Ontario, which is why due diligence falls heavily on the homeowner.

This does not mean your bathroom contractor operates in a regulatory vacuum. Ontario has other protections and requirements that apply to renovation work:

WSIB (Workplace Safety and Insurance Board) coverage is essential. If an uninsured worker is injured on your property during a bathroom renovation, you as the homeowner could be held liable. Always request a **WSIB clearance certificate** from your contractor before work begins. Legitimate GTA bathroom contractors carry WSIB coverage as standard practice.

Licensed trades are required for specific work. Plumbing work must be performed by or under the supervision of a **licensed plumber** (holding a Certificate of Qualification from the Ontario College of Trades or its successor). Electrical work must be performed by a **licensed electrician**, and all electrical installations require an ESA inspection. These trade licensing requirements protect you regardless of whether the general contractor holds any other certification.

Liability insurance is another must-have. Your bathroom contractor should carry a minimum of **$2 million in commercial general liability insurance**. This protects you if the renovation causes damage to your property — for example, a plumbing connection failure that causes water damage to floors below.

Tarion Warranty and Bathrooms

Tarion provides warranty coverage for **new home construction** in Ontario, covering defects in materials and workmanship for up to 7 years on certain components. If you purchased a newly built home in the GTA and discover bathroom defects within the warranty period, Tarion coverage may apply. However, **Tarion does not cover renovation work on existing homes**. If you are renovating the bathroom in your 1960s North York bungalow or your 2005 Mississauga townhouse, Tarion warranty does not apply to the renovation — your protection comes from your contract with the renovation contractor and their liability insurance.

What to Check Instead

Since HCRA registration does not apply to bathroom renovators, here is what you should verify before hiring a bathroom contractor in the GTA: **WSIB clearance certificate** (current and valid), **commercial general liability insurance** ($2 million minimum), **references from recent GTA bathroom projects** (ask for 3–5 and actually call them), confirmation that they use **licensed plumbers and electricians** for those portions of the work, and a **detailed written contract** specifying scope, materials, timeline, payment schedule, and warranty terms.

Q9

How does the Ontario Building Code affect bathroom ventilation and fan requirements?

The Ontario Building Code requires mechanical ventilation in every bathroom — meaning an exhaust fan that vents to the exterior is mandatory, not optional. This requirement exists because bathrooms generate significant moisture from showers, baths, and sinks, and that moisture must be actively removed to prevent mould growth, structural damage, and poor indoor air quality. In Toronto's climate, with its humid summers and sealed-up winters, proper bathroom ventilation is especially critical.

The minimum exhaust capacity required is **50 CFM (cubic feet per minute)** for a standard bathroom. However, this is a bare minimum, and many GTA bathroom renovation professionals recommend sizing your fan based on the actual room size — the industry standard is **1 CFM per square foot of bathroom floor area**, with 50 CFM as the floor regardless of how small the bathroom is. For a typical GTA bathroom at 40–60 square feet, 50–60 CFM is adequate. For a larger master ensuite at 80–120 square feet, you should be looking at **80–120 CFM** fans. Bathrooms with steam showers, large soaker tubs, or multiple showerheads need even more — **100–150 CFM** is appropriate for high-moisture applications.

Venting to the Exterior — No Exceptions

The Ontario Building Code is clear that bathroom exhaust fans must vent to the **exterior of the building** through the roof or an exterior wall. Venting into the attic, soffit, wall cavity, or crawl space is a code violation and one of the most damaging mistakes possible in a bathroom renovation. When warm, moist bathroom air is dumped into a cold attic space during a Toronto winter, it condenses on roof sheathing, insulation, and framing — causing mould growth, wood rot, and potentially ice damming. GTA home inspectors flag attic-vented bathroom fans as a deficiency on virtually every inspection where they find one.

The vent ductwork should be rigid or semi-rigid metal (not flexible vinyl, which sags and collects condensation), properly insulated where it passes through unheated spaces, and as short and straight as possible to maintain airflow efficiency. Every bend in the duct reduces effective CFM, so a fan rated at 80 CFM with three 90-degree elbows and a long duct run may only deliver 50 CFM at the exterior termination.

Condo-Specific Ventilation Challenges

Toronto condo bathroom renovations present unique ventilation considerations. Most condo buildings have **dedicated exhaust duct connections** in each bathroom that tie into the building's ventilation system. When renovating a condo bathroom, you must verify the existing duct connection location, size, and damper configuration before selecting a new fan. Some older Toronto condos have shared exhaust risers with backdraft dampers — installing an overpowered fan can push humid air into neighbouring units through the shared system. Always check with your **building management** about ventilation specifications before upgrading a condo bathroom fan.

Noise, Timers, and Humidity Sensors

Modern bathroom exhaust fans are dramatically quieter than models from even a decade ago. Fan noise is measured in **sones** — look for fans rated at 1.0 sone or less for quiet operation. Many homeowners in the GTA avoid running their bathroom fan because older models are so loud, defeating the entire purpose of having one. A quiet fan that runs properly is infinitely better than a loud fan that never gets turned on.

The Ontario Building Code does not specify controls beyond requiring the fan to be operable, but best practice — and increasingly standard in GTA bathroom renovations — is to install a **timer switch** or **humidity-sensing switch** . A timer ensures the fan runs for 20–30 minutes after you leave the bathroom, removing residual moisture. A humidity sensor activates the fan automatically when moisture levels rise and shuts it off when humidity returns to normal. Both options cost **$30–$80** for the switch and eliminate the most common ventilation failure point: the homeowner forgetting to turn the fan on or turning it off too soon.

Installing or replacing a bathroom exhaust fan requires an **electrical permit** if new wiring is involved, and the installation should be performed by a licensed electrician to ensure proper connection, GFCI protection if required, and compliance with Ontario electrical codes.

Q10

Do I need a separate plumbing permit and electrical permit for a bathroom renovation?

Yes — plumbing permits and electrical permits are separate applications in Ontario, and a bathroom renovation that involves both plumbing and electrical modifications requires both permits independently. They are issued by different authorities, inspected by different inspectors, and follow different code requirements. Understanding this dual-permit system helps you plan your Toronto bathroom renovation timeline and budget accurately.

Plumbing permits in Toronto are issued by the **City of Toronto Building Division**. You need a plumbing permit any time you are adding new drain connections, modifying the drain/waste/vent (DWV) system, relocating supply lines, adding new fixtures (such as a second sink or a new basement bathroom), or installing a backwater valve. The plumbing permit application requires drawings showing the proposed plumbing layout, pipe sizes, and connections. Fees typically range from **$150–$400** for residential bathroom work. The plumbing rough-in inspection must be completed before walls and floors are closed up — the inspector needs to see the pipes, verify proper sizing and slope, and confirm code compliance before anything is concealed.

Electrical permits in Ontario are handled through the **Electrical Safety Authority (ESA)**, which is a separate entity from the city building department. You need an electrical permit for adding GFCI outlets, installing heated floor circuits, wiring new exhaust fans, adding or relocating vanity lighting circuits, and any modifications to existing bathroom wiring. Your licensed electrician typically handles the ESA permit application and schedules the inspection. Fees are generally **$100–$300** for standard residential bathroom electrical work. Like the plumbing inspection, the electrical rough-in inspection must happen before drywall or backer board covers the wiring.

How the Two Permits Work Together

In a typical mid-range GTA bathroom renovation, the construction sequence coordinates both permits into a logical workflow. After demolition, your plumber does the rough-in — relocating drains, running new supply lines, positioning the shower valve. Then your electrician does the rough-in — running circuits for GFCI outlets, the exhaust fan, heated floor, and new lighting. Both inspections happen at the rough-in stage, ideally within a few days of each other so the project can move forward to waterproofing, backer board, and tile without unnecessary delays.

Experienced bathroom contractors in the Greater Toronto Area coordinate this sequencing seamlessly. They schedule the plumber first (since plumbing rough-in involves larger pipes that need to be positioned before electrical runs), then the electrician, then both inspections before closing up walls. A well-organized contractor can get both rough-in inspections completed within the same week, keeping your project on schedule.

When You Need Only One or Neither

Not every bathroom renovation needs both permits. If you are **only doing electrical work** — for example, adding GFCI outlets and a heated floor circuit to a bathroom where the plumbing stays untouched — you need only the ESA electrical permit. If you are **only doing plumbing work** — such as replacing a bathtub with a walk-in shower that requires a new drain position — you need only the plumbing permit (assuming no new electrical is involved).

And as noted earlier, a **purely cosmetic refresh** — new tile, vanity swap in the same location, paint, hardware — typically requires neither permit, since you are not modifying any plumbing connections or electrical wiring.

Budget and Timeline Impact

Combined permit fees for a bathroom renovation involving both plumbing and electrical typically total **$250–$700** — a modest cost relative to the overall project budget. The timeline impact is more significant: allow **2–4 weeks** for permit approvals, and build inspection scheduling into your construction timeline. Rushed permit applications with incomplete drawings get bounced back for revisions, adding unnecessary delays. Your contractor should factor permit timelines into the project schedule from the start.

Q11

What are the code requirements for bathroom outlet placement and GFCI protection in Ontario?

Every electrical outlet in an Ontario bathroom must have GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter) protection — this is a non-negotiable requirement under the Ontario Electrical Safety Code and one of the most important safety features in any bathroom. GFCI protection detects ground faults — situations where electrical current is flowing through an unintended path, such as through water or a person — and cuts power in milliseconds, preventing electrocution.

The requirement is absolute: **all receptacles (outlets) in a bathroom must be GFCI-protected**, regardless of their distance from water sources. This applies to the outlet beside the vanity mirror, the outlet near the toilet for a bidet seat, the outlet for a countertop appliance, and any other receptacle in the room. In older Toronto homes — particularly pre-1980s houses across Scarborough, North York, Etobicoke, and the inner suburbs — bathrooms often have standard outlets without GFCI protection. Upgrading these during a bathroom renovation is essential for safety and code compliance.

How GFCI Protection Works in Practice

You can provide GFCI protection in two ways: with a **GFCI receptacle** (the outlet itself has test and reset buttons) or with a **GFCI circuit breaker** at the electrical panel that protects the entire circuit. Both methods are code-compliant. GFCI receptacles cost **$15–$30** each and are the most common approach in GTA bathroom renovations because they provide visible, accessible test and reset buttons right at the point of use. GFCI circuit breakers cost **$40–$80** and protect every outlet on the circuit — useful when multiple outlets are on the same circuit.

GFCI outlets should be tested monthly by pressing the test button to verify they trip properly, then pressing reset to restore power. This is simple maintenance that many homeowners neglect but is critical for ensuring the safety device actually works when needed.

Outlet Placement and Circuit Requirements

The Ontario Electrical Safety Code requires at least **one duplex receptacle** within reach of the vanity area in every bathroom. In practice, most GTA bathroom renovations include one or two GFCI outlets near the vanity for hair dryers, electric razors, and other grooming appliances, plus an additional outlet near the toilet area if a bidet seat is planned (electronic bidet seats require a nearby outlet on a dedicated or shared bathroom circuit).

Bathroom receptacles should be on a **dedicated 20-amp circuit** that serves only the bathroom — this is current best practice and required by the Ontario Electrical Safety Code for new installations. The 20-amp rating accommodates high-draw appliances like hair dryers (which can pull 12–15 amps) without tripping the breaker. In older Toronto homes, bathroom outlets were often shared with hallway or bedroom circuits on 15-amp breakers — a renovation is the perfect opportunity to upgrade to a dedicated 20-amp bathroom circuit.

Heated Floor and Exhaust Fan Circuits

Beyond receptacles, bathroom electrical work in Ontario includes circuits for **heated floors** and **exhaust fans**, both of which have specific code requirements. Electric radiant floor heating systems must be on a dedicated circuit with GFCI protection — the heating mat or cable manufacturer specifies the circuit size based on the floor area, but **15-amp or 20-amp dedicated circuits** are standard for typical GTA bathroom sizes. The GFCI protection for heated floors is typically provided at the thermostat/control unit or the circuit breaker.

Exhaust fans require their own circuit or can share a lighting circuit depending on the installation. The fan switch should be accessible and, ideally, equipped with a timer or humidity sensor to ensure adequate run time after bathing.

ESA Inspection Is Mandatory

All new or modified bathroom electrical work in Ontario — including GFCI outlet installation, new circuits, heated floor wiring, and fan circuits — requires a permit and **ESA (Electrical Safety Authority) inspection** before being

concealed behind walls or finishes. Your licensed electrician handles the permit application and schedules the inspection. The ESA inspector verifies proper GFCI protection, circuit sizing, wire routing, grounding, and overall compliance with the Ontario Electrical Safety Code.

The cost for upgrading bathroom electrical during a renovation in the GTA typically runs **$500–$2,000** depending on the scope — adding GFCI outlets, a heated floor circuit, new fan wiring, and updated vanity lighting. Given that this work protects your family from electrocution in a wet environment, it is one of the most important investments in any bathroom renovation project.

Q12

If my contractor says permits aren't needed for my bathroom reno, should I be concerned?

Yes, you should be concerned — and you should verify independently whether permits are required before agreeing to proceed without them. A contractor who dismisses permits entirely is either uninformed about Ontario Building Code requirements or intentionally cutting corners, and neither scenario protects you as the homeowner.

The reality is that many bathroom renovations in the GTA do require at least one type of permit. If your project involves **moving or adding plumbing** — relocating a toilet, adding a new shower drain, running new supply lines, or modifying the drain/waste/vent (DWV) system — a plumbing permit is required through the City of Toronto Building Division. If your project involves **any electrical work** — adding a GFCI outlet, wiring a new exhaust fan, installing a heated floor circuit, or running new lighting circuits — an electrical permit is required, and the work must pass an **ESA (Electrical Safety Authority) inspection** before being concealed behind walls.

That said, not every bathroom renovation requires permits. A **cosmetic refresh** — replacing tile, swapping a vanity, installing a new toilet in the same location, painting, and updating fixtures without modifying plumbing or electrical systems — typically does not require a building permit. The key distinction is whether you are changing the plumbing layout, adding new electrical circuits, or modifying structural elements.

Why Permits Matter for Toronto Homeowners

Skipping permits creates several serious problems. When you sell your home, the buyer's home inspector or their lawyer may request permit history from the City of Toronto. **Unpermitted plumbing and electrical work** will show up as a red flag, and the buyer can demand that you open walls for inspection, redo work to current code, or reduce the sale price. In some cases, the municipality can issue an order to comply, requiring you to bring the work up to

code at your expense.

From a safety perspective, permits exist to protect you. A plumbing inspection confirms that drain slopes are correct, venting is adequate, and connections are watertight. An ESA inspection confirms that electrical work in your wet bathroom environment meets safety standards — GFCI protection, proper grounding, correct wire sizing, and safe fixture placement near water sources.

What You Should Do

Before your project starts, **call the City of Toronto Building Division at 416-397-5330** or visit their website to confirm what permits are required for your specific scope of work. You can describe your project and get a clear answer. This takes 15 minutes and can save you thousands of dollars in future problems. Ask your contractor directly: "Which permits are you pulling for this project, and can I see the permit numbers once they're issued?" A reputable GTA bathroom contractor will handle the permit process as part of their scope and will welcome this question — it shows you are an informed homeowner.

Also verify that your contractor carries **WSIB (Workplace Safety and Insurance Board) coverage** and proper liability insurance. A contractor who avoids permits may also be cutting corners on insurance and worker coverage, which creates liability exposure for you as the property owner.

If you need help finding a bathroom renovation contractor who follows proper permitting procedures, Toronto Bath Remodeling can match you with local professionals through the Toronto Construction Network.

Q13

What are the minimum ceiling height requirements for a bathroom under the Ontario Building Code?

The Ontario Building Code (OBC) requires a minimum ceiling height of 2.1 metres (approximately 6 feet 11 inches) in bathrooms. This applies to the finished ceiling height over the usable floor area of the room, and it is a critical dimension to verify when planning a bathroom renovation in a Toronto basement, attic conversion, or any space with non-standard ceiling heights.

For most GTA homes — whether you are in a post-war bungalow in Scarborough, a semi-detached in the Annex, or a modern condo in Mississauga — standard ceiling heights of 8 or 9 feet mean this requirement is easily met on the main floors. Where this code requirement becomes a real planning concern is in **basement bathrooms** and **attic or upper-floor conversions** where ceiling height may be limited by floor joists, ductwork, bulkheads, or sloped roof lines.

Basement Bathroom Considerations

Many older Toronto homes, particularly the post-war bungalows and split-levels common across North York, Etobicoke, and Scarborough, have basement ceiling heights that barely meet or fall short of the 2.1-metre minimum — especially once you account for the finished ceiling material, any dropped ceiling to conceal ductwork or plumbing, and the thickness of finished flooring. If your unfinished basement has a floor-to-joist height of less than **2.3 metres (7 feet 6 inches)**, you may struggle to achieve the required 2.1 metres after finishing.

Strategies to maximize ceiling height in GTA basement bathrooms include using **drywall directly fastened to the joists** rather than a dropped ceiling, routing any ductwork or plumbing around the bathroom perimeter with localized bulkheads rather than dropping the entire ceiling, and using **thin-profile recessed LED pot lights** that fit within the joist cavity without requiring additional depth. A skilled contractor can often work around low-clearance areas by positioning fixtures strategically — for example, placing the toilet and vanity under full-height areas and allowing reduced height only in non-critical zones.

The OBC does allow reduced ceiling height under obstructions such as beams and ducts, provided the obstruction does not reduce the height below 2.0 metres and the obstruction spans less than a specified portion of the room. This means a single bulkhead for a drain line crossing the ceiling may be acceptable even if it dips below 2.1 metres, as long as the main ceiling height meets code.

Shower and Tub Enclosure Heights

For showers and bathtub/shower combinations, the ceiling height above the shower floor must also meet the 2.1-metre minimum. If you are building a **curbless shower with a recessed drain pan**, the effective ceiling height increases slightly because the shower floor is at the same level as the bathroom floor. Conversely, if the bathtub rim sits 14-16 inches above the floor, the standing height within the tub is reduced accordingly — the ceiling height is measured from the standing surface, not the bathroom floor.

Before starting any bathroom renovation in a space with potentially limited ceiling height, **have your contractor verify the finished ceiling height** with measurements that account for all layers — subfloor, finished floor, ceiling framing, drywall, and any mechanical obstructions. If you are adding a basement bathroom in an older Toronto home, this measurement should be one of the first things checked during the planning phase, because if you cannot meet code, the permit will not be approved.

Q14

How do I check if previous bathroom work in my Toronto home was done with proper permits?

You can check permit history for your Toronto property through the City of Toronto's online portal or by contacting the Building Division directly. This is a smart step before starting a new bathroom renovation, because unpermitted previous work can create complications with your current project, affect your insurance coverage, and cause problems when you eventually sell the home.

The **City of Toronto Building Division** maintains records of all building, plumbing, and electrical permits issued for properties within the city. You can search permit records online through the city's **Building Permits Online** portal at toronto.ca. Enter your property address, and the system will show permits that have been issued, along with their status — whether they were closed (inspected and approved), still open (work started but never inspected), or expired. An **open permit** is a red flag — it means work was started under permit but the required inspections were never completed.

For **electrical permits**, the **ESA (Electrical Safety Authority)** maintains a separate database. You can search ESA permit records at esasafe.com or call them directly. Since bathroom renovations frequently involve electrical work — GFCI outlets, exhaust fans, heated floors, lighting circuits — checking ESA records is just as important as checking building permits.

What the Records Will Tell You

Permit records typically include the **type of work permitted** (plumbing, electrical, building), the **date issued**, the **contractor or applicant name**, and the **inspection status**. If you see that a plumbing permit was issued for your address 10 years ago and shows as "closed/final," that means the plumbing work was inspected and approved by the city. If there is no permit history at all for a property that clearly had bathroom work done — new plumbing fixtures in different locations, a basement bathroom that was added, upgraded electrical — that work was likely done without permits.

What to Do If You Find Unpermitted Work

Discovering unpermitted bathroom work does not mean you need to tear everything out. However, you should be aware of the implications. If you are planning a new renovation in the same space, your contractor and the city inspector may require that the previous unpermitted work be brought up to current code as part of the new permit. This can increase your project scope and cost.

For **plumbing concerns**, a licensed plumber can assess whether the existing drain, waste, and vent system meets code — proper drain slopes, adequate venting, correct pipe sizes, and watertight connections. For **electrical concerns**, a licensed electrician can verify that circuits are properly grounded, GFCI protection is in place, wire sizing is correct, and connections are safe. If the work is sound and meets current code, bringing it into compliance may simply require an inspection.

If you are purchasing a home in the GTA, checking permit history should be part of your **due diligence** before closing. Your real estate lawyer can request a permit search, or you can do it yourself through the city's online portal. Many Toronto home buyers have been surprised to discover that a "renovated bathroom" highlighted in the listing was done entirely without permits — which shifts the cost of compliance onto them after purchase.

For properties outside the City of Toronto but within the GTA — Mississauga, Brampton, Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Oakville, and other municipalities — each city has its own building department with permit records. The process is similar: contact the local building department with your property address.

Q15

Does adding a basement bathroom require different permits than renovating an existing one?

Yes, adding a new basement bathroom requires more extensive permitting than renovating an existing one, because you are creating new plumbing connections, new electrical circuits, and potentially modifying the building's drainage system. The scope of permits depends on exactly what work is involved, but a new basement

bathroom in a Toronto home almost always requires a building permit, a plumbing permit, and an electrical permit.

When you **renovate an existing bathroom** — swapping tile, replacing a vanity, installing a new toilet in the same location, updating fixtures — and you are not moving plumbing or adding electrical circuits, you may not need any permits at all. The moment you start relocating drains, adding new supply lines, or running new electrical circuits, permits come into play. But you are still working within an already-approved bathroom space with existing plumbing and electrical infrastructure.

A **new basement bathroom** is a different scope entirely. You are adding a room that did not previously exist as a bathroom, which means new plumbing rough-in, new electrical services, and potentially ventilation and structural considerations that require formal approval from the City of Toronto Building Division.

Plumbing Permits and the Basement Challenge

The plumbing permit for a new basement bathroom covers the connection of toilet, sink, and shower or tub drains to the home's existing DWV (drain/waste/vent) system. Many Toronto homes built from the 1970s onward have **rough-in plumbing** already in place in the basement — a capped drain and supply lines installed during original construction in anticipation of a future bathroom. If your home has a rough-in, the plumbing work is simpler: your licensed plumber connects to the existing rough-in stub-outs. Expect to pay **$1,500-$3,000** for plumbing in this scenario.

If there is **no rough-in**, the plumbing work is significantly more involved. Your plumber will need to cut into the concrete basement floor to install drain lines, connect to the main sewer stack, and install proper venting. This work typically costs **$3,000-$7,000** depending on the distance from the existing sewer stack and the complexity of the routing. A **backwater valve** is also strongly recommended (and required by many GTA municipalities) to prevent sewer backup into your basement bathroom — a real concern in Toronto's aging sewer infrastructure during heavy rainstorms.

Electrical and Building Permits

The electrical permit covers new circuits for bathroom lighting, a GFCI-protected outlet (code-required), the exhaust fan, and any heated floor system. All electrical work must be done by a licensed electrician and inspected by the **ESA (Electrical Safety Authority)** before being concealed behind drywall.

The building permit covers the overall construction — framing, insulation, drywall, ventilation, and compliance with Ontario Building Code requirements for room dimensions, ceiling height (minimum 2.1 metres), and egress. If your basement bathroom includes a shower, the inspector will verify that proper **waterproofing** is installed before tile goes up.

GTA-Specific Considerations

In older Toronto homes — particularly pre-1970s houses in established neighbourhoods — basement ceiling heights can be tight, and the distance from the proposed bathroom to the existing sewer stack affects both cost and feasibility. Your contractor should assess these factors during the planning phase before you invest in permit applications.

Basement bathroom permits in Toronto typically cost **$300-$800** total for the building, plumbing, and electrical permits combined. The permit process takes **2-4 weeks** for approval. Budget **$10,000-$25,000** for a complete new basement bathroom depending on whether rough-in plumbing exists, your finish level, and the complexity of the space.

Getting proper permits for a basement bathroom protects your investment and ensures the work is safe and code-compliant — which matters significantly when you sell your home.

Q16

What are Toronto's requirements for WSIB coverage when hiring a bathroom renovation contractor?

In Ontario, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) provides workplace injury insurance, and homeowners should verify that their bathroom renovation contractor carries active WSIB coverage before any work begins. While the legal requirements around WSIB for residential renovation contractors have some nuance, the practical recommendation is clear: always hire contractors with WSIB coverage to protect yourself from liability.

Under Ontario's **Workplace Safety and Insurance Act**, construction is a mandatory coverage industry — meaning construction businesses with employees are required to register with WSIB and maintain active coverage. This includes bathroom renovation contractors, plumbers, electricians, tile installers, and other trades working on your GTA bathroom project. Independent operators (sole proprietors with no employees) may not be legally required to carry WSIB but can opt for voluntary **Independent Operator coverage**.

Here is why this matters to you as a homeowner: if a worker is injured on your property and the contractor does not have WSIB coverage, **you as the homeowner could be held liable for the worker's medical costs, lost wages, and rehabilitation expenses.** This is not a theoretical risk — construction work involves power tools, heavy materials, scaffolding, and the physical demands of demolition and installation. Bathroom renovations specifically involve working in confined spaces, lifting heavy tubs and tile, and using sharp cutting tools.

How to Verify WSIB Coverage

Before signing a contract, ask your contractor for their **WSIB Clearance Certificate**. This document confirms that the contractor is registered with WSIB and that their account is in good standing — meaning their premiums are paid and their coverage is active. You can also verify a contractor's WSIB status independently through the **WSIB website** at wsib.ca using their online clearance certificate tool. You will need the contractor's legal business name or WSIB account number.

A valid clearance certificate should be **current** — they have an expiry date, so check that the certificate covers the period during which your bathroom renovation will take place. For longer projects, you may want to request an updated certificate partway through.

What About Subcontractors?

Bathroom renovations typically involve multiple trades — a general contractor managing the project, plus subcontractors for plumbing, electrical, tile, and possibly drywall and painting. **Each subcontractor should carry**

their own WSIB coverage. Ask your general contractor whether their subcontractors are WSIB-registered and request clearance certificates for each trade that will be working in your home. A professional GTA bathroom contractor will have this documentation readily available and will not be offended by the request.

WSIB Plus Liability Insurance

WSIB coverage and **general liability insurance** are two separate things, and you want your contractor to carry both. WSIB covers worker injuries. General liability insurance covers damage to your property — if a plumber accidentally floods your basement, if a tile saw damages your hardwood floor, or if demolition causes unintended structural damage. A reputable Toronto bathroom contractor will carry a minimum of **$2 million in general liability insurance** along with active WSIB coverage.

Ask for proof of both before work begins, and keep copies in your project file. If a contractor hesitates or refuses to provide WSIB clearance and proof of insurance, that is a significant red flag. In a market as active as the GTA, there is no shortage of professional, properly insured bathroom renovation contractors — do not settle for one who cannot provide basic documentation.

Need help finding a properly insured bathroom renovation contractor? Toronto Bath Remodeling can match you with local professionals through the Toronto Construction Network.

Q17

Are there specific code requirements for shower glass and tempered glass in Ontario bathrooms?

Yes, the Ontario Building Code and CSA (Canadian Standards Association) standards require that all glass used in shower enclosures, bathtub enclosures, and other hazardous locations in bathrooms must be safety glass — specifically tempered glass or laminated glass. This is a non-negotiable safety requirement, and any shower glass installed in your Toronto bathroom must comply.

Tempered glass is glass that has been heat-treated to be approximately four times stronger than regular annealed glass. More importantly, when tempered glass breaks, it shatters into small, relatively harmless granular pieces rather than large, sharp shards that can cause serious lacerations. In a wet, slippery bathroom environment where a person could fall against or through a glass enclosure, this safety characteristic is critical.

The Ontario Building Code references **CSA A500, "Building Guards,"** and the National Building Code provisions for safety glazing in hazardous locations. Bathrooms are classified as hazardous locations for glass because of the combination of wet surfaces, bare skin, and the risk of slipping. Specifically, safety glass is required in the following

bathroom applications:

- **Shower doors and shower enclosures** — all glass panels, whether hinged, sliding, or fixed
- **Bathtub enclosures** — glass panels or doors adjacent to or enclosing a bathtub
- **Glass within 600 mm (approximately 24 inches) of a bathtub or shower** — even if not part of the enclosure itself, glass panels near wet areas must be safety glass
- **Glass doors** leading into a bathroom
- **Mirrors** in certain applications near tubs and showers (though standard mirrors are generally exempt if wall-mounted above vanities at standard height)

Glass Thickness and Quality Standards

For frameless shower enclosures — which are the dominant style in GTA bathroom renovations right now — the industry standard is **10mm (3/8-inch) tempered glass**. This thickness provides the structural rigidity needed for a frameless panel that is supported only by hinges and minimal hardware. Semi-frameless enclosures may use **8mm (5/16-inch) tempered glass**, while framed shower doors can use **6mm (1/4-inch) tempered glass** because the frame provides additional structural support.

All tempered glass installed in Ontario must carry a **permanent CSA certification mark** or equivalent safety glazing identification etched into the glass. This small etched logo, usually found in a corner of the glass panel, confirms that the glass has been manufactured and tested to Canadian safety standards. If you cannot find this marking on your shower glass, the glass may not be properly certified tempered glass.

GTA Installation Considerations

When selecting shower glass for your Toronto bathroom renovation, consider that **quality matters significantly** for longevity in a wet environment. Budget shower enclosures using thin glass with plastic rollers and lightweight hardware deteriorate quickly — the rollers fail, the hardware corrodes, and the seals degrade within 3-5 years. Quality shower glass with **stainless steel or solid brass hardware**, heavy-duty hinges, and proper glass treatment (such as EnduroShield or similar nano-coating that repels water and reduces cleaning) costs more upfront but lasts 15-20 years.

Expect to pay **$800-$1,500** for a quality framed sliding shower door, **$1,200-$2,500** for a semi-frameless enclosure, and **$1,500-$4,000+** for a custom frameless glass enclosure in the GTA market. Custom frameless glass for larger walk-in or curbless showers can exceed $5,000 depending on the size and configuration.

Your contractor or glass installer should ensure that all glass panels are properly tempered, CSA-certified, and installed with appropriate hardware rated for the wet bathroom environment. This is one area where cutting costs leads to both safety risks and premature failure.

Q18

What happens at a final inspection after a permitted bathroom renovation — what are they checking?

At a final inspection, the city building inspector verifies that all permitted work — plumbing, electrical, and general construction — has been completed according to the Ontario Building Code and the approved permit drawings. Understanding what inspectors look for helps you ensure your GTA bathroom renovation passes on the first visit, avoiding delays and re-inspection fees.

It is important to understand that a bathroom renovation with plumbing and electrical permits typically involves **multiple inspections at different stages**, not just one final visit. The final inspection is the last step, but earlier inspections must have been completed and passed before you reach this point.

Inspection Stages for a Typical Toronto Bathroom Renovation

Rough-in plumbing inspection happens after your plumber has installed all drain, waste, and vent piping and supply lines, but before walls are closed up. The inspector verifies correct pipe sizes, proper drain slopes (typically 1/4 inch per foot for horizontal drains), adequate venting, secure connections, and that the installation matches the approved permit drawings. They may conduct a water test or air pressure test on the DWV system to check for leaks.

ESA electrical inspection occurs after your electrician has run all new wiring — circuits for GFCI outlets, exhaust fan, heated floor, and lighting — but before drywall covers the wiring. The ESA inspector checks wire sizing, proper circuit protection, GFCI placement, grounding, junction box installation, and code-compliant fixture locations relative to water sources. **All bathroom outlets must have GFCI protection** — this is one of the most commonly checked items.

Waterproofing inspection may be required before tile installation. The inspector verifies that an approved waterproof membrane — Schluter Kerdi, liquid-applied membrane such as RedGard or Mapei AquaDefense, or equivalent — has been properly installed in the shower and tub surround areas. The membrane must be continuous, with all seams sealed and corners properly treated.

The Final Inspection

At the final inspection, the building inspector conducts an overall review of the completed bathroom. They are checking that **all previously inspected rough-in work has been properly enclosed**, that finish work meets code, and that the bathroom is safe for occupancy. Specific items they verify include:

Plumbing fixtures and function — the inspector will run water to each fixture (toilet, sink, shower/tub) to verify proper drainage, check for leaks at connections, confirm that the toilet is securely mounted, and verify that hot and cold supply lines are correctly connected. They check that **anti-scald protection** is in place — thermostatic or pressure-balance shower valves are mandatory under the Ontario Building Code, with a maximum delivery temperature of 49 degrees Celsius.

Electrical completion — GFCI outlets tested for proper trip/reset function, exhaust fan operation verified, all light fixtures properly installed and functioning, heated floor system operational with proper thermostat and GFCI protection.

Ventilation — the exhaust fan must be properly ducted to the exterior of the home (not into the attic, soffit, or wall cavity), and the ductwork must be insulated where it passes through unheated spaces to prevent condensation. Minimum 50 CFM capacity for standard bathrooms.

General construction — minimum fixture clearances (15 inches from toilet centre to wall, 21 inches clear space in front of toilet and vanity), proper door swing or pocket door function, and accessibility features if specified in the permit.

Tips for Passing Inspection in Toronto

Make sure your contractor schedules inspections at the correct stages — do not close up walls before rough-in inspections are complete. Keep the permit posted visibly on site. Ensure access to all inspection points — the inspector needs to see shut-off valves, electrical panels, and fixture connections. A professional GTA bathroom contractor manages the inspection schedule as part of their project workflow, coordinating with the city and ESA to minimize delays.

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