



## Basement Renovations

In many homes, the basement represents great, untapped potential for more living space. It may offer the most cost-effective approach to adding a new family room, an extra bedroom or a home office. With careful planning and the assistance of a professional renovator, most basements can be turned into attractive, comfortable living space.

**Energy efficiency and comfort.** Renovating your basement offers a great opportunity to increase the energy efficiency of your home. An experienced renovator will inspect your basement and make appropriate recommendations for insulation, caulking and air-sealing that can make your entire home more comfortable.

**Bring in the light.** Consult with your renovator on ways to brighten up your basement. Often you can enlarge existing windows or add new ones, depending on the above-ground height of the foundation, what's around the house and the intended use of the new space. Or the renovator may recommend glass blocks - you get the extra light while preserving privacy. Keep in mind that if you are building a bedroom in the basement, the building code specifies a minimum window size for safety reasons.

**Special construction considerations.** Some basements may be more challenging to renovate than others because of supporting posts in the middle of an open area, or floors that are too low for proper connection of bathroom fixtures to municipal sewer lines, for instance. Sometimes it may even be necessary to break open the concrete floor to get at the plumbing. An experienced renovator can identify these challenges and provide suggestions for overcoming them.

**The heating system.** In undeveloped basements, the heat is often supplied by registers that are set right in the ductwork running along the basement ceiling. Your renovator may recommend relocating the heat outlets or registers and adding a cold-air return. This will create the air circulation needed for even heat distribution and a much more pleasant living environment. **Air quality.** You should pay particular attention to moisture and air quality in the basement. Professional renovators will conduct a thorough assessment of the area, looking for signs of dampness or mustiness, which may be the result of water entering the basement. It is important to correct all moisture problems before renovating the basement. Your renovator may suggest exterior drainage work or re-parging the outside of the foundation wall. If mold is present, it can be eliminated by washing the area with a bleach solution.

**Proper ventilation will improve indoor air quality.** Your renovator may recommend a separate exhaust fan or a heat recovery ventilator (a whole house, "fresh air" system). Equipment in the basement such as the furnace and dryer should be vented directly to the outside and may require a separate air intake. In some areas, a dehumidifier may be required during summer months.

**Soundproofing.** Planning a family entertainment centre and a bedroom in the basement? Soundproofing will minimize the noise traveling from one area to another. Your renovator may also recommend the installation of an intercom system connected to the upstairs for easy communication between levels.

**Other things to think about.** There are lots of good ideas and products available that will add extra comfort and value to your basement renovation. Here are just a few suggestions from experienced renovators to get you started:

Update your laundry room at the same time, with cabinets or shelving, and a counter.

Consider installing at least a two-piece bathroom. You'll enjoy the convenience!

Rough in all the connections now for later installations, such as a fireplace. Install the wiring now for any anticipated future needs -cable television, alarm system, dedicated telephone lines etc.

Text provided by the CHBA and CMHC.

# Your one step to a **successful** renovation!