

OTTAWA BATHROOMS

Vanity & Fixtures

Vanities, sinks, faucets, toilets, mirrors, and fixture
selection

13 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

ottawabathrooms.ca/construction-brain

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Q1

What vanity storage options are best?

The best vanity storage options depend on your bathroom size and daily routine, but drawers consistently outperform cabinets for accessibility and organization. Modern vanities offer clever storage solutions that can dramatically improve your bathroom's functionality.

Drawer-based vanities are the gold standard for bathroom storage. Full-extension soft-close drawers allow you to see and reach everything easily, unlike deep cabinets where items get lost in the back. Look for vanities with varying drawer heights - shallow top drawers for daily essentials like toothbrushes and makeup, medium drawers for hair tools and medications, and deep bottom drawers for towels and bulk items. Many Ottawa homeowners are choosing vanities with built-in drawer dividers and organizers that keep everything in its place.

Double vanity configurations work exceptionally well in master bathrooms, giving each person dedicated storage space. Consider asymmetrical designs where one side has drawers for daily items while the other features a combination of drawers and open shelving for decorative storage. **Floating vanities** create visual space in smaller bathrooms while still offering substantial storage - the open area underneath can accommodate baskets or a small stool.

For **Ottawa's older homes** with smaller bathrooms, corner vanities or narrow vanities with vertical storage make excellent use of limited space. Wall-mounted medicine cabinets above the vanity add storage without eating into floor space. **Recessed storage** between wall studs creates additional space for toiletries without protruding into the room.

Practical storage features to prioritize include soft-close hinges and drawer slides, adjustable shelving, built-in electrical outlets for charging devices, and pull-out waste bins. Avoid vanities with fixed shelves that can't adapt to your changing storage needs.

For a free consultation on vanity options that maximize your bathroom's storage potential, Ottawa Bathrooms can help you design the perfect solution for your space and lifestyle.

Q2

Can I use a dresser as a bathroom vanity?

Yes, you can convert a dresser into a bathroom vanity, but it requires proper waterproofing and modifications to handle the moisture and plumbing requirements of a bathroom environment.

The key challenge is moisture protection. Regular furniture isn't designed for bathroom humidity and water exposure. You'll need to seal all surfaces with marine-grade polyurethane or specialized bathroom furniture sealant, paying special attention to the interior where plumbing will be installed. The top will need to be replaced or heavily reinforced to support a countertop and sink.

Plumbing modifications are essential for this conversion. You'll need to cut holes for supply lines and drain connections, which can weaken the structure if not done properly. The back panel typically needs to be removed or modified for wall-mounted plumbing access. Most dressers also require additional internal bracing to handle the weight of a filled sink and daily use.

In Ottawa's climate, proper ventilation becomes even more critical with furniture-based vanities due to our temperature fluctuations and humidity changes. The conversion works best with solid wood pieces rather than particle board or MDF, which can swell and deteriorate quickly in bathroom conditions. You'll also want to elevate the vanity slightly off the floor to prevent water damage from minor flooding.

Consider the practical aspects - drawer functionality may be limited once plumbing is installed, and you'll need to ensure adequate clearance for P-trap access. The electrical outlet placement should be confirmed before finalizing the vanity position.

For a professional assessment of your specific dresser and bathroom layout, Ottawa Bathrooms can evaluate the feasibility and handle the plumbing modifications to ensure a long-lasting, code-compliant installation.

Q3

What countertop material is best for bathroom vanities?

Quartz is generally the best countertop material for bathroom vanities due to its non-porous surface, durability, and low maintenance requirements. It resists stains, doesn't require sealing, and handles daily water exposure exceptionally well.

Quartz countertops offer the ideal combination of beauty and practicality for bathrooms. Unlike natural stone, engineered quartz is completely non-porous, meaning it won't absorb water, toothpaste, makeup, or other bathroom products that could cause staining. The material is also highly resistant to scratches and chips from dropped items like hair tools or cosmetic bottles. In Ottawa's market, expect to pay \$60-120 per square foot installed for quality quartz.

Natural stone options like granite and marble remain popular but require more maintenance. Granite needs annual sealing to prevent water damage and staining, while marble is prone to etching from acidic products like

certain cleaners or beauty products. However, both offer unique natural beauty that many homeowners prefer. Granite typically runs \$50-90 per square foot installed in Ottawa, while marble ranges from \$70-150 per square foot.

For budget-conscious renovations, solid surface materials like Corian (\$40-80 per square foot) or high-quality laminate (\$20-50 per square foot) can work well. Solid surface is non-porous and repairable, though it can scratch more easily than quartz. Modern laminate has improved significantly and can mimic stone appearances convincingly.

Consider your vanity size and usage patterns when selecting materials. Double vanities with heavy daily use benefit most from quartz's durability, while powder room vanities might accommodate more delicate materials. Also factor in your home's resale value - quartz and granite typically offer the best return on investment for bathroom renovations in the Ottawa market.

For a free estimate on vanity installation with your preferred countertop material, request a quote from Ottawa Bathrooms.

Q4

What is a floating vanity, and is it better than a regular one?

A **floating vanity** is a wall-mounted bathroom vanity that appears to "float" above the floor, creating open space underneath. Unlike traditional vanities that sit directly on the floor, floating vanities are secured to wall studs with heavy-duty brackets, giving your bathroom a modern, streamlined appearance.

Floating vanities offer several practical advantages over traditional floor-mounted units. The open floor space underneath makes cleaning much easier - you can sweep and mop right under the vanity without navigating around cabinet legs or toe kicks. This also creates the illusion of more space, which is particularly valuable in smaller Ottawa bathrooms. The contemporary look works well with modern design trends and can make your bathroom feel less cluttered.

From a **maintenance perspective**, floating vanities provide better access to plumbing connections since pipes and shut-off valves remain visible and accessible underneath. This can save money on future repairs or modifications. The elevated design also protects the vanity from potential water damage during floor cleaning or minor flooding incidents.

However, **proper installation is critical** for floating vanities. They require secure mounting to wall studs and may need additional blocking during construction, especially for heavier stone countertops. The wall behind must be structurally sound, and in older Ottawa homes, this sometimes means reinforcing the framing. Weight capacity is also limited compared to floor-mounted vanities - typically 100-200 pounds depending on the mounting system.

Traditional vanities still have advantages in certain situations. They offer more storage space since you can utilize the full height, they're generally less expensive to install, and they work better with pedestal-style designs. For families needing maximum storage, a floor-mounted vanity with drawers extending to the floor provides more capacity.

For most Ottawa bathroom renovations, floating vanities work excellently and are increasingly popular. The key is ensuring proper installation with adequate wall support. Want to discuss which vanity style would work best for your specific bathroom layout? We offer free consultations to help you make the right choice for your renovation project.

Q5

Are vessel sinks practical or just for looks?

Vessel sinks can be both practical and stylish, but their functionality depends heavily on proper installation and your specific needs. When installed correctly with appropriate faucet height and counter positioning, they offer excellent usability while creating a stunning focal point.

The practical advantages of vessel sinks include easier cleaning around the basin since there's no rim sealed to the counter, and they're typically easier to replace without counter modifications. The elevated bowl position can also be more comfortable for taller users, reducing back strain during daily use. Many vessel sinks offer generous bowl depth, providing ample space for washing without splashing.

However, there are practical considerations to address. The faucet must be positioned at the correct height - typically 6-8 inches above the rim - to prevent splashing while ensuring comfortable reach. Counter space around the sink becomes more limited since the basin sits on top rather than dropping in. Water can also splash more easily if the faucet height isn't properly calculated, and some users find the elevated rim height awkward for tasks like washing hair or filling large containers.

In Ottawa bathrooms, vessel sinks work particularly well in powder rooms and master ensuite vanities where the dramatic visual impact enhances the space. They're less ideal for busy family bathrooms where practicality trumps aesthetics. Popular materials in the Ottawa market include natural stone, ceramic, and glass, with prices ranging from \$200-\$1,500 for the sink alone, plus installation costs.

For optimal results, choose a vessel sink with adequate depth (at least 4 inches), ensure your vanity can accommodate the plumbing modifications, and work with an experienced contractor to achieve the proper faucet positioning. The key is balancing the striking visual appeal with thoughtful installation that prioritizes daily usability.

Q6

Do I need a special pump for a basement toilet?

Most basement toilets don't need a special pump if they're above the main sewer line, but toilets installed below the sewer line require an **ejector pump system** to move waste upward to the main drainage system.

The need for a pump depends on your basement's elevation relative to Ottawa's municipal sewer system. In many Ottawa homes, basements are high enough that gravity can carry waste to the street connection. However, if your basement floor is below the sewer line level, or if you're installing a toilet in a lower area like a basement bathroom, you'll need an **sewage ejector pump**.

Sewage ejector pumps are specifically designed for basement toilets and handle solid waste, unlike smaller sump pumps that only move water. These systems include a sealed pit (usually 18-24 inches deep), a powerful pump,

and a discharge pipe that connects to your main sewer line above ground level. The entire system must be properly vented according to Ontario Building Code requirements.

In Ottawa's typical residential construction, homes built on slabs or with walkout basements often don't need pumps, while homes with traditional basements that are several feet below grade usually do. **City of Ottawa requirements may vary - confirm with your licensed contractor** who can assess your specific situation and determine the proper pump sizing and installation requirements.

Installing a sewage ejector system requires plumbing permits and should only be done by licensed plumbers due to the complexity of the electrical connections, venting requirements, and potential health hazards if installed incorrectly. The system typically adds \$2,000 - \$5,000 to a basement bathroom project in Ottawa.

For a proper assessment of your basement toilet requirements and pump needs, consult with licensed contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network who can evaluate your home's specific drainage situation.

Q7

My vanity is peeling, can I just repaint it?

Yes, you can repaint a peeling vanity, but success depends on proper preparation and using the right materials for the bathroom environment. The key is addressing why it's peeling in the first place - usually moisture damage or poor surface prep from previous paint jobs.

Surface preparation is critical for a lasting finish. You'll need to sand down to stable paint or bare wood, removing all loose and peeling areas. If the peeling goes down to bare wood, you may have moisture damage that needs addressing first. Clean thoroughly with TSP (trisodium phosphate) to remove soap residue and oils that prevent paint adhesion.

For bathroom vanities, use high-quality primer and paint designed for moisture-rich environments. A bonding primer like Zinsser Bulls Eye 1-2-3 or similar will help the new paint stick to glossy surfaces. Follow with a semi-gloss or satin finish paint that can handle humidity and frequent cleaning. Avoid flat paints in bathrooms as they're harder to clean and more prone to moisture damage.

In Ottawa's climate with temperature swings and humidity changes, proper ventilation during and after painting is essential. Allow extra drying time between coats, especially in winter when humidity levels can be higher indoors.

Consider the vanity's condition overall - if it's an older unit with multiple paint failures, extensive water damage, or poor construction, replacement might be more cost-effective than repeated repainting. A new vanity with countertop typically runs \$800-\$3,000 installed, depending on size and materials.

For extensive prep work or if you discover water damage during the process, consulting with renovation professionals can help determine if repair or replacement makes more sense for your situation.

Q8

Why does my toilet keep running?

A running toilet is typically caused by a faulty flapper, chain adjustment issue, or water level problem in the tank. Most of these are simple fixes you can handle yourself with basic tools.

The most common culprit is the **rubber flapper at the bottom of the tank** not sealing properly against the flush valve seat. Over time, flappers warp, crack, or accumulate mineral buildup that prevents a tight seal. When water continuously leaks past the flapper, the fill valve keeps running to maintain water level. Remove the toilet tank lid

and check if the flapper is sitting flat - if it's warped or has buildup around the edges, replacing it usually costs under \$10.

Chain length problems are another frequent cause. If the chain connecting the flush handle to the flapper is too long, the flapper won't lift fully during flushing. If it's too short, the flapper can't close completely. The chain should have just enough slack to allow the flapper to seal but not so much that it gets caught under the flapper.

Water level issues can also cause continuous running. The water level should sit about 1 inch below the rim of the overflow tube. If it's too high, water spills into the overflow tube and the toilet runs constantly. This usually indicates a problem with the fill valve or float mechanism. In Ottawa's hard water areas, mineral buildup on these components is common and may require cleaning or replacement.

When to call a professional: If adjusting the chain, replacing the flapper, and checking water levels doesn't solve the problem, you may have a worn fill valve, cracked flush valve seat, or other internal damage requiring replacement parts and plumbing knowledge.

For persistent toilet issues or if you're planning a bathroom upgrade with a new comfort-height toilet, Ottawa Bathrooms can help with professional installation and ensure everything meets Ontario plumbing code requirements.

Q9

What size vanity fits in a small bathroom?

For small bathrooms, vanities between 24-36 inches wide typically work best, with 30 inches being the most popular choice that balances storage with space efficiency.

Vanity sizing depends on your bathroom's layout and clearance requirements. You'll need at least 15 inches of clearance from the vanity edge to any wall or fixture, and 30 inches of clear floor space in front for comfortable use. In tight spaces, a 24-inch vanity can work, but you'll sacrifice some storage and counter space. A 36-inch vanity is often the maximum that works in smaller bathrooms without overwhelming the space.

In Ottawa's older homes, many powder rooms and secondary bathrooms measure 5x8 feet or smaller, making space planning crucial. Corner vanities can be excellent space-savers, typically measuring 24x24 inches while providing good storage. Wall-mounted vanities also create the illusion of more space by showing floor underneath, and they make cleaning easier.

Consider depth as well as width - standard vanities are 21 inches deep, but you can find 18-inch depth models for very tight spaces. Single-sink vanities in the 30-36 inch range offer the best combination of functionality and proportion for most small bathrooms. Choose lighter colors and add good lighting to make the space feel larger.

Before purchasing, measure your space carefully and consider the door swing, toilet placement, and any heating vents. A professional can help optimize your layout to maximize both storage and functionality. For a free consultation on your small bathroom renovation, Ottawa Bathrooms can help you find the perfect vanity solution that makes the most of your space.

Q10

Are touchless faucets good for bathroom sinks?

Touchless faucets are excellent for bathroom sinks, offering significant hygiene benefits and convenience, especially in family bathrooms and powder rooms where multiple people wash their hands throughout the day.

Hygiene and convenience are the primary advantages of touchless bathroom faucets. They eliminate the need to touch potentially contaminated handles after using the toilet or before washing hands, making them particularly valuable during flu season or when you have young children. The automatic operation is also convenient when your hands are dirty or full, and many models include temperature memory settings that maintain your preferred water temperature.

Modern touchless faucets have become much more reliable than early models, with improved sensors that respond consistently without false activations. Battery-powered models typically last 1-2 years on a single set of batteries, while hardwired versions eliminate battery concerns entirely. Most quality units include manual override options and adjustable sensor sensitivity to prevent accidental activation.

In Ottawa's market, expect to invest \$300-800 for a quality touchless bathroom faucet, plus \$200-400 for professional installation. Popular brands like Moen, Delta, and Kohler offer reliable options with good warranty coverage. The installation requires electrical connections for hardwired models, which should be handled by licensed contractors to ensure proper GFCI protection in bathroom environments.

Consider your bathroom's specific needs when choosing between battery and hardwired models. Battery units are easier to install but require periodic maintenance, while hardwired versions need electrical rough-in work but offer long-term reliability. Look for models with adjustable run times (typically 10-60 seconds) and easy sensor cleaning features.

For professional installation of touchless faucets or complete bathroom upgrades, Ottawa Bathrooms can ensure proper electrical connections and optimal sensor positioning for reliable operation.

Q11

Will a black bathroom faucet show water spots?

Yes, black bathroom faucets will show water spots and fingerprints more readily than chrome or brushed finishes. The dark surface creates contrast that makes mineral deposits, soap residue, and water droplets highly visible, especially in Ottawa's hard water areas.

Matte black finishes tend to show spots less than glossy black, but both require more frequent cleaning than traditional finishes. The good news is that water spots wipe away easily with a microfiber cloth - the key is staying on top of daily maintenance rather than letting buildup accumulate.

In Ottawa's water conditions, which contain moderate mineral content, you'll notice white calcium and lime spots forming quickly on black fixtures. A daily wipe-down after use prevents most spotting, while weekly cleaning with a mild cleaner keeps the finish looking pristine. Avoid abrasive cleaners that can damage the coating.

Design-wise, black faucets create stunning focal points and pair beautifully with white vanities, natural stone, or subway tile. Many Ottawa homeowners choose black fixtures for the dramatic contrast, accepting the extra maintenance as worthwhile for the aesthetic impact. Consider the overall bathroom design - busy patterns can help camouflage occasional spots between cleanings.

For your specific situation, think about your cleaning preferences and bathroom usage. High-traffic powder rooms might benefit from more forgiving finishes like brushed nickel, while a master ensuite where you control the maintenance routine can showcase black beautifully. Quality black finishes from reputable manufacturers also tend to resist spotting better than budget options.

For help selecting the right faucet finish for your bathroom renovation, Ottawa Bathrooms can guide you through options that balance style with practicality for your specific needs.

Q12

What is a comfort height toilet?

A **comfort height toilet** is a toilet that sits 2-3 inches higher than standard toilets, with the seat typically measuring 17-19 inches from the floor compared to the standard 15 inches. This height matches the standard height of most chairs, making it much easier to sit down and stand up.

Comfort height toilets are particularly beneficial for taller individuals, seniors, and anyone with mobility challenges or knee problems. The higher seat reduces the strain on joints when transitioning from sitting to standing. Many people find them more comfortable for daily use regardless of age or mobility concerns. They're also called "chair height" or "right height" toilets by different manufacturers.

In Ottawa's aging population, comfort height toilets have become increasingly popular in bathroom renovations. They're considered a universal design feature that improves accessibility without looking like a medical device.

Installation costs are the same as standard toilets, typically \$400-\$800 installed, since the rough-in plumbing dimensions remain identical.

When choosing a comfort height toilet, look for **WaterSense certified models** that use 4.8 liters per flush or less to meet Ontario's water efficiency standards. Popular brands like Kohler, American Standard, and TOTO offer extensive comfort height collections. Consider features like dual-flush technology, soft-close seats, and easy-clean surfaces for added convenience.

If you're planning a bathroom renovation or accessibility upgrade, comfort height toilets pair well with other universal design features like grab bars and walk-in showers. For a free estimate on your bathroom renovation including comfort height toilet installation, request a quote from Ottawa Bathrooms.

How high should a bathroom vanity be?

Standard bathroom vanity height is 32-34 inches, but the ideal height depends on the users' heights and preferences. Modern trends favor taller vanities for better ergonomics and a more contemporary look.

Traditional vs. Comfort Height Options

Most older bathrooms have 32-inch vanities, which were designed when average heights were shorter. Today's **comfort height vanities** typically measure 34-36 inches, reducing back strain when using the sink. For households with taller family members, 36-inch vanities provide much better ergonomics for daily tasks like brushing teeth and washing faces.

Choosing the Right Height for Your Family

The best vanity height allows users to stand comfortably without hunching over the sink. A good test is standing with your hands flat on the counter - your arms should be slightly bent, not straight or severely angled. For families with varying heights, 34-35 inches often works as a good compromise. **Double vanity installations** can even accommodate different heights for each sink area.

Ottawa Installation Considerations

In Ottawa's older homes, you may need to adjust plumbing connections when upgrading to a taller vanity. The existing drain and supply lines might require modification, especially if moving from a 32-inch to 36-inch vanity. Licensed contractors ensure proper connections and that the installation meets Ontario Building Code requirements for fixture spacing and accessibility.

Design and Resale Impact

Taller vanities create a more luxurious appearance and align with current design trends. They also provide better storage in the base cabinets. For resale value in Ottawa's market, 34-36 inch vanities are preferred by most buyers, particularly in master bathrooms where comfort height fixtures are expected.

For a professional vanity installation that ensures proper height and plumbing connections, request a quote from Ottawa Bathrooms for your bathroom renovation project.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Bathrooms. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any construction or renovation project. Information is current as of February 23, 2026 and may change. Visit ottawabathrooms.ca for the latest answers.