OTTAWA CONSTRUCTION NETWORK

Bathrooms

Bathroom renovation questions across the Ottawa network

3 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

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Q1

I am dealing with a loud, persistent whirring throughout my studio apartment after a change to the energy recovery ventilator in the bathroom. The building i high-rise new build. What might be causing this and what can be done to fix it?

That persistent whirring sound after an ERV adjustment is almost certainly a ventilation system balancing issue — and it's very common in high-rise new builds when airflow is modified in one unit.

In a high-rise, the ERV (Energy Recovery Ventilator) in your bathroom isn't operating in isolation. It's connected to a shared ventilation shaft or central air handling system that serves multiple units. When airflow is changed in one suite — whether the ERV fan speed was adjusted, a damper was repositioned, or a component was replaced — it can throw off the pressure balance across the entire system. What you're hearing is likely one of a few things: **the ERV fan motor running at an incorrect speed**, **a damper vibrating under increased static pressure**, or **ductwork resonating** because air is now moving faster or at a different pressure than the system was designed for.

The whirring could also point to a **loose or misaligned fan blade** inside the ERV unit itself. Even a small imbalance in the impeller can create a consistent, annoying hum that travels through the ductwork and walls. In newer construction, the ductwork is often rigid sheet metal, which is excellent at transmitting sound throughout a unit — so even a minor vibration at the source can feel amplified inside your apartment.

In a high-rise condo or rental, this is not a DIY situation. The ERV and ventilation system are almost certainly common building mechanical elements, meaning the building's HVAC contractor or property management team is responsible for the repair. You should not attempt to open or adjust the ERV unit yourself, as this could void warranties on the building's mechanical systems and may violate your lease or condo rules.

Here's what you should do:

- **Document everything** — note when the sound started (directly after the ERV change), how constant it is, and whether it changes with temperature or time of day. A short video with audio on your phone is useful evidence.
- **Submit a formal written maintenance request** to your property manager or building superintendent, referencing the specific ERV work that was done as the likely trigger. Ask them to have the HVAC contractor re-inspect the unit and rebalance the airflow.
- **Request confirmation** that the work will be done by a TSSA-certified HVAC technician — in Ontario, gas and mechanical systems in residential buildings must be serviced by qualified trades.
- If the building is slow to respond, **escalate in writing** and reference Ontario's Residential Tenancies Act (if renting), which requires landlords to maintain the property in a good state of repair.

If you're the unit owner in a condo, review your status certificate and condo corporation rules to confirm whether the ERV is a common element or your responsibility — in most new high-rises, it's a shared system.
For any HVAC-related concerns, you can also browse verified HVAC contractors in the Ottawa Construction Network directory — though in this case, pressure the building first since it's their system to fix.

Q2

Where can I rent a portable toilet for a home renovation project?

You can rent portable toilets for your Ottawa renovation project from several local equipment rental companies, with daily rates typically ranging from $150-250 plus delivery fees.

For home renovation projects in Ottawa, portable toilet rental is a practical solution, especially for major renovations where you're gutting bathrooms or working on plumbing systems. **United Rentals, Home Depot Tool Rental, and Battlefield Equipment Rentals** are the main providers serving the Ottawa area, along with several local companies like **Capital City Rentals** and **Rideau Rental**.

Rental costs typically break down as follows: standard portable units run $150-200 per week, deluxe units with handwashing stations cost $200-250 weekly, and luxury trailer units (if you want something nicer for longer projects) can reach $300-400 weekly. Most companies charge a delivery fee of $75-150 depending on your location within Ottawa and surrounding areas like Kanata, Barrhaven, or Orleans. For projects lasting more than two weeks, many companies offer discounted monthly rates.

Timing and logistics are important considerations for Ottawa renovations. Book at least a week in advance, especially during peak construction season (May through October). The rental company will need clear access for their delivery truck - typically requiring at least 10 feet of clearance and firm ground. In Ottawa's winter months, snow removal and ground conditions can affect placement and pickup, so discuss this with your rental company.

Permit considerations: While portable toilets themselves don't require permits, if you're placing the unit on city property (like the street or sidewalk), you may need a permit from the City of Ottawa. Most homeowners place units on their own property - driveways, side yards, or back yards work well. Make sure the location complies with any HOA rules if you're in a community with restrictions.

Next steps: Call 2-3 local rental companies for quotes, as prices can vary significantly. Ask about weekly vs. monthly rates, delivery scheduling, and what's included (toilet paper, hand sanitizer, weekly servicing). For major renovations lasting several months, negotiate a better rate and ensure regular maintenance is included in your contract.

Q3

Should I hire a specialized bathroom contractor or general contractor?

For bathroom renovations in Ottawa, a specialized bathroom contractor is typically your best choice, especially for full renovations involving plumbing, electrical, and structural changes. However, the right answer depends on your project scope and budget.

When to Choose a Bathroom Specialist

Bathroom specialists in Ottawa understand the unique challenges of working in tight spaces with multiple trades coordination. They're experienced with Ontario Building Code requirements for bathroom ventilation, electrical GFCI protection, and waterproofing standards. Most importantly, they have established relationships with plumbing and electrical subcontractors who are properly licensed with ESA and TSSA.

A bathroom specialist will typically handle permit applications through the City of Ottawa Building Code Services (613-580-2424) and coordinate all required inspections. For a typical Ottawa bathroom renovation ($15,000-$50,000), they understand local permit requirements and can navigate the 15-25 business day approval process efficiently.

When a General Contractor Makes Sense

Choose a general contractor if your bathroom renovation is part of a larger home renovation project, or if you're doing multiple rooms simultaneously. General contractors are also suitable for simpler cosmetic updates that don't require permits - like replacing fixtures, vanities, or flooring without moving plumbing or electrical.

Critical Verification Steps for Either Choice

Regardless of which type you choose, verify their credentials through official Ontario channels. Check that any electrical subcontractors are Licensed Electrical Contractors through ESA's contractor locator at esasafe.com. For gas work (if installing a gas fireplace or moving gas lines), ensure TSSA certification at tssa.org.

Always verify WSIB clearance certificates and liability insurance. Request references from recent Ottawa-area bathroom projects and actually call those homeowners. A legitimate contractor will provide this information readily.

Red Flags to Avoid

Be wary of contractors who can't explain the permit process for your specific project, refuse to provide written estimates, or pressure you to sign immediately. Door-to-door contractors and those demanding large upfront payments are major red flags in Ottawa's construction market.

Getting the Right Quote

Whether specialist or generalist, ensure quotes include permit costs, inspection fees, and clearly outline which trades are subcontracted versus in-house. Under Ontario's Construction Lien Act, you're entitled to hold back 10% of payments for 60 days after substantial completion to protect against liens.

For expert renovation advice and to connect with verified bathroom specialists in Ottawa, check out our contractor directory where you can find pre-screened professionals who understand local requirements and have proven track records with Ottawa homeowners.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Construction Network. 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 November 22, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawaconstructionnetwork.com** for the latest answers.