

OTTAWA PRO PLUMBING



Water Heaters

Tank and tankless water heaters, installation,
repair, and maintenance

3 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

ottawaplumbingpro.ca/construction-brain

Table of Contents

1. Can I switch from electric to gas water heater?
.....
2. How much does it cost to install a tankless water heater?
.....
3. Should I repair or replace my water heater?
.....

Q1

Can I switch from electric to gas water heater?

Yes, you can switch from electric to gas water heater, but it requires significant work including running a new gas line and venting system. This conversion typically costs \$2,500 - \$4,500 in Ottawa, depending on your home's layout and distance to the gas meter.

The conversion process involves several major components. First, a licensed gas technician must run a new gas line from your meter to the water heater location, which can cost \$800 - \$1,500 depending on distance and complexity. Second, you'll need proper venting installed - either through an existing chimney or a new direct-vent system through an exterior wall. The venting alone can add \$500 - \$1,200 to the project.

In Ottawa, this work requires permits and inspections. The gas line installation needs a gas permit, and the water heater replacement requires a plumbing permit. Your licensed plumber will coordinate these permits and ensure the installation meets Ontario Building Code requirements. The gas company will also need to inspect and connect the new line before the system can be activated.

Consider your long-term savings versus upfront costs. Natural gas typically costs less to operate than electricity for water heating - often 40-60% less in Ottawa. However, with the conversion costs, it usually takes 3-5 years to break even. If your electric water heater is relatively new and working well, the economics might not justify the switch.

Safety is critical with gas water heaters. They require proper combustion air, carbon monoxide detection, and regular maintenance. Gas units also need more clearance around them compared to electric models.

For a detailed assessment of your specific situation and accurate pricing, request a consultation with Ottawa Pro Plumbing. We can evaluate your home's gas accessibility, venting options, and help you determine if the conversion makes financial sense.

Q2

How much does it cost to install a tankless water heater?

Tankless water heater installation in Ottawa typically costs between \$3,500 to \$5,500, including the unit, installation labor, permits, and necessary upgrades. This is significantly higher than traditional tank water heaters due to the complexity of installation requirements.

The **total cost depends on several key factors**. The unit itself ranges from \$1,500 to \$3,000, with gas models generally more expensive than electric. Installation labor adds \$1,500 to \$2,000, but this can increase substantially if your home needs upgrades. Many Ottawa homes require electrical upgrades for electric units (new 240V circuits) or gas line modifications for gas units, which can add \$500 to \$1,500 to the project.

Permit requirements in Ottawa add approximately \$200 to \$400 to your total cost. Tankless water heater installations require both plumbing and electrical permits, and the City of Ottawa has specific venting requirements for gas units that must be followed. Your licensed plumber will handle the permit applications and ensure code compliance.

Additional costs to consider include potential structural modifications if venting routes need changes (\$300-\$800) and water treatment systems if you have hard water, which can damage tankless units over time. Some Ottawa homes also need upgraded gas meters for higher BTU gas tankless units, which involves coordination with Enbridge Gas.

The investment pays off through energy savings - tankless units are 20-30% more efficient than tank water heaters and last 15-20 years versus 8-12 years for tanks. They also free up valuable basement space and provide unlimited hot water when properly sized.

For an accurate quote based on your specific home's requirements and to ensure proper permitting, request a free consultation from Ottawa Pro Plumbing. We'll assess your current setup and provide a detailed estimate including all necessary upgrades.

Q3

Should I repair or replace my water heater?

The decision between repairing or replacing your water heater depends on its age, the cost of repairs, and efficiency considerations. Generally, if your water heater is over 10-12 years old and needs expensive repairs, replacement is usually the better investment.

Age is the primary factor in this decision. Tank water heaters typically last 8-12 years in Ottawa's hard water conditions, while tankless units can last 15-20 years. If your unit is approaching or past its expected lifespan, even minor repairs may be followed by other failures within months. The **"50% rule"** is helpful here - if repair costs exceed 50% of replacement cost and your unit is over 8 years old, replacement usually makes more sense.

Consider the type and cost of repairs needed. Simple fixes like replacing a thermostat (\$150-250) or heating element (\$200-350) are worthwhile on newer units. However, major issues like tank leaks, corroded pipes, or multiple component failures often signal it's time to replace. In Ottawa's market, basic repairs typically range from \$200-500, while tank water heater replacement runs \$1,500-2,500 installed.

Energy efficiency improvements make replacement attractive for older units. New water heaters are significantly more efficient than models from 10+ years ago, potentially saving \$200-400 annually on energy costs. Tankless units offer even greater efficiency but require higher upfront investment (\$3,500-5,500). Ottawa's cold winters put extra demand on water heaters, making efficiency gains more valuable here.

Safety considerations shouldn't be overlooked. Older gas water heaters may have venting issues or carbon monoxide risks, while aging electric units can develop electrical hazards. Any signs of rust, corrosion, or water pooling around the unit warrant immediate professional assessment.

For a free evaluation of your water heater's condition and replacement options, Ottawa Pro Plumbing can help you make the most cost-effective decision for your specific situation.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Pro Plumbing. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any construction or renovation project. Information is current as of March 15, 2026 and may change. Visit ottawaplumbingpro.ca for the latest answers.