CALGARY PLUMBING PRO

Basement Bathrooms & Rough-Ins

Adding a basement bathroom, rough-in plumbing, drain slope and venting, sewage ejector pumps, laundry moves and plumbing for a renovation

4 Expert Answers from Plumbing IQ

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Q1

Upflush toilet or cutting concrete for a Calgary basement bathroom?

Cutting concrete for a full rough-in typically runs $2,500 to $5,500 in Calgary, rising to about $8,000 where the concrete is thick or the drain is deep. An upflush (macerating) system costs less to install but carries its own trade-offs worth understanding before you decide.

The core choice

A conventional rough-in means a plumber cuts the concrete floor, ties into the existing drain and vent stack, and pours new concrete when done. You get gravity drainage, no mechanical parts to service, and a bathroom that looks and functions like any other. The cost swings on how deep your existing drain sits, how much concrete comes up, whether the floor drain or laundry line is nearby, and how far the new toilet, sink and shower are from the stack. Labour alone on a complex dig can push the total toward the upper end of that range.

An upflush toilet uses a macerator pump to grind waste and push it up and horizontally to the existing drain, so no concrete is cut. The unit costs less to install because no concrete is cut; ask for the unit and labour to be priced separately. The honest trade-offs: the pump is a mechanical component that will eventually need service or replacement, the unit is audible when it runs, and it is worth asking your insurer whether it affects your coverage. If you want a full bathroom with a shower, you need a system rated for that, and the shower still has to drain somewhere, which may mean a small amount of concrete work anyway.

A plumber needs to see your existing drain depth and location before either option makes sense. If the drain is already close to the floor slab, a conventional rough-in may be simpler than it sounds. If it sits deep, the dig is more involved and the upflush option becomes more attractive on cost.

Permits and certification in Calgary

A basement bathroom rough-in requires a plumbing permit from the City of Calgary. That applies whether you are cutting concrete or installing a macerating system, because you are adding to the plumbing system. Paid work must be done by a certified journeyperson plumber or a registered apprentice working under one; this is a compulsory trade in Alberta under the Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Education Act. A homeowner who owns and lives in the home may apply for the plumbing permit and do the work themselves, but the City will not issue a homeowner permit for concealed plumbing that was done without a permit first. The City inspects at rough-in and again at final.

What a fair quote covers

Ask each plumber to give you a written price that spells out: the scope (gravity rough-in or macerating system, which fixtures), whether the price is fixed or hourly, the equipment by model, the permit and inspection, concrete

cutting and patching, disposal of the spoil, and the warranty on both parts and labour. Compare quotes by scope, not just the bottom line.

Before signing anything, ask to see the plumber's trade certificate, confirm they hold an Alberta prepaid contracting licence if they are taking a deposit before the work is done, and request a WCB-Alberta clearance letter. For a job of this size, a written contract with a holdback until the work passes final inspection is worth insisting on.

One more thing worth doing before you call a plumber: check with your home insurer about whether a macerating system affects your coverage, since that answer shapes which option makes the most sense for your house.

Q2

How deep is the main drain in a typical Calgary basement?

Basement drain depth in Calgary varies too much from house to house for a reliable single figure, and this is one of those cases where the honest answer is: a camera inspection tells you far more than any rule of thumb.

What actually determines drain depth here

The depth of a basement floor drain or the main sanitary drain running beneath the slab depends on several overlapping factors: when the house was built, how the lot was graded, how deep the City's sewer main sits in the street, and how much fall the original plumber needed to get drainage to flow. There is no single "Calgary standard."

This matters most when a homeowner wants to add a basement bathroom, a floor drain or a backwater valve, because the contractor has to know whether there is enough depth to tie in new fixtures with the required slope, or whether a sewage ejector pump is needed instead. It also matters for sewer line repairs: a deeper line means more concrete to cut, more excavation and a higher price. Basement bathroom rough-ins in Calgary typically run $2,500 to $5,500, rising to around $8,000 where a significant amount of concrete must be removed, and drain depth is one of the main reasons a quote can land at either end of that range.

A drain camera inspection, which typically costs $200 to $600 in Calgary, is the right first step before any basement plumbing project. It shows the depth, the condition of the pipe, the direction of flow and whether there are any existing problems worth fixing before new work begins. No reputable plumber should quote a basement rough-in or a backwater valve installation without knowing what is under that slab.

On permits: adding a floor drain, roughing in a bathroom or installing a backwater valve all require a plumbing permit from the City of Calgary. A homeowner who owns and lives in the home can take out a plumbing permit and

do the work themselves, but the City will not issue a homeowner permit to cover concealed plumbing that was already done without one. The permit triggers a rough-in inspection and a final inspection; plan for both before the concrete is poured back.

Before calling anyone, locate your main water shut-off inside the house and confirm it turns freely. If you can safely lift the access cover on a floor drain or cleanout, a look inside with a flashlight can sometimes show you the direction the pipe runs and give a rough sense of depth, which is useful context when you describe the job to a plumber.

Q3

Can a basement bathroom in Calgary tie into the existing floor drain?

Whether a basement bathroom can tie into an existing floor drain depends on what that drain connects to and how the new fixtures will be vented, and a plumber needs to trace the drain before any concrete is cut.

What the plumber checks first

A basement floor drain that runs to the sanitary sewer is a possible tie-in point, but the drain's size, depth, slope and condition all determine whether it can accept the additional load from a toilet, sink and shower. A floor drain is typically a smaller-diameter line and may sit too shallow to allow a toilet to drain by gravity, which is the first thing the plumber confirms with a camera or by exposing the pipe. If the existing drain is too shallow, the toilet will need a sewage ejector pump, which adds cost and ongoing maintenance.

Venting is the other constraint. Each new fixture needs venting, and routing it through finished walls or ceilings can drive the price up considerably. The plumber designs the venting to the National Plumbing Code of Canada 2020, which has been in force in Alberta since April 1, 2023.

A rough-in permit is required. The City of Calgary issues plumbing permits for basement bathroom rough-ins, and a homeowner who owns and lives in the home may apply for that permit themselves if they are doing the work. A contractor doing the work takes out the permit in their own name; a homeowner cannot take out a permit to cover a contractor's work. The City inspects at rough-in and again at final, so the concrete should stay open until the rough-in inspection passes.

Realistic cost range for Calgary: a basement bathroom rough-in typically runs $2,500 to $5,500, and can reach around $8,000 where a significant amount of concrete needs to be cut, the existing drain is deep, or the vent run is long. That range covers labour and materials for the rough-in only; fixtures, finishing and drywall are separate. The permit fee is $116.50 for a homeowner permit, or for a contractor it starts at $116.50 and rises with the construction

value.

What a fair quote covers: the scope should spell out how much concrete is cut and how it is patched, whether an ejector pump is included or excluded, the vent routing plan, the permit and both inspections, equipment and pipe specifications, and a warranty on labour. Get at least two written quotes and compare them line by line rather than by total, because one contractor may include concrete patching while another does not.

Before hiring, ask to see the plumber's trade certificate (plumbing is a compulsory certification trade in Alberta), a WCB-Alberta clearance letter confirming the account is in good standing, and, if any deposit is taken before the work is complete, an Alberta prepaid contracting licence issued by Service Alberta.

Keep the permit and the inspection sign-off after the job is done; they are the paperwork that matters most if you sell the home or need warranty work later.

Q4

Rough in now, finish the bathroom later, fine for a Calgary basement?

Roughing in a basement bathroom now and finishing it later is a common and practical approach in Calgary, and the City of Calgary's permit rules are set up to accommodate exactly that sequence. Budget roughly $2,500 to $5,500 for the rough-in alone, rising to about $8,000 where a lot of concrete needs to be cut.

What the rough-in actually covers

The rough-in is the underground and in-wall work: cutting the concrete floor, tying into the existing drain stack and sanitary line, setting the drain locations for a toilet, shower or tub, and a sink, running the vent piping, and pouring the concrete back. The supply lines are usually stubbed out at this stage too. None of the fixtures are connected yet; that comes later when you finish the space.

What moves the price most is how deep the existing sewer line sits below your slab and how much concrete has to come up. A shallow line with easy access keeps costs toward the lower end; a deep line, a long run to the stack, or a tight mechanical room pushes it higher. The number of fixtures matters too: a three-piece (toilet, shower, sink) costs less than adding a tub or a second sink.

A plumbing permit from the City of Calgary is required for this work. The City of Calgary issues plumbing permits to homeowners for homes they own and live in, as long as you are doing the work yourself and the home is not a rental. If you are hiring a plumber, the contractor takes out the permit in their name; a homeowner cannot pull a permit to cover a contractor's work. Either way, the permit must be in hand before work starts: beginning without one doubles the permit fee.

Alberta's Permit Regulation includes a provision that works in your favour here: in a single-family home, installing fixtures does not need a plumbing permit when the rough-in was done under another permit. That is what makes doing it in two stages practical. The rough-in inspection happens before the concrete is poured back, so the inspector can see the drain locations, the venting and the slope of the pipe. Do not pour until that inspection is signed off.

When you take out the permit, ask the City how it wants the final inspection handled if the fixtures go in later; the final inspection checks, among other things, that toilets have shut-offs and that tub and shower water does not exceed 49°C.

On the contractor side, confirm the plumber is a certified journeyperson or a registered apprentice working under one; that is a requirement under Alberta's Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Education Act for paid plumbing work. Ask for a WCB-Alberta clearance letter before work starts, and if any deposit changes hands before the job is done,

the contractor needs an Alberta prepaid contracting licence from Service Alberta.

A fair written quote for the rough-in should spell out the scope (number of fixtures, drain locations, vent routing), whether concrete cutting and patching are included, the permit fee, the equipment and pipe materials, a fixed price or a clear hourly rate with a call-out fee, and the warranty on labour and parts.

Ask the plumber directly: who pulls the permit, when is the rough-in inspection scheduled, and what paperwork do you get to show the City when you come back to finish?

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Calgary Plumbing Pro. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority (the City of Calgary or your own municipality) before starting any plumbing or gas project. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **calgaryplumbingpro.com** for the latest answers.