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# Costs & Pricing

Basement renovation costs, budgeting, financing,  
ROI, quotes, and price estimates for NB  
homeowners

24 Expert Answers from Basement IQ

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## How much of a basement renovation budget in New Brunswick typically goes to labour versus materials and how has that ratio shifted in 2026?

**In New Brunswick basement renovations, labour typically accounts for 60-70% of the total budget, with materials making up 30-40%.** This ratio has shifted significantly in 2024-2025, with labour costs rising faster than materials due to skilled trade shortages across the Maritimes.

### The Current Labour-Material Split

For a typical mid-range basement finishing project in NB (\$35,000-\$55,000), you're looking at roughly \$21,000-\$38,500 in labour costs and \$14,000-\$16,500 in materials. This reflects the reality that basement renovation is highly labour-intensive work — framing against foundation walls, running electrical and plumbing through tight spaces, waterproofing installations, and the precision required for egress window cutting all demand skilled tradespeople.

**Waterproofing work** shows an even higher labour ratio, often 75-80% labour. Installing an interior drainage system with sump pump involves jackhammering concrete, excavating around the foundation perimeter, installing weeping tile, and connecting to existing drainage — all specialized work that can't be rushed. Materials for waterproofing (drainage pipe, gravel, sump pump, membrane) are relatively inexpensive compared to the skilled excavation and installation labour.

### How the Ratio Has Shifted in 2024-2025

The labour portion has increased from the traditional 55-65% to today's 60-70% due to several Maritime-specific factors. **Skilled basement contractors** have become harder to find as many experienced tradespeople moved to Alberta's oil patch or Ontario's construction boom during the pandemic. Those who remained in NB can command higher hourly rates — basement specialists now charge \$45-\$65 per hour compared to \$35-\$50 just two years ago.

**Material costs have actually stabilized** after the 2021-2023 spike. Lumber, drywall, and insulation prices in NB are now only 10-15% higher than pre-pandemic levels, while labour rates have jumped 25-35%. This creates a challenging dynamic where the skilled work (waterproofing, electrical rough-in, precision framing) represents an even larger share of project budgets.

### Regional Variations Within NB

In **Moncton and Saint John**, where contractor availability is better, the labour ratio might be closer to 60-65%. In smaller communities like **Miramichi, Bathurst, or Edmundston**, finding qualified basement contractors often means paying premium rates or waiting longer for availability, pushing labour to 70-75% of budgets.

## Practical Implications for Homeowners

This shift means **getting multiple quotes is more critical than ever** — labour pricing can vary 30-40% between contractors for identical scope. It also makes **timing your project strategically** important. Booking contractors by March for summer start dates often secures better labour rates than emergency winter work.

The high labour ratio also explains why **proper planning prevents costly changes**. Once skilled trades are on-site, any scope changes or corrections become expensive quickly. Spending time upfront on detailed planning, permits, and waterproofing assessment saves significantly on labour costs during execution.

## When to Expect Different Ratios

**DIY-friendly projects** like painting, installing carpet tiles, or basic storage systems can flip this ratio to 20-30% labour if you handle the simple tasks yourself. Conversely, **complex waterproofing or structural work** (underpinning, major electrical upgrades) can push labour to 80-85% of costs due to the specialized expertise required.

Need help finding a basement contractor? New Brunswick Basements can match you with local renovators who provide transparent labour and material breakdowns in their estimates.

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Q2

## What is the expected return on investment for adding a legal basement suite in Oromocto or Fredericton when selling the home?

**Adding a legal basement suite in Oromocto or Fredericton typically recovers 60-80% of renovation costs at resale, with rental income providing ongoing returns of 8-12% annually on your investment.**

The return on investment varies significantly based on execution quality, local rental demand, and whether you maintain it as a rental property versus selling immediately. In the Fredericton area market, a well-executed legal

suite adds \$40,000-\$70,000 to home value, while renovation costs typically run \$45,000-\$80,000 for a complete suite with separate entrance, kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom.

**Fredericton offers stronger rental demand** due to UNB students, government workers, and military personnel from CFB Gagetown. Legal basement suites rent for \$800-\$1,200 monthly, depending on size and finishes. Oromocto has steady demand from military families and government employees but a smaller rental pool. Both markets favor legal suites over illegal conversions — buyers pay premiums for properly permitted units with egress windows and separate entrances.

**The "legal" designation is crucial for ROI.** Unpermitted basement apartments actually hurt resale value because buyers factor in \$15,000-\$30,000 to bring them up to code. Legal suites require building permits, egress windows (\$2,500-\$5,000 per bedroom), separate electrical meter, and often a separate entrance. These upfront costs reduce immediate ROI but create long-term value and rental income potential.

#### **Key factors affecting your return:**

- **Separate entrance:** Adds \$8,000-\$15,000 to renovation cost but increases rental income by \$100-\$200 monthly
- **Kitchen quality:** Full kitchen versus kitchenette affects both rental rates and resale appeal
- **Ceiling height:** 6'5" minimum for habitable space — low ceilings limit your market
- **Waterproofing:** Essential first step in NB's climate — wet basements kill ROI completely

**Timing considerations for NB:** Spring thaw season (March-May) reveals any water issues that could derail your investment. Never start finishing work until you've confirmed the basement stays dry through at least one spring thaw cycle. Waterproofing problems discovered after finishing require complete tear-out, destroying your ROI.

**Rental income potential** makes basement suites attractive long-term investments even with modest resale returns. At \$1,000 monthly rent on a \$60,000 renovation, you're earning 20% gross annual return before expenses. Many Fredericton area homeowners keep the suite as rental income rather than selling, using cash flow to accelerate mortgage payments.

The strongest ROI comes from holding the property 3-5 years minimum, collecting rental income while building equity. Immediate resale rarely recovers full renovation costs, but the combination of rental income and gradual home value appreciation typically exceeds stock market returns in the Fredericton market.

Need help finding contractors experienced with legal basement suites? New Brunswick Basements can match you with renovators who understand permit requirements and egress window installation for a free consultation on your project.

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Q3

## How much does it cost to fully finish a 1000 square foot basement in Moncton including all materials and labour in 2026?

A full 1000 square foot basement finish in Moncton runs between **\$25,000 and \$70,000+** in 2026, with most homeowners landing in the **\$35,000-\$55,000** range for a mid-level renovation that includes a bathroom, bedroom, and living area. The massive price range reflects the enormous difference between a basic open-concept finish and a full basement suite with custom finishes.

Here is how the costs typically break down for a 1000 square foot Moncton basement at a **mid-range finish level**:

**Waterproofing** should be your first line item and is non-negotiable in NB's Maritime climate. An interior waterproofing system with sump pump runs **\$3,000-\$8,000** depending on severity. If your Moncton home has a poured concrete foundation from the 1990s or later with only minor cracks, you may need just crack injection at **\$300-\$800 per crack**. Older concrete block foundations from the 1970s-1980s often need the full interior drainage system. Moncton's sandy and silty soils drain better than Saint John's clay, but spring thaw still pushes significant water against foundations.

**Framing and drywall** for walls and ceiling across 1000 square feet runs **\$10,000-\$15,000**. This includes 2x4 framing against foundation walls with a proper air gap, interior partition walls to create rooms, and drywall installation, taping, and finishing on walls and ceiling.

**Insulation** is critical for NB basements. Rigid foam board (2-inch) against foundation walls costs **\$2,500-\$4,000** for 1000 square feet. Closed-cell spray foam is superior at **\$4,000-\$7,000** but provides higher R-value and acts as a vapour barrier. Never use fiberglass batts against foundation walls in NB — they trap moisture and guarantee hidden mold.

**Flooring with Dricore subfloor** runs **\$4,000-\$8,000** for the full 1000 square feet. The Dricore panels (\$3-\$5/sq ft) create an air gap above the concrete slab to prevent moisture wicking, and LVP (luxury vinyl plank) on top (\$4-

\$8/sq ft installed) is the best all-around choice for Moncton basements.

**Electrical** rough-in including new circuits, outlets, lighting, smoke detectors, and GFCI/AFCI protection costs **\$2,500-\$5,000**. If your home has a 60-amp panel (common in older Moncton homes), a panel upgrade to 100 or 200 amps adds **\$1,500-\$4,000**.

**A 3-piece bathroom** (toilet, vanity, shower) adds **\$8,000-\$18,000** including breaking the concrete slab for plumbing rough-in, connecting to the sewer main, and finishing. A backwater valve (\$300-\$1,500) is strongly recommended to prevent sewer backup.

**Egress window** for the bedroom adds **\$2,500-\$5,000** per window — required by NB Building Code for any basement bedroom.

**Permits** in Moncton run **\$100-\$300** through the city's building inspection department, with processing typically taking 1-3 weeks.

Before any finishing work, invest **\$30-\$50** in a radon test kit. Moncton has areas with elevated radon levels, and mitigation (\$2,000-\$4,000) is far easier to install before walls and floors go in.

**Get at least three quotes** from local contractors. Pricing in Moncton varies 30-40% between contractors for identical scope, and NB labour rates run 15-20% below Ontario and BC, which keeps overall costs lower than the national average. The best time to book is March or April for a summer start — Moncton basement contractors are busiest May through October.

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## What is the average cost per square foot to finish a basement in New Brunswick compared to the national Canadian average?

The average cost to finish a basement in New Brunswick runs **\$25-\$55 per square foot in 2026**, compared to the national Canadian average of **\$30-\$65 per square foot**. NB homeowners benefit from labour rates that are 15-20% lower than Ontario and British Columbia, which brings total project costs roughly 10-15% below the national average for comparable finish levels.

These per-square-foot figures represent the **all-in cost** including framing, insulation, drywall, flooring, electrical, basic lighting, and paint. They do not include bathrooms, kitchens, egress windows, or waterproofing, which are priced as separate components on top of the base finishing cost. Here is how the tiers break down in NB:

**Basic finishing (\$25-\$35/sq ft)** covers framing, insulation, drywall, paint, basic lighting, and simple flooring like LVP over Dricore subfloor panels. This gives you a clean, open-concept finished space suitable for a family room or recreation area. For an 800 square foot basement, this translates to roughly **\$20,000-\$28,000**. Nationally, the same basic finish runs \$30-\$40/sq ft.

**Mid-range finishing (\$35-\$55/sq ft)** adds a bathroom, bedroom with egress window, better flooring choices, more lighting circuits, a drop ceiling for access to mechanicals, and a higher quality of finish overall. An 800 square foot mid-range project in NB runs **\$28,000-\$44,000** compared to \$35,000-\$52,000 nationally.

**High-end finishing (\$55-\$80+/sq ft)** includes custom built-ins, a full bathroom with tile shower, kitchenette or wet bar, home theatre wiring, premium flooring, pot lights throughout, and designer-level finishes. At this level, an 800 square foot NB basement reaches **\$44,000-\$64,000+**, while the same project in the GTA or Vancouver could easily exceed \$75,000-\$100,000.

The cost gap between NB and national averages is driven almost entirely by **labour costs**. Skilled trades in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John charge \$35-\$55 per hour compared to \$50-\$80+ in Toronto and \$55-\$85+ in Vancouver. Material costs are nearly identical across Canada because NB contractors source from the same national distributors (building supply chains ship to NB at comparable pricing). So the per-square-foot savings in NB come from the labour component, which typically represents 40-50% of a basement renovation budget.

One cost that is **higher per square foot in NB than drier provinces** is waterproofing. NB's Maritime climate — 70-85% summer humidity, spring thaw flooding, high seasonal water tables — means waterproofing is a prerequisite, not an optional upgrade. An interior waterproofing system adds **\$3,000-\$8,000** to your project regardless of basement size, effectively adding \$4-\$10 per square foot to an 800 square foot basement. In drier climates like Calgary or Saskatoon, many basements need minimal or no waterproofing, so their per-square-foot

totals do not include this cost.

Similarly, **insulation requirements** are more demanding in NB. The NB Building Code requires minimum R-12.5 for basement walls, with R-20 recommended for energy efficiency. Rigid foam board or closed-cell spray foam — the only insulation types suitable for NB basement walls due to moisture concerns — costs more per square foot than the fiberglass batts that some contractors in drier provinces can get away with.

The bottom line: NB homeowners get strong value for basement finishing compared to the national average, with the savings concentrated in labour costs. Always get three or more quotes — pricing within NB varies 30-40% between contractors for identical scope, which means shopping carefully can save you more than the NB-vs-national differential.

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Q5

## How much does it cost to add a bathroom, bedroom, and living area to a basement in Fredericton in 2026?

**A full basement conversion with a bathroom, bedroom, and living area in Fredericton typically runs \$40,000 to \$65,000 in 2026**, depending on the size of the space, the condition of your foundation, and the level of finishes you choose. This is a mid-range to upper-mid-range project that transforms raw basement space into a functional living suite.

Breaking the budget down by component gives a clearer picture. The **living area** — framing, insulation, drywall, flooring, and painting for roughly 400 to 600 square feet — typically costs \$15,000 to \$25,000. For the **bedroom**, add \$2,500 to \$5,000 for the egress window (cutting through your foundation wall, installing the well, and the window itself), plus another \$4,000 to \$8,000 for framing, insulation, drywall, closet, and flooring. The **bathroom** is the most expensive single room, running \$8,000 to \$25,000 for a full three-piece — you are breaking through the concrete slab for drain lines, running supply plumbing, and installing fixtures. A basic three-piece with standard finishes sits around \$10,000 to \$15,000, while a high-end bathroom with tiled shower, heated floors, and premium

fixtures pushes toward \$20,000 or more.

On top of these room costs, budget for **electrical rough-in** at \$2,000 to \$5,000 (new circuits, GFCI-protected outlets throughout, AFCI on the bedroom circuit, recessed lighting), a **drop ceiling** at \$2,000 to \$5,000, and **permits** at \$150 to \$300 through the City of Fredericton building inspection department. Fredericton processes permits relatively quickly — typically one to three weeks — but you will need inspections at framing, rough-in, insulation, and final stages.

## What Fredericton Homeowners Must Address First

Before any finishing work begins, **waterproofing must be confirmed or addressed**. Fredericton sits in the Saint John River valley with mixed clay and loam soils and a seasonally high water table, especially in low-lying neighbourhoods near the river. If your basement shows any signs of moisture — staining, efflorescence on the block walls, musty smell, or damp concrete — you need an interior waterproofing system (\$3,000 to \$8,000) or exterior membrane work (\$8,000 to \$20,000) before a single stud goes up. Finishing over a wet basement leads to mold, rot, and a complete tear-out within two to three years.

Also budget for **radon testing** before you close up the walls. New Brunswick has elevated radon levels in many areas, and a sub-slab depressurization system (\$2,000 to \$4,000) is far easier and cheaper to install before finishing than after. A three-month passive test kit costs \$30 to \$50 and should be placed in the lowest living area.

For insulation, use **rigid foam board** (\$2.50 to \$4.00 per square foot) or **closed-cell spray foam** (\$4.00 to \$7.00 per square foot) against foundation walls. Never use fiberglass batts directly against the foundation — they trap moisture between the batt and the cold concrete, leading to hidden mold. NB Building Code requires a minimum R-12.5 for basement walls, and R-20 is recommended for energy efficiency in our climate.

For flooring, **luxury vinyl plank** (\$4 to \$8 per square foot installed) over a Dricore subfloor system (\$3 to \$5 per square foot) is the best combination for Fredericton basements — waterproof, comfortable underfoot, and handles the humidity swings of our Maritime seasons.

A realistic all-in budget including waterproofing, radon testing, and a modest contingency lands most Fredericton homeowners between **\$45,000 and \$70,000** for a bedroom, bathroom, and living area. Get at least three quotes — NB pricing varies 30 to 40 percent between contractors for identical scope. New Brunswick Basements can match you with local basement renovation contractors for free estimates on your project.

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Q6

## What is the return on investment for finishing a basement in a Moncton home when it comes time to sell?

**Finishing a basement in a Moncton home typically returns 50 to 75 percent of your investment at resale,** making it one of the better renovation ROI projects available to homeowners — especially when the work is done properly with permits and professional-grade waterproofing. A \$40,000 basement finishing project can reasonably add \$20,000 to \$30,000 to your sale price, though the exact return depends heavily on the quality of the work and how well the space was protected from moisture.

The Moncton real estate market values finished basements more than many other Canadian cities because of the region's housing stock. A large percentage of Moncton homes were built in the 1960s through 1990s with unfinished basements, so a properly finished lower level genuinely differentiates your listing. Buyers in the Greater Moncton area — including Dieppe and Riverview — actively look for move-in ready homes, and a finished basement with a bedroom, bathroom, or family room removes a major renovation burden for the next owner.

**The key factor that separates a high-ROI basement from a low-ROI one is waterproofing.** In Moncton, with its sandy and silty soils that can shift under foundations and cause settlement cracks, buyers and their home inspectors will scrutinize basement moisture carefully. A finished basement with visible water staining, musty odours, or evidence of past leaks actually **hurts** your resale value — buyers either walk away or discount their offer by more than the cost of the finishing work. A finished basement backed by a documented waterproofing system, a working sump pump with battery backup, and proper insulation (rigid foam or closed-cell spray foam, never fibreglass batts against the foundation) gives buyers confidence.

Certain basement improvements deliver higher returns than others. A **legal basement bedroom with a code-compliant egress window** adds the most value because it increases the official bedroom count on the listing — going from a three-bedroom to a four-bedroom home has a measurable impact on sale price in Moncton. A **three-piece bathroom** also adds strong value, as it solves a practical daily problem for families. A general **family room or rec room** adds comfort value but is harder to quantify in the sale price. A **home theatre or specialty room** adds the least return because it appeals to a narrow buyer pool.

All work should be done with **proper building permits** through the City of Moncton's building inspection department. Unpermitted finished basements are a red flag during home inspections, and buyers may demand the

walls be opened to verify insulation, electrical, and plumbing behind them. Permitted work with inspection records on file gives buyers — and their mortgage lenders — confidence.

To maximize your ROI, focus on these priorities: waterproof first, insulate with rigid foam or closed-cell spray foam to at least R-12.5, install luxury vinyl plank flooring over a Dricore subfloor (waterproof and attractive), use a drop ceiling for clean appearance with access to services above, and ensure all electrical is GFCI-protected and up to current NB Building Code. Test for radon before finishing — if levels exceed 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>, install a sub-slab depressurization system, which actually becomes a selling feature.

A well-finished basement with documented waterproofing, permits, and quality materials is one of the strongest investments a Moncton homeowner can make before listing. Get matched with local basement renovation contractors through New Brunswick Basements for free estimates on your project.

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## Is it cheaper to finish a basement in the winter off-season in New Brunswick when contractors are less busy?

**Yes, you can often save 10 to 15 percent on labour costs by scheduling interior basement finishing work during the winter off-season in New Brunswick**, roughly November through March. Many basement contractors see a significant slowdown during this period because exterior work — foundation excavation, exterior waterproofing, decks, siding, roofing — comes to a halt. Contractors who are available and looking to keep their crews busy through winter may offer more competitive pricing and faster scheduling.

The savings come primarily from **labour rates and availability, not materials**. Building materials in New Brunswick are shipped from the same distributors year-round, so drywall, lumber, insulation, flooring, and fixtures cost roughly the same whether you buy in January or July. What changes is the contractor's willingness to negotiate on labour. During peak season (May through October), good basement contractors in Moncton, Saint John, and Fredericton are booked weeks or months out and have little incentive to discount. In January or February, those same contractors may sharpen their pricing to fill the schedule.

**Interior basement work is well-suited to winter scheduling** because it happens below grade, sheltered from weather. Framing, insulation, drywall, electrical rough-in, plumbing rough-in, flooring, and painting can all proceed through the coldest months without issue. Your basement maintains a relatively stable temperature — typically 10 to 15°C even in an unfinished state — which is adequate for drywall taping and compound curing, paint application, and adhesive-based flooring installation.

There are a few important caveats, however. **Exterior waterproofing cannot be done in winter**. If your basement needs excavation and an exterior membrane — common with older concrete block foundations across NB — that work must wait until the ground thaws, typically May. Frozen ground in New Brunswick can extend 1.2 metres deep in Moncton and Saint John, and up to 1.5 metres in Bathurst and Edmundston, making winter excavation impractical. If your waterproofing needs are interior only — an interior drainage channel, sump pump installation, or crack injection — those can proceed in winter.

**Closed-cell spray foam insulation** requires ambient temperatures above 5°C during application, which is generally manageable in a basement environment but worth confirming with your installer if the space is unheated. Concrete slab work like breaking through for bathroom drain lines is also season-independent since it is below grade.

Another winter advantage is **permit processing speed**. Municipal building departments in Fredericton, Moncton, and Saint John tend to process permits faster in winter because application volumes drop. You may get your framing and rough-in inspections scheduled more quickly as well, keeping the project timeline tight.

To take advantage of winter pricing, **start getting quotes in October and November** — this gives contractors time to schedule you into their winter slate. Ask specifically whether they offer off-season pricing or if their rates are the same year-round. Get at least three quotes, as NB pricing varies 30 to 40 percent between contractors for identical scope regardless of season.

The one thing you should never compromise on to save money is waterproofing. If your basement is not confirmed dry, do not start finishing work in winter with the plan to waterproof later in spring. Finishing a wet basement leads to mold, rot, and a complete tear-out. Address waterproofing first — even if that means doing the interior waterproofing in winter and the finishing immediately after. New Brunswick Basements can help you find contractors available for winter projects across the province.

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Q8

## How much should I budget for a contingency fund when planning a basement renovation in Saint John?

**Budget a contingency of 15 to 20 percent of your total project cost for a basement renovation in Saint John** — higher than the typical 10 percent recommended for above-grade renovations. Basements in Saint John carry more unknowns than almost any other renovation type, and the city's heavy clay soils, older housing stock, and Maritime moisture conditions mean surprises behind walls and under floors are the norm, not the exception.

On a \$40,000 basement finishing project in Saint John, that means setting aside \$6,000 to \$8,000 as contingency. On a \$60,000 project with a bathroom, bedroom, and living area, budget \$9,000 to \$12,000. This may feel like a lot of money sitting idle, but experienced basement contractors in the Saint John area will tell you that a significant majority of projects encounter at least one unexpected issue once walls are opened up or concrete is broken through.

**The most common surprises in Saint John basements** include hidden water infiltration that only becomes apparent once insulation and framing are in place, deteriorated concrete block mortar joints that need repair before

you can frame against them, inadequate or non-existent weeping tile that requires an interior drainage system, and older electrical panels (60-amp service is still common in Saint John's older neighbourhoods like the South End, West Side, and North End) that need upgrading to 100 or 200 amps at \$1,500 to \$4,000. Saint John's heavy clay soils hold water against foundations and drain slowly, which means hydrostatic pressure issues are especially common here — you may discover during demolition or framing that what appeared to be a dry basement actually seeps during spring thaw or heavy rain events.

**Plumbing surprises** are another major contingency driver, especially if you are adding a basement bathroom. Breaking through the concrete slab to connect drain lines can reveal deteriorated cast iron waste pipes (common in pre-1980s Saint John homes) that need replacement, or you may find that the sewer line slope is insufficient for gravity drainage, requiring an ejector pump (\$1,500 to \$3,000 installed). A backwater valve (\$300 to \$1,500) is strongly recommended in Saint John to prevent sewer backup during heavy rain events that overwhelm the municipal system.

**Radon is another contingency item.** New Brunswick has elevated radon levels, and if your pre-renovation test shows levels above 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> (Health Canada's action guideline), you will need a sub-slab depressurization system at \$2,000 to \$4,000. This is much easier and cheaper to install before walls are closed up, which is why testing should happen at the very start of your project — but if you did not test early, it becomes an unexpected cost mid-renovation.

To protect your contingency fund, take these steps before construction starts: get a professional moisture assessment of the entire basement, have the existing electrical panel evaluated, test for radon with at least a short-term professional test (\$150 to \$300), and if adding a bathroom, have a plumber scope the existing drain lines with a camera (\$200 to \$400). These upfront diagnostic costs — totalling \$500 to \$1,000 — can prevent much larger surprises once demolition begins.

If your renovation comes in under budget and you do not use the full contingency, that money is yours. But starting without it puts you at risk of running out of funds mid-project, which leads to half-finished basements, unpaid contractors, and stalled permits. Get matched with experienced Saint John basement contractors through New Brunswick Basements for accurate quotes that account for local conditions.

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## What financing options are available for a basement renovation in New Brunswick including home equity lines and renovation loans?

New Brunswick homeowners have several financing options for basement renovations, with home equity lines of credit (HELOCs), personal renovation loans, and refinancing being the most common routes. The right choice depends on how much equity you have in your home, the size of the renovation, and how quickly you need access to funds.

A **home equity line of credit (HELOC)** is the most popular financing tool for basement renovations in the \$20,000 to \$80,000 range. All major Canadian banks and NB credit unions — including the Caisse populaire network across francophone New Brunswick — offer HELOCs at rates that are significantly lower than personal loans or credit cards. You can typically borrow up to 65 percent of your home's appraised value minus your remaining mortgage balance. The advantage of a HELOC is that you draw funds as needed throughout the renovation, only paying interest on what you have used. For a phased basement project — waterproofing first, then framing and finishing — this is ideal because you are not paying interest on the full amount from day one. Current HELOC rates in New Brunswick typically run prime plus 0.5 to 1.5 percent.

A **mortgage refinance** lets you roll the renovation cost into your existing mortgage at your mortgage rate, which is often the lowest interest rate available. This works well for larger projects (\$40,000 or more) where the renovation adds significant value to the home. The downside is that you spread the cost over 20 to 25 years, paying more total interest, and there are appraisal fees, legal fees, and potential penalties for breaking your existing mortgage term early. Most NB lenders allow refinancing up to 80 percent of appraised value.

A **personal renovation loan** from a bank or credit union is an unsecured or lightly secured loan specifically for home improvements, typically ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000. Interest rates are higher than HELOCs (often 6 to 12 percent) but the application process is faster, and you do not need an appraisal or to pledge your home as collateral. This can work for smaller basement projects like waterproofing (\$3,000 to \$8,000) or a basic finishing package.

**Credit union options** deserve special attention in New Brunswick. Local credit unions often offer more flexible terms and lower fees than the big banks, and some have specific home renovation loan products with competitive rates. If you are in a francophone community, the Caisse populaire network is worth exploring for renovation financing.

The **Canada Greener Homes Loan** program (if still active at the time of your renovation) offered interest-free loans up to \$40,000 for energy efficiency improvements. Basement insulation, air sealing, and certain HVAC upgrades may qualify. Check the Natural Resources Canada website for current program status, as government programs

change frequently.

A few practical tips for financing your NB basement renovation: get your quotes finalized before applying for financing so you know exactly how much you need, add 15 to 20 percent contingency to your financing amount (especially in Saint John and Moncton where older basements frequently reveal surprises), and never finance more than the renovation will add in home value. For a mid-range basement finishing project in New Brunswick (\$35,000 to \$55,000), a HELOC is usually the most cost-effective route if you have sufficient equity.

Avoid putting a basement renovation on high-interest credit cards or using buy-now-pay-later schemes — the interest costs can add 20 to 30 percent to your total project cost. If you need help getting accurate renovation quotes to support your financing application, New Brunswick Basements can match you with local contractors for free estimates.

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## How much does it cost to just frame and insulate a basement in Moncton without doing the full finishing?

**Framing and insulating a basement in Moncton without full finishing typically costs \$8,000 to \$18,000 for an 800 square foot space**, depending on the insulation type you choose and the complexity of the layout. This is a practical approach that many Moncton homeowners take — getting the structural and thermal envelope done now while deferring drywall, flooring, and finishes to a later phase when the budget allows.

The **framing** portion — building 2x4 stud walls against the foundation perimeter, framing interior partition walls, and installing headers for doorways — runs \$4,000 to \$8,000 for a typical 800 square foot Moncton basement. This includes lumber, fasteners, and labour. A few important details specific to Moncton: your contractor should leave a **minimum one-inch air gap** between the framing and the foundation wall, and the bottom plate should sit on a foam sill gasket or pressure-treated lumber to prevent moisture wicking from the concrete slab. Moncton's sandy and silty soils offer better natural drainage than Saint John's clay, but settlement cracks are more common here, so inspect the foundation walls for any active water entry before framing against them.

**Insulation** is where the cost range widens significantly based on your choice of material. **Rigid foam board (2-inch extruded polystyrene)** at \$2.50 to \$4.00 per square foot installed is the most popular option — it provides R-10 per 2 inches, resists moisture, and creates a thermal barrier between the cold foundation and your future living space. **Closed-cell spray foam** at \$4.00 to \$7.00 per square foot installed is the premium choice — it delivers R-6 per inch, acts as its own vapour barrier, adheres directly to the foundation wall sealing every crack and gap, and is the best performer in Moncton's humid Maritime climate. For an 800 square foot basement with roughly 1,200 square feet of wall area to insulate, rigid foam runs \$3,000 to \$5,000 while closed-cell spray foam runs \$5,000 to \$8,500.

**Do not use fiberglass batt insulation against your foundation walls.** This is the single most common mistake in New Brunswick basement renovations. Batts trap moisture between the insulation and the cold concrete, and in Moncton's climate — where summer humidity averages 70 to 85 percent and winter condensation forms on near-freezing foundation walls — hidden mold growth behind the batts is virtually guaranteed. Mineral wool batts (Roxul) are moisture-resistant and acceptable for interior partition walls between rooms, but not against the foundation.

NB Building Code requires a minimum **R-12.5 for basement walls**, though R-20 is recommended for energy efficiency. With 2-inch rigid foam (R-10) plus a framed cavity filled with mineral wool, you can achieve R-22 to R-24, which significantly reduces heating costs through Moncton's long winters.

Before framing and insulating, address two prerequisites. First, confirm the basement is dry — no active leaks, no water staining, no efflorescence on the blocks. If there is any moisture, waterproof first (\$3,000 to \$8,000 for an

interior system). Second, test for radon (\$30 to \$50 for a passive test kit). If levels exceed 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>, install the sub-slab depressurization piping now while the space is open — it is far more difficult and expensive after walls are insulated and closed.

Framing and insulating as a standalone phase is a smart strategy that protects your investment. The thermal envelope and rough structure are in place, and you can add drywall, flooring, and finishes whenever you are ready. Get free quotes from local contractors through [New Brunswick Basements](#) to lock in current pricing.

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Q11

## What is the cost difference between a basic finished basement and a high-end finished basement in Fredericton?

**The cost difference between a basic and high-end finished basement in Fredericton is substantial — roughly \$20,000 to \$35,000 for a basic finish versus \$55,000 to \$80,000 or more for a high-end build in a typical 800 square foot space.** That is a spread of two to three times, driven primarily by fixture quality, room complexity, and the level of custom work involved.

A **basic finished basement** in Fredericton includes framing, rigid foam insulation to code minimum R-12.5, drywall on walls and a drop ceiling, luxury vinyl plank flooring over a vapour barrier, basic potlights on standard switches, a few electrical outlets per wall, and paint. The layout is typically open — a large rec room or family room with minimal partition walls, no plumbing additions, and no structural changes. Framing and drywall run \$8,000 to \$15,000, insulation \$3,000 to \$6,000, flooring \$3,000 to \$6,000 (including subfloor system), electrical \$2,000 to \$3,500, drop ceiling \$2,000 to \$4,000, and paint and trim \$1,500 to \$3,000. This gets you a clean, functional living space.

A **high-end finished basement** in Fredericton is an entirely different project. It typically includes multiple rooms — a bedroom with a code-compliant egress window (\$2,500 to \$5,000 per window), a full three-piece or four-piece bathroom (\$10,000 to \$25,000), a kitchenette or wet bar (\$5,000 to \$15,000), and a dedicated media or

entertainment room. The finishes step up dramatically: closed-cell spray foam insulation (\$5,000 to \$9,000), engineered hardwood or large-format porcelain tile flooring (\$6,000 to \$12,000), drywall ceiling with pot lights on dimmers and accent lighting (\$4,000 to \$8,000), custom built-in cabinetry and shelving (\$3,000 to \$8,000), premium trim and millwork, and higher-end fixtures throughout.

The biggest cost drivers separating the two tiers are **plumbing and electrical**. A basic finish may need \$2,000 to \$3,500 in electrical work. A high-end build with a bathroom, kitchenette, in-floor heating, dedicated home theatre circuits, and a sub-panel upgrade can push electrical costs to \$5,000 to \$10,000. Plumbing for a bathroom rough-in — breaking through the slab, connecting to the sewer main, running supply lines — adds \$3,000 to \$8,000 on its own.

## What Both Levels Must Include in Fredericton

Regardless of whether you go basic or high-end, certain costs are non-negotiable in Fredericton. **Waterproofing** must be addressed before any finishing begins. Fredericton's location in the Saint John River valley means seasonally high water tables, especially in low-lying neighbourhoods. An interior waterproofing system runs \$3,000 to \$8,000. **Radon testing** (\$30 to \$50 for a passive kit) is essential before closing walls, with mitigation at \$2,000 to \$4,000 if needed. **Building permits** (\$100 to \$300) are required for both basic and high-end finishes, and the City of Fredericton will inspect at framing, rough-in, insulation, and final stages.

Insulation type makes a meaningful difference in both cost and long-term performance. At the basic level, rigid foam board at \$2.50 to \$4.00 per square foot gets the job done. At the high-end level, closed-cell spray foam at \$4.00 to \$7.00 per square foot provides superior R-value, acts as its own vapour barrier, and is the best defence against Fredericton's Maritime humidity and winter condensation cycles.

For either level, get at least three quotes — NB pricing varies 30 to 40 percent between contractors for identical scope. New Brunswick Basements can match you with local contractors for free estimates whether you are planning a basic family room or a full luxury suite.

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## How much does it cost to install a drop ceiling versus a drywall ceiling in a New Brunswick basement in 2025?

A **drop (suspended) ceiling** in a New Brunswick basement typically costs **\$4 to \$8 per square foot installed**, while a **drywall ceiling** runs **\$3 to \$6 per square foot installed**. While drywall appears cheaper on a per-square-foot basis, the total installed cost often ends up comparable once you factor in taping, mudding, sanding, priming, and painting — and the drop ceiling offers significant practical advantages in NB basements.

A **drop ceiling** uses a metal grid system suspended from the floor joists above, with acoustic or decorative tiles that sit in the grid. For a typical 800 square foot NB basement, the total installed cost runs \$3,200 to \$6,400. The major advantage of a drop ceiling in New Brunswick is **access to everything above it** — plumbing, electrical, ductwork, and most importantly, your sump pump discharge line, water supply lines, and any future repairs. In a province where basement moisture issues are common and sump pumps are essential, being able to lift a tile and access a leaking pipe or check a junction box without tearing out ceiling material is enormously valuable. Drop ceilings also make future wiring additions simple — running a new cable for a wall-mounted TV or additional lighting takes minutes instead of hours.

The drawback of a drop ceiling is **height loss**. The grid hangs 3 to 6 inches below the joists, and NB Building Code requires a minimum ceiling height of 6 feet 5 inches (1.95 metres) for habitable space. In many older New Brunswick homes — particularly the 1960s to 1980s housing stock common across Moncton, Saint John, and Fredericton — basement ceiling heights are already tight at 7 feet or less. Losing 4 to 6 inches to a drop ceiling grid can make the space feel cramped. Measure your available height carefully before choosing.

A **drywall ceiling** attaches directly to the underside of the floor joists, giving you the maximum ceiling height and a clean, seamless look. For an 800 square foot basement, installed cost including taping, mudding, sanding, primer, and two coats of paint runs \$2,400 to \$4,800. The finished appearance is more polished than a drop ceiling, and it makes the basement feel more like a main-floor room. However, every plumbing repair, electrical modification, or ductwork service call above that ceiling means cutting through the drywall, doing the repair, then patching, taping, sanding, and repainting. In NB basements where you may need to access services periodically — checking for moisture above the ceiling, servicing HVAC ductwork, or dealing with a frozen pipe in a cold snap — this becomes expensive and frustrating.

A practical compromise that many NB homeowners choose is a **drywall ceiling in the main living areas with drop ceiling panels in utility corridors and above the bathroom** where plumbing access is most likely needed. This gives you the polished look where it matters and the access where you need it.

There is also a third option worth considering: an **exposed painted ceiling** at \$1 to \$3 per square foot. You paint the joists, subfloor, pipes, and ductwork a uniform colour (typically flat black or dark grey), leaving everything exposed. This preserves full ceiling height, maintains complete access, and creates an industrial-modern look. It works well in rec rooms and home theatres but is less appropriate for bedrooms or formal living spaces.

Whichever option you choose, ensure your electrical and plumbing rough-in inspections are complete before closing the ceiling. NB building inspectors must see all wiring and plumbing before it is concealed. Get quotes from local contractors through New Brunswick Basements to compare pricing for your specific layout.

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## What is the typical cost to waterproof a basement before finishing it in Saint John including interior drainage?

**Waterproofing a basement in Saint John with a full interior drainage system typically costs \$4,000 to \$10,000, with most homeowners landing in the \$5,000 to \$8,000 range for a complete perimeter system with sump pump.** Saint John's heavy clay soils make this one of the most important investments you will make before finishing — clay holds water against your foundation, drains extremely slowly, and creates sustained hydrostatic pressure that pushes moisture through concrete block and poured concrete walls alike.

A **full interior waterproofing system** in Saint John includes several components. The contractor cuts a channel along the interior perimeter of the basement floor, about 12 inches from the foundation wall. A perforated drainage pipe is laid in gravel in this channel, sloped toward a sump pit. The channel is then covered with new concrete. Water that enters through the foundation walls or rises through hydrostatic pressure is intercepted by the drainage channel before it reaches the living space and directed to the sump pit, where a **sump pump** discharges it outside and away from the foundation. The drainage channel and sump pump installation for a full perimeter in an 800 to 1,000 square foot Saint John basement runs \$3,500 to \$7,000.

The **sump pump** itself costs \$800 to \$2,500 installed, depending on pump quality and whether you opt for a **battery backup system** — which you absolutely should in Saint John. Maritime storms regularly knock out power, and a spring nor'easter with heavy rain coinciding with snowmelt is exactly when your sump pump needs to run most. A battery backup adds \$500 to \$1,000 but can prevent thousands of dollars in flood damage. Some homeowners also add a water-powered backup pump that runs on municipal water pressure as a secondary failsafe.

If your Saint John home has **concrete block foundation walls** — extremely common in homes built from the 1960s through 1980s — the interior system should also include a **dimpled membrane** (drainage board) installed against the foundation wall before framing. This membrane creates an air gap that allows any water weeping through the porous block to travel down the wall behind the membrane and into the perimeter drainage channel, rather than soaking into your insulation and framing. Adding this membrane runs \$1.50 to \$3.00 per square foot of wall area.

**Foundation crack repair** is often needed alongside the drainage system. Poured concrete foundations (1990s and newer) commonly develop shrinkage cracks that allow water entry. Crack injection with epoxy or polyurethane resin costs \$300 to \$800 per crack and is a targeted, effective fix. Block foundations with deteriorated mortar joints may need parging or tuckpointing on the interior face before the dimpled membrane is installed.

For severe cases — particularly older Saint John homes in neighbourhoods like the South End, Millidgeville, or the West Side where clay soils and high water tables combine — **exterior waterproofing** may be necessary. This involves excavating down to the footing, applying a waterproof membrane (rubberized asphalt or HDPE sheet), installing new weeping tile at the footing, and backfilling with gravel. Exterior waterproofing runs \$8,000 to \$20,000 depending on the depth and length of wall, but it addresses the problem at the source.

Before finishing any Saint John basement, also test for **radon** (\$30 to \$50 for a passive kit) and check for **iron ochre** — a bacterial mineral deposit that clogs weeping tiles and sump pits, requiring specialized cleaning and ongoing maintenance (\$3,000 to \$8,000 for a treatment system).

Waterproofing is not optional in Saint John — it is step one. Finishing over a wet basement leads to mold, rot, and a complete tear-out within two to three years. New Brunswick Basements can match you with waterproofing specialists in the Saint John area for free assessments and quotes.

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**Q14**

## How much does electrical rough-in and finish cost for a full basement renovation in Moncton with recessed lighting?

**Electrical rough-in and finish for a full basement renovation in Moncton with recessed lighting typically costs \$3,500 to \$7,000**, depending on the number of circuits, fixtures, and outlets, and whether your main panel needs an upgrade. This covers everything from running new wiring during the framing stage through to installing switches, outlets, and light fixtures after drywall is complete.

The **rough-in phase** — running Romex cable through the framing, installing electrical boxes for outlets, switches, and recessed light housings, and wiring back to the panel — accounts for about 60 percent of the total electrical cost. For a typical Moncton basement with a family room, bedroom, bathroom, and utility area, expect 8 to 15 new circuits including general lighting circuits, outlet circuits for each room, dedicated circuits for a bathroom exhaust fan, a dehumidifier, and any heavy appliances (freezer, space heater), plus an AFCI-protected circuit for the

bedroom. Rough-in labour and materials run \$2,000 to \$4,500.

The **finish phase** — installing the actual recessed light fixtures (pot lights), switches, cover plates, GFCI outlets, and connecting everything — runs \$1,500 to \$2,500. **Recessed LED pot lights** are the most popular basement lighting choice in Moncton, and for good reason — they sit flush with the ceiling, do not reduce headroom (critical in basements with limited ceiling height), and provide even, bright illumination. Plan for one pot light per 20 to 25 square feet of floor area in living spaces, spaced 4 to 6 feet apart. An 800 square foot basement typically needs 15 to 25 pot lights. The fixtures themselves cost \$15 to \$50 each for LED IC-rated (insulation contact) housings, with slim-profile LED disc lights at the lower end and adjustable gimbal-style fixtures at the higher end.

## Panel Capacity and Upgrades

Many older Moncton homes — particularly the 1960s to 1980s housing stock throughout the city, Dieppe, and Riverview — still have **60-amp electrical panels**. A full basement finishing project with recessed lighting, bathroom circuits, and dedicated appliance circuits can easily exceed the remaining capacity of a 60-amp panel. If an upgrade is needed, going to **100-amp service** costs \$1,500 to \$2,500, while a **200-amp upgrade** runs \$2,500 to \$4,000. Your electrician will assess panel capacity during the quoting process — this is a critical step before any work begins.

NB Building Code requires **GFCI protection** on all basement outlets, with particular emphasis on outlets within 1.5 metres of any water source (bathroom sink, laundry area, bar sink). **AFCI protection** is required on all bedroom circuits, which adds about \$40 to \$80 per breaker compared to standard breakers. **Smoke detectors** are required in every bedroom and hallway, and **carbon monoxide detectors** are required near sleeping areas and any fuel-burning appliances.

All electrical work in New Brunswick requires an **electrical permit**, and the work must be inspected at both the rough-in stage (before drywall goes up) and the final stage (after fixtures are installed). Never skip the rough-in inspection — if drywall is installed before the inspector signs off, you will be required to tear it out. Permit fees are typically \$75 to \$150 for residential electrical in Moncton.

Consider adding a few smart upgrades during the rough-in while walls are open: **dimmer switches** for pot lights in the living area and media room (\$20 to \$50 per switch), **pre-wired speaker locations** if you plan a home theatre (\$100 to \$200 per location), and **extra outlets** on every wall — adding an outlet during rough-in costs \$50 to \$100, while adding one after the walls are closed costs \$200 to \$400.

All electrical work must be done by a licensed electrician in New Brunswick. Get matched with local contractors through New Brunswick Basements for free quotes on your project.

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Q15

## What is the average cost to install luxury vinyl plank flooring throughout a finished basement in New Brunswick?

Installing luxury vinyl plank (LVP) flooring throughout a finished basement in New Brunswick typically costs between \$4 and \$8 per square foot installed, making it the most popular basement flooring choice in the province. For an average 800-square-foot basement, that works out to roughly \$3,200 to \$6,400 for materials and labour combined.

The price range depends heavily on the quality of LVP you choose. Budget-grade LVP (4mm thick, no attached underlayment) sits at the lower end around \$4 per square foot installed, while premium options with a rigid SPC core, integrated cork backing, and a thicker wear layer push closer to \$8 per square foot. For a New Brunswick basement, you want a minimum 5mm thickness with a rigid core — thinner products flex on slightly uneven concrete slabs and the click joints can separate over time.

**What most homeowners overlook is the cost of subfloor preparation underneath the LVP.** In New Brunswick's Maritime climate, concrete slabs wick moisture constantly due to high water tables and seasonal groundwater fluctuations. Installing LVP directly on bare concrete — even with the basic underlayment pad — risks trapped moisture, musty odours, and eventual adhesive breakdown. A **Dricore subfloor panel system** at \$3 to \$5 per square foot adds an air gap between the concrete and your flooring, which is the single best investment you can make for basement flooring longevity in NB. With Dricore underneath, your total flooring cost rises to \$7 to \$13 per square foot, or roughly \$5,600 to \$10,400 for an 800-square-foot basement.

Before any flooring goes down, you should perform a **calcium chloride moisture test** or tape a piece of plastic sheeting to the slab for 48 hours. If moisture accumulates underneath, you need to address that first with a vapour barrier, Dricore panels, or potentially interior waterproofing. In areas like Saint John with heavy clay soils, or coastal communities like Shediac with naturally high water tables, moisture testing is absolutely essential.

**A few practical tips for NB homeowners.** First, purchase 10% extra material beyond your measured square footage to account for cuts, waste, and future repairs — LVP dye lots vary, and matching later is nearly impossible. Second, let the LVP acclimate in the basement for 48 hours before installation so it adjusts to the cooler below-grade temperature. Third, choose a product rated for below-grade installation — not all LVP is rated for basements despite being waterproof on the surface.

Installing LVP on a prepared subfloor is one of the few basement projects a handy homeowner can tackle as a DIY job, potentially saving \$1.50 to \$3.00 per square foot in labour. However, if your concrete slab is significantly uneven (more than 3mm variation over 10 feet), you will need a self-levelling compound applied first, which is best left to a professional. Get at least three quotes from local contractors — NB pricing varies 30 to 40 percent between companies for the same scope of work.

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## How much more does it cost to build an in-law suite in a basement versus a basic finished living space in Fredericton?

A basement in-law suite in Fredericton typically costs \$45,000 to \$80,000 or more, compared to \$20,000 to \$35,000 for a basic finished living space — roughly double to triple the investment. The cost difference comes down to the additional plumbing, electrical, kitchen, separate entrance, and code requirements that transform a simple finished basement into a self-contained dwelling unit.

A **basic finished basement** in the Fredericton area — framing, insulation, drywall, flooring, paint, basic lighting, and perhaps a half bathroom — runs between \$25 and \$45 per square foot for an 800-square-foot space. You are essentially creating a comfortable living area connected to the main home with shared kitchen and laundry facilities. The scope is straightforward: stud walls against the foundation with rigid foam insulation, drywall finishing, LVP or carpet tile flooring over Dricore subfloor panels, and updated electrical with code-compliant outlets and lighting.

**An in-law suite adds several expensive components.** A full three-piece bathroom costs \$8,000 to \$25,000 depending on finishes, requiring a plumbing rough-in that involves breaking the concrete slab to connect drain lines — a major cost driver. A kitchenette with basic cabinetry, countertop, sink, and appliance hookups adds \$5,000 to \$15,000. If you want a full kitchen with a range and dishwasher, expect \$10,000 to \$25,000. A separate entrance with exterior stairs and a landing adds \$5,000 to \$12,000. And here is the critical one for Fredericton: **every bedroom in the suite requires an egress window**, which costs \$2,500 to \$5,000 per window including cutting the foundation wall, installing the window well, and waterproofing.

### Fredericton-Specific Considerations

Fredericton's building inspection department processes permits relatively quickly compared to rural RSC areas — typically one to three weeks. However, a secondary suite triggers more rigorous inspection requirements than a basic finished basement. You will need a building permit, plumbing permit, electrical permit, and potentially a separate entrance permit. The City of Fredericton has been supportive of secondary suites to address housing supply, but you must meet all NB Building Code requirements including fire separation between the suite and the main dwelling (minimum 30-minute fire rating on the ceiling assembly), interconnected smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and GFCI protection on all basement outlets.

Fredericton sits in the Saint John River valley with mixed clay and loam soils and a relatively high water table near the river. Before investing \$50,000-plus in an in-law suite, **waterproofing must be addressed first** — water entry will destroy finished walls, flooring, and appliances. Many older Fredericton homes from the 1960s through 1980s have concrete block foundations with no exterior waterproofing membrane, and an interior waterproofing system (\$3,000 to \$8,000) is often a prerequisite.

Another cost factor specific to older Fredericton homes is the **electrical panel**. Many homes still have 60-amp or 100-amp service, which is insufficient for an in-law suite with a kitchen, bathroom, and dedicated circuits. A panel upgrade to 200-amp service costs \$1,500 to \$4,000 and is often required before the electrical inspector will sign off. Radon testing (\$30 to \$50 for a passive kit) should also be completed before finishing — Fredericton has areas with elevated radon, and mitigation (\$2,000 to \$4,000) is far easier to install before walls and floors are finished.

Get a minimum of three detailed quotes from contractors experienced specifically in secondary suites — the scope is more complex than basic finishing, and you want a contractor who understands the code requirements. New Brunswick Basements can help match you with experienced local basement contractors for free estimates.

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Q17

## Should I get three quotes from basement contractors in Moncton and how do I compare bids that seem very different?

**You should get a minimum of three quotes — and ideally four or five — for any basement renovation in Moncton, because pricing in the New Brunswick market varies 30 to 40 percent between contractors for identical scope.** This is not a small difference. On a \$35,000 basement finishing project, that spread means the gap between the lowest and highest bid could be \$10,000 or more.

The reason bids vary so dramatically is that basement work is not standardized the way a roof replacement or window installation might be. Every contractor approaches moisture management, insulation, and layout differently, and the scope assumptions behind each quote can be wildly inconsistent. One contractor may include waterproofing as a line item while another assumes the basement is already dry. One may quote rigid foam board insulation while another quotes cheaper fiberglass batts (which, in Moncton's Maritime humidity, is a recipe for hidden mold behind the walls). These are not equivalent bids even if the bottom-line number looks similar.

**To compare bids effectively, break each quote into its component parts and compare line by line.** A proper basement renovation quote in Moncton should itemize the following separately: waterproofing or moisture

management, insulation type and R-value, framing and drywall, electrical rough-in and fixtures, plumbing (if applicable), flooring including subfloor system, ceiling type, permit fees, and a clear description of what is included versus excluded. If a contractor hands you a single lump-sum number with no breakdown, ask for an itemized version — any reputable contractor will provide one.

Here is what to watch for when comparing. **First, check the insulation specification.** In Moncton, you want rigid foam board (minimum R-12.5, ideally R-20) or closed-cell spray foam against foundation walls — never fiberglass batts touching the concrete. Moncton's sandy and silty soils drain relatively well compared to Saint John's clay, but the Maritime humidity still drives condensation on cold foundation walls from October through April. A lower bid that uses fiberglass batts is not actually cheaper — it is a mold problem waiting to happen.

**Second, check whether waterproofing is included or assumed.** Many Moncton homes from the 1960s through 1980s have concrete block foundations with no exterior membrane. If the contractor's quote does not address moisture at all, either they are assuming you will handle it separately or they are planning to finish over a wet basement — both are red flags.

**Third, verify permit costs and who pulls them.** A legitimate contractor includes building, electrical, and plumbing permits in the quote and handles the inspection process. In Moncton, the city building inspection department processes permits within one to three weeks and fees run \$75 to \$300 depending on scope. A contractor who suggests skipping permits to save money is someone you should walk away from immediately.

**Fourth, compare payment schedules.** A reasonable structure is 10 to 15 percent deposit, progress payments at defined milestones (framing complete, rough-in inspection passed, drywall hung), and 10 to 15 percent holdback until final inspection and your walkthrough. Be cautious of any contractor asking for more than 25 percent upfront.

Finally, verify that each contractor carries **general liability insurance** and **WorkSafeNB coverage** — ask for certificates, not just verbal confirmation. New Brunswick Basements can help you connect with vetted local basement contractors through the New Brunswick Construction Network to make the quoting process easier.

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## What hidden costs should I expect when finishing a basement in New Brunswick that most contractors do not include in quotes?

**The most significant hidden cost in any New Brunswick basement renovation is waterproofing — and it is the one item that many contractors either exclude from their quotes entirely or address inadequately.**

Beyond waterproofing, homeowners in NB routinely encounter \$5,000 to \$15,000 in additional costs that were not in the original estimate. Knowing about these upfront prevents budget shock mid-project.

**Waterproofing and moisture management** is the number one surprise. Many contractors quote the "finishing" scope — framing, insulation, drywall, flooring — and assume the basement is already dry. In New Brunswick's Maritime climate, with 70 to 85 percent summer humidity, spring thaw flooding, and older housing stock that often lacks exterior waterproofing membranes, a dry basement cannot be assumed. An interior waterproofing system with a sump pump runs \$3,000 to \$8,000, and if your home needs exterior excavation and membrane application, that jumps to \$8,000 to \$20,000. This is not optional — finishing a wet basement guarantees mold and a complete tear-out within two to three years.

**Permit fees and inspections** add \$75 to \$300 per permit in NB cities like Moncton, Saint John, and Fredericton. A full basement finishing project may require a building permit, electrical permit, and plumbing permit — potentially \$200 to \$900 in fees alone. Some contractors include permits in their bid; many do not. Always ask explicitly.

**Electrical panel upgrades** catch many homeowners off guard. Older NB homes — particularly those built before the 1980s — frequently have 60-amp or 100-amp service panels. Adding a basement with multiple circuits for lighting, outlets, a bathroom exhaust fan, a dehumidifier, and potentially a kitchenette can exceed the panel's capacity. Upgrading to 200-amp service costs \$1,500 to \$4,000 and is often not included in the finishing quote because the contractor does not discover the need until the electrician assesses the panel.

**Radon testing and mitigation** is another cost that most contractors never mention. New Brunswick has elevated radon levels in many areas, and Health Canada recommends testing before finishing any basement. A passive test kit costs \$30 to \$50, but if levels exceed 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>, a sub-slab depressurization system costs \$2,000 to \$4,000 to install. This is dramatically cheaper and easier to do before walls and floors go in — retrofitting afterward can cost double.

**Egress windows** are required by the NB Building Code for any basement bedroom, and many homeowners do not realize this until the building inspector flags it. Each egress window — including cutting the foundation wall, installing the window and well, and waterproofing — costs \$2,500 to \$5,000. If you are planning two bedrooms, that is potentially \$10,000 the contractor may not have included.

Other commonly excluded costs include: **Dricore subfloor panels** (\$3 to \$5 per square foot) which are essential under any flooring in NB to prevent moisture wicking from the concrete slab; **iron ochre treatment** (\$3,000 to \$8,000) if your drainage system is affected by this bacterial mineral deposit common in parts of NB; **HVAC modifications** to extend heating and cooling to the basement (\$1,500 to \$4,000); and a **dehumidifier** (\$300 to \$800 for a quality unit) which is practically mandatory for any finished NB basement.

The best protection is to request fully itemized quotes that explicitly state what is included and excluded, budget an additional 15 to 20 percent contingency beyond the quoted price, and address waterproofing as a separate first-phase project before any finishing begins.

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## How much does it cost to add egress windows and bring a basement bedroom up to code in Saint John?

Adding an egress window to a basement bedroom in Saint John typically costs \$2,500 to \$5,000 per window, and bringing the full bedroom up to NB Building Code standards — including electrical, smoke detection, and finishing — generally runs \$8,000 to \$18,000 total depending on the current state of the space. This is a life-safety requirement, not an optional upgrade. Every basement bedroom must have a code-compliant egress window, and there are no exceptions.

The NB Building Code requires each basement bedroom egress window to have a **minimum clear opening of 3.8 square feet (0.35 m<sup>2</sup>)**, with a **maximum sill height of 1,500mm from the finished floor**. The window must open without tools or special knowledge — this is your emergency escape route in a fire. Because the window is below grade in most basements, a **window well** is required outside, and it must have proper drainage to prevent water pooling. In Saint John specifically, with its heavy clay soils that hold water against foundations, the window well drainage is critical. A poorly drained window well in Saint John clay becomes a water entry point during every rainstorm and spring thaw.

The egress window installation itself involves several steps that drive the cost. The contractor must **cut through the concrete foundation wall** using a concrete saw — this is structural work that requires a building permit in Saint John. The opening must be properly sized and reinforced with a steel lintel above to maintain structural integrity. The window well is then excavated outside, lined (usually with a galvanized steel or polyethylene well), backfilled with drainage gravel, and connected to a drain that either ties into the weeping tile system or drains to daylight. The window unit itself is installed and sealed with waterproofing membrane on the exterior. In Saint John's clay soils, the excavation and drainage work tends to push costs toward the higher end of the range because the clay does not drain naturally and requires more robust gravel and drainage provisions.

### Full Bedroom Code Compliance Costs

Beyond the egress window, bringing a basement bedroom up to code in Saint John includes several other requirements. **Electrical** needs include AFCI-protected circuits for the bedroom, GFCI protection on all basement outlets, adequate lighting, and proper outlet spacing — rough-in electrical for a bedroom runs \$1,000 to \$2,500. **Smoke detectors** are required in every bedroom and in the hallway outside bedrooms, and **carbon monoxide detectors** are required near sleeping areas — add \$200 to \$500 for hardwired, interconnected units. **Insulation** against the foundation walls must meet a minimum R-12.5, using rigid foam board or closed-cell spray foam (never fiberglass batts against the concrete in Saint John's damp conditions) — insulating one bedroom's worth of wall space runs \$1,500 to \$3,500. **Framing and drywall** for the bedroom adds \$2,000 to \$5,000, and **flooring** with a

Dricore subfloor system adds \$1,500 to \$3,000.

Saint John's building inspection department handles permits directly and typically processes applications within one to three weeks, with fees ranging from \$75 to \$300. You will need framing, rough-in electrical, insulation, and final inspections. Do not skip this process — unpermitted bedrooms create liability issues, insurance problems, and complications when selling the home.

Because this work involves cutting the foundation, structural reinforcement, electrical, and waterproofing, this is firmly in the hire-a-professional category. Get at least three quotes from contractors experienced with egress window installations in Saint John.

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Q20

## What is the price range for spray foam insulation in a full basement in Moncton in 2026?

**Closed-cell spray foam insulation for a full basement in Moncton runs approximately \$4.00 to \$7.00 per square foot of wall area installed, which translates to roughly \$5,000 to \$12,000 for a typical 800-square-foot basement with standard 8-foot walls.** The total cost depends on the wall area being sprayed, the thickness applied, accessibility, and whether the rim joist areas are included.

For basement wall insulation in Moncton, **closed-cell spray foam** is the superior choice over open-cell spray foam. Closed-cell provides approximately R-6 to R-7 per inch, acts as its own vapour barrier at 2 inches or greater thickness, and resists moisture absorption — all critical properties for below-grade walls in New Brunswick's Maritime climate. At 2 inches thick, you achieve roughly R-12.5, which meets the NB Building Code minimum for basement walls. At 3 inches, you reach approximately R-19 to R-21, closer to the recommended R-20 for energy efficiency in NB's cold winters. Most contractors in Moncton recommend the 3-inch application for long-term energy savings, which pushes the per-square-foot cost toward the \$5.50 to \$7.00 range.

**Open-cell spray foam** is significantly cheaper at \$1.50 to \$3.50 per square foot, but it absorbs moisture and does not act as a vapour barrier on its own. In Moncton basements, where cold foundation walls create condensation from October through April and the Maritime humidity averages 70 to 85 percent in summer, open-cell foam against the foundation is risky without an additional vapour barrier. Most experienced NB basement contractors recommend closed-cell exclusively for foundation wall applications.

The cost calculation for your specific basement depends on the **net wall area** — total wall perimeter multiplied by wall height, minus window and door openings. A typical Moncton basement with a 30-by-26-foot footprint has roughly 112 linear feet of wall. At 8 feet tall, that is approximately 896 square feet of wall area. At \$5.00 to \$7.00 per square foot for closed-cell, the wall insulation alone runs \$4,500 to \$6,300. Add the **rim joist and header areas** — a critical thermal weak point that should always be included — and you add \$500 to \$1,500 depending on the home's configuration.

Moncton's sandy and silty soils provide better natural drainage than Saint John's clay, which means foundation walls in Moncton tend to be somewhat drier. However, the condensation issue remains significant. When warm, humid basement air contacts the cold concrete wall surface (which hovers near soil temperature — roughly 5 to 10°C for much of the year), condensation forms. Spray foam eliminates this condensation point by creating a continuous thermal and vapour barrier directly on the concrete surface, which is why it outperforms any other insulation method for NB basements.

**A few important notes for Moncton homeowners.** Spray foam installation requires specialized equipment and trained applicators — this is never a DIY project. The space must be evacuated during application and for 24 hours afterward due to off-gassing. Make sure your contractor is certified by the spray foam manufacturer. Before spraying, any active water leaks or cracks must be addressed — spray foam is not a waterproofing product and will mask leaks rather than fix them, leading to hidden damage. Always address waterproofing first, then insulate.

Get quotes from at least three insulation contractors in the Moncton area. Pricing varies, and some contractors offer better rates when combining basement walls with rim joist and attic work in a single visit.

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## How much does it cost to redo an old finished basement in Fredericton that has outdated wood panelling and drop ceilings?

**Renovating an outdated finished basement in Fredericton — demolishing old wood panelling and drop ceilings and rebuilding to modern standards — typically costs \$30,000 to \$55,000 for an 800-square-foot space, and often more if waterproofing and insulation deficiencies are uncovered behind the old walls.** This is almost always more expensive than finishing an unfinished basement because you are paying for demolition, disposal, and likely correcting moisture problems that the original renovation ignored.

The first phase is **demolition and assessment**, which runs \$2,000 to \$5,000 including labour and disposal fees. When the old wood panelling comes down in a Fredericton home — particularly those built in the 1960s through 1980s — you will frequently discover problems hiding behind the walls. The most common findings are: **mold on the back side of the panelling or on the foundation wall** (extremely common because those old renovations typically had no vapour barrier and often used fiberglass batt insulation directly against the concrete), **no insulation at all** (many vintage finished basements in NB relied solely on the panelling as a "finished" surface with nothing behind it), and **moisture staining or active water entry** through cracks in the foundation. This assessment phase is critical — what you find behind the old walls determines the true scope and cost of the project.

**Waterproofing is the likely hidden cost.** Most Fredericton basements finished in the 1970s and 1980s had zero waterproofing. Fredericton's mixed clay and loam soils along the Saint John River valley hold moisture against foundations, and the seasonal water table fluctuation is significant. If you find moisture problems behind the old walls — and the probability is high — budget \$3,000 to \$8,000 for an interior waterproofing system with a sump pump before any new finishing begins. If the home is in a low-lying area near the river, exterior waterproofing (\$8,000 to \$20,000) may be necessary.

**Rebuilding the space to modern standards** includes proper rigid foam or closed-cell spray foam insulation against the foundation walls (\$5,000 to \$12,000 for a full basement), new framing with an appropriate air gap (\$3,000 to \$6,000), drywall finishing (\$3,000 to \$6,000), new flooring with a Dricore subfloor system (\$4,000 to \$9,000), new electrical to current code including GFCI outlets and updated lighting (\$2,000 to \$5,000), and a new ceiling — either a modern drop ceiling for service access (\$2,000 to \$5,000) or drywall ceiling (\$2,000 to \$4,000). Paint, trim, and finishing details add another \$1,500 to \$3,000.

There are two additional items specific to Fredericton renovations of this era. **Radon testing** should be done before rebuilding — Fredericton has areas with elevated radon, and mitigation (\$2,000 to \$4,000) is far easier to install before new walls go up. And **asbestos testing** is advisable if the original renovation used certain ceiling tiles, pipe insulation, or joint compounds common in the 1960s through early 1980s — a professional asbestos survey costs

\$200 to \$500, and removal, if needed, adds \$1,000 to \$5,000 depending on the material and quantity.

The silver lining is that a full gut-and-redo lets you design the layout properly from scratch, add egress windows where needed for bedrooms, and build the space to current NB Building Code standards with proper moisture management — something the original renovation almost certainly did not include. Get at least three quotes and ensure each contractor itemizes demolition, waterproofing, insulation, and finishing as separate line items so you can compare accurately.

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## What does it cost to have a structural engineer assess my basement foundation before starting a renovation in New Brunswick?

A structural engineer's assessment of a basement foundation in New Brunswick typically costs \$500 to \$1,500 for a standard residential inspection and written report, with more complex assessments involving load calculations or underpinning designs running \$1,500 to \$3,500 or more. This is one of the smartest investments you can make before starting a basement renovation, particularly in older NB homes where foundation conditions are often unknown.

A **standard structural assessment** includes a site visit where the engineer visually inspects the foundation walls, footings (if accessible), floor slab, support beams, lally columns, and any visible cracking, bowing, settling, or water damage. They will assess the overall structural integrity and provide a written report with findings and recommendations. For a straightforward assessment of a poured concrete or concrete block foundation in good condition, expect to pay \$500 to \$1,000. This is the level of assessment most homeowners need before a basic basement finishing project.

Costs increase when the assessment requires **detailed engineering calculations or design work**. If you are planning to remove or relocate a load-bearing wall, replace lally columns or beams, cut large openings in the foundation for egress windows, or lower the basement floor through underpinning, the engineer must produce stamped engineered drawings that specify beam sizes, column spacing, footing requirements, and construction sequence. These detailed engineering designs run \$1,500 to \$3,500 depending on complexity. The NB Building Code requires stamped engineered drawings for any structural modifications — your building inspector in Moncton, Saint John, Fredericton, or whichever municipality you are in will not approve a structural permit without them.

In New Brunswick specifically, there are several situations where a structural engineer's assessment is particularly important before renovating. **Concrete block foundations** from the 1960s through 1980s — extremely common across NB — can develop horizontal cracking and inward bowing from lateral soil pressure and frost heave. What looks like minor cracking may indicate a wall that needs reinforcement before any finishing occurs. **Fieldstone and rubble foundations** found in pre-1960s homes in Saint John and Fredericton heritage areas require expert evaluation before any finishing is attempted — many of these foundations were never designed to be finished spaces. **Settlement cracking** is common in Moncton's sandy and silty soils, where foundations can shift gradually, and in Fredericton's river valley where clay soils expand and contract seasonally.

A structural assessment also identifies whether **underpinning** is needed if your basement has insufficient ceiling height (less than 6 feet 5 inches for habitable space per code). Underpinning — lowering the basement floor by excavating beneath the existing footings — is a major structural undertaking costing \$30,000 to \$80,000 or more,

and it absolutely requires engineered design and supervision.

To find a structural engineer in NB, look for a **P.Eng. (Professional Engineer) registered with Engineers and Geoscientists New Brunswick (EGGNB)**. Most structural engineering firms in the Moncton, Saint John, and Fredericton areas are familiar with NB's housing stock and foundation types. Request a written report with clear recommendations — this document becomes your roadmap for the renovation and your building permit application.

The \$500 to \$1,500 cost of an assessment pales in comparison to the cost of discovering a structural problem after walls are framed and drywall is hung. If your home was built before 1990, has visible foundation cracking, bowing walls, or if you are planning any structural changes, a professional assessment before you start is essential.

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Q23

## How do material costs for basement finishing in New Brunswick compare between buying at Home Depot versus through a contractor?

**Buying materials yourself at Home Depot or a local building supply store can save 10 to 25 percent on material costs compared to having your contractor supply everything, but the savings come with significant trade-offs in convenience, warranty coverage, and potential project delays.** The decision depends on the scope of your project and the arrangement you negotiate with your contractor.

At retail prices from Home Depot in Moncton, Saint John, or Fredericton, here is what typical basement finishing materials cost in 2026. **Rigid foam insulation board** (2-inch XPS) runs roughly \$1.50 to \$2.50 per square foot of material. **Drywall** (half-inch moisture-resistant) costs about \$15 to \$20 per 4-by-8 sheet. **LVP flooring** ranges from \$2.00 to \$5.00 per square foot depending on quality. **Dricore subfloor panels** run approximately \$3.50 to \$5.00 per 2-by-2-foot tile. **Framing lumber** (2x4 studs) costs \$4 to \$7 each. For an 800-square-foot basement, the raw material cost for a basic finish (insulation, framing, drywall, flooring with subfloor, paint, basic lighting) typically totals \$8,000 to \$15,000 at retail.

When a contractor supplies materials, they typically mark up between 10 and 25 percent above their cost. However, many established NB contractors buy at **contractor pricing** from building suppliers — which is already 10 to 20 percent below retail — so their marked-up price to you may only be marginally higher than what you would pay at Home Depot, or in some cases actually comparable. The markup covers the contractor's time sourcing materials, arranging delivery, handling returns and defects, and ensuring the right products arrive at the right time.

**There are real advantages to letting the contractor supply materials.** First, they carry the **warranty and liability** for material defects and compatibility — if the drywall they supplied is defective or the wrong insulation was installed, that is their problem to resolve. If you supplied the wrong material, you eat the cost and the delay. Second, contractors know which specific products perform well in NB basement conditions. For example, they will know to specify moisture-resistant drywall for all basement walls, not standard drywall. They will select LVP rated for below-grade installation. They will avoid fiberglass batt insulation against foundation walls — a mistake a well-meaning homeowner at Home Depot might make based on a price comparison with rigid foam.

**The biggest risk of homeowner-supplied materials is project delays.** If you buy the wrong size, quantity, or type — or if materials are backordered — your contractor's crew sits idle while you sort it out, and most contractors will charge a delay fee or move to another job. In NB's short prime renovation season (May through October), a week's delay can push your project completion into the fall.

The practical middle ground that many NB homeowners take is to **supply your own flooring, paint, and fixtures** (items where personal taste drives the selection and the cost difference is meaningful) while letting the contractor handle **structural materials, insulation, drywall, and electrical and plumbing supplies** (items where specification matters more than price). Discuss material supply upfront during the quoting phase — some contractors require supplying all materials as part of their contract, while others are flexible. Whatever you decide, get it in writing before the project starts.

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## What is the typical deposit and payment schedule when hiring a basement contractor in the Moncton or Saint John area?

**A reasonable deposit for a basement renovation contractor in the Moncton or Saint John area is 10 to 15 percent of the total contract value, with the balance paid in milestone-based progress payments and a final holdback of 10 to 15 percent upon completion.** Any contractor requesting more than 25 percent upfront — or full payment before work begins — is a significant red flag regardless of how good their quote looks.

The standard payment structure for a basement renovation in the \$25,000 to \$60,000 range in the Moncton and Saint John areas typically follows this pattern. A **deposit of 10 to 15 percent** is paid upon signing the contract, which secures your spot on the contractor's schedule and covers initial material procurement. For a \$40,000 basement finishing project, that means a deposit of \$4,000 to \$6,000. The deposit should be accompanied by a signed contract that specifies the full scope of work, material specifications, timeline, payment schedule, and warranty terms.

**Progress payments** are tied to completion milestones, not calendar dates. A well-structured schedule for a full basement finishing project looks something like this: 20 to 25 percent upon completion of demolition (if applicable) and framing, 20 to 25 percent after rough-in inspections pass (electrical and plumbing), 20 to 25 percent after insulation inspection and drywall installation, and the **final 10 to 15 percent holdback** after all finishing work is complete, final municipal inspection is passed, and you have done a thorough walkthrough to create a deficiency list.

That final holdback is your most powerful tool as a homeowner. **Never release the final payment until every item on your deficiency list is addressed.** This includes touch-up paint, trim completion, outlet and switch plate installation, final cleaning, and any items that do not match the contract specifications. In New Brunswick, the final building inspection must also be completed and passed before you consider the project done — this protects you legally and for insurance purposes.

### Moncton and Saint John Considerations

Both cities have active building inspection departments, and the inspection schedule directly affects your payment milestones. In Moncton and Saint John, inspectors typically respond within a few business days of a request, but delays can occur during the busy summer season (May through October). Your payment schedule should be tied to **inspections passing**, not just work being completed — if the framing inspection fails and the contractor needs to make corrections, you should not be making the next progress payment until the inspection passes.

Saint John's heavy clay soils and Moncton's sandy soils create different waterproofing requirements, and if waterproofing is part of your project scope, it should be a separate early milestone with its own payment upon

completion and testing. Paying for finishing work before waterproofing is verified puts you at risk of paying twice — once for the finish and again to tear it out and redo it when water comes through.

**Protect yourself with these practices.** Always pay by cheque or e-transfer with a clear memo noting what milestone the payment covers — never pay cash without a detailed receipt. Get a written contract before any deposit changes hands. Verify the contractor has **general liability insurance** and **WorkSafeNB coverage** (ask for certificates, not verbal promises). In New Brunswick, if a contractor is injured on your property without WorkSafeNB coverage, you could be held liable.

Be cautious of contractors who offer suspiciously large discounts for cash payment or upfront payment in full — these are warning signs. A reputable basement contractor in the Moncton or Saint John area will have no problem with a milestone-based payment schedule because they have the cash flow and credit to operate between payments. New Brunswick Basements can help connect you with established local contractors through the New Brunswick Construction Network.

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