OTTAWA PAINT CONTRACTORS

Exterior Painting

Exterior house painting including siding, trim, fascia and weather protection

19 Expert Answers from Paint IQ

ottawapaintcontractors.com/construction-brain

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Q1

What happens to fresh exterior paint on an Ottawa home during an unexpected frost?

Fresh exterior paint exposed to unexpected frost in Ottawa will likely suffer significant damage, potentially ruining the entire paint job. When temperatures drop below the paint's minimum application temperature (typically 5-10°C for most exterior paints) before the paint has fully cured, the water in latex paint can freeze and expand, causing the paint film to crack, blister, or fail to properly adhere to the surface.

This is a real concern in Ottawa's unpredictable spring and fall weather. Even when daytime temperatures reach 15-20°C in late April or early May, overnight temperatures can still plummet to near freezing. Similarly, September and October can deliver surprise frost warnings that catch homeowners off guard. The paint needs several hours to begin its initial cure before temperatures drop, and most quality exterior paints require 24-48 hours of temperatures above their minimum threshold for proper film formation.

The damage typically manifests as poor adhesion, where the paint peels away in sheets, or as a chalky, powdery surface that wipes off easily. Blistering is also common when moisture gets trapped under the paint film during the freeze-thaw cycle. If you suspect frost damage, wait for warmer weather and test the paint by pressing tape against it and pulling it off - damaged paint will come away with the tape.

Prevention is key: always check the extended weather forecast before starting exterior painting in Ottawa, and avoid painting when overnight lows are predicted to drop within 5°C of the paint's minimum temperature. Professional painters know to watch for these conditions and will typically reschedule rather than risk a callback. If you're planning exterior painting and want to connect with contractors who understand Ottawa's challenging climate conditions, you can browse experienced painting professionals through the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory.

Q2

What Is the Best Exterior Paint for Surviving Ottawa's Freeze-Thaw Cycles?

Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycles are genuinely brutal on exterior paint. We're talking about **150+ freeze-thaw transitions per year** — those shoulder-season days in March, April, November, and December where temperatures bounce above and below zero repeatedly. That constant expansion and contraction destroys inferior paint films. Here's what actually works.

Why Freeze-Thaw Destroys Paint

When moisture penetrates a paint film and freezes, it expands by roughly 9%. That expansion creates micro-cracks. The next thaw lets more moisture in. The next freeze pushes those cracks wider. Within a couple of Ottawa winters, you've got peeling, flaking, and bubbling — especially on north-facing walls that stay damp and cold longest.

The key to surviving this cycle is a paint that does two things well: **stays flexible at extreme cold temperatures** and **resists moisture penetration** so there's nothing to freeze in the first place.

Top-Performing Exterior Paints for Ottawa

100% Acrylic Latex — The Gold Standard

100% acrylic latex paint is the clear winner for Ottawa exteriors. Unlike vinyl-acrylic blends, pure acrylic maintains flexibility down to approximately **-30C** — which is exactly what we hit during Ottawa's coldest January stretches. The key products Ottawa painters rely on:

- **Benjamin Moore Aura Exterior**: Premium option at **$75-$90 per gallon**. Exceptional adhesion and colour retention. Self-priming on most surfaces.
- **Sherwin-Williams Duration Exterior**: Strong contender at **$70-$85 per gallon**. Excellent moisture resistance and coverage.
- **Benjamin Moore Regal Select Exterior**: Mid-premium at **$60-$75 per gallon**. Solid performance for budget-conscious homeowners.
- **Dulux Diamond Exterior**: A Canadian-made option at **$55-$70 per gallon** that performs very well in our climate.

  These prices are typical for Ottawa paint stores — roughly **10-15% below Toronto pricing** due to lower overhead and competitive local retailers.

Elastomeric Coatings — For Problem Walls

If you have stucco, masonry, or concrete block walls that have already shown cracking, **elastomeric paint** stretches up to **300-500%** without breaking. It's essentially a thick rubber-like coating that bridges existing cracks up to 1/16 inch wide.

Cost is higher — **$50-$70 per gallon** for product alone — and it requires specific application technique. But for Ottawa homes with persistent cracking on exposed walls, it's a permanent solution rather than a band-aid.

What to Avoid in Ottawa

Alkyd (oil-based) exterior paint was the standard 30 years ago, but it becomes brittle in cold temperatures. Once an alkyd film hardens fully (usually within the first year), it loses flexibility and cannot handle freeze-thaw movement. You'll see it crack and peel much sooner than acrylic.

Vinyl-acrylic blends — the cheaper "acrylic" paints — use vinyl as a binder extender. They're less flexible and less moisture-resistant than 100% acrylic. The $10-$15 per gallon savings is a false economy when you're repainting two years sooner.

Flat finishes on trim and high-exposure areas collect moisture and are harder to clean after Ottawa's salty, gritty winters. Use **satin or semi-gloss** on trim, soffits, and any surface within splash range of the ground.

Application Tips That Matter in Ottawa

Even the best paint will fail if applied wrong. Ottawa-specific considerations:

- **Prime bare wood with an alkyd primer** even if top-coating with latex. Alkyd primers penetrate deeper and seal wood fibres better, preventing moisture entry that leads to freeze-thaw damage.
- **Apply two full coats minimum**. One coat might look fine initially, but the thinner film won't withstand Ottawa winters. Two coats give you **8-12 mils of dry film thickness** — the minimum for serious freeze-thaw resistance.
- **Paint when surface temperature is 10-30C** and rising. Morning dew must be fully evaporated. Ottawa's ideal window is **mid-May through early October**.
- **Watch humidity**: Ottawa's summer humidity can exceed 80%. Paint applied in high humidity dries slowly and may not cure properly before fall temperatures drop.

Realistic Lifespan Expectations

With premium 100% acrylic paint, proper prep, and two coats, expect:

- **Wood siding**: 7-10 years on south/west faces, 5-8 years on north faces
- **Aluminum/vinyl siding** (yes, people paint these): 5-7 years
- **Brick and masonry**: 10-15 years
- **Trim and fascia**: 5-8 years (higher wear from ice, snow, and water runoff)

North-facing walls in neighbourhoods like Old Ottawa South, the Glebe, or Sandy Hill — especially those shaded by mature trees — always degrade faster because they stay damp longer, giving freeze-thaw more to work with.

For help choosing the right product and application approach for your specific home, the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** connects you with local painting professionals. And **Ottawa Paint Contractors** has dozens of Paint IQ answers covering every aspect of exterior painting in our climate.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Justyn Rook Contracting
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- Geerts Roofing Inc
- SIR Custom
- Leeds Property Maintenance

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Q3

How Long Does Exterior Paint Typically Last on Ottawa Homes Exposed to Heavy Snowfall?

This is one of the most practical questions Ottawa homeowners ask, and the honest answer is: **it depends heavily on which side of your house you're looking at**. Snow exposure, sun angle, wind patterns, and your home's specific micro-climate all play a role. Let me give you the real numbers.

General Lifespan by Surface and Exposure

Using quality **100% acrylic latex paint** with proper preparation and two coats, here's what Ottawa homeowners typically see:

| Surface | Protected Faces | Exposed Faces (North/West) | |---------|----------------|----------------------------| | Wood siding | 8-12 years | 5-7 years | | Wood trim/fascia | 6-9 years | 4-6 years | | Stucco/masonry | 10-15 years | 7-10 years | | Cedar shingles | 5-8 years | 3-5 years | | Fibre cement (Hardie) | 12-15 years | 10-12 years |

Those "exposed faces" numbers reflect walls that take the brunt of Ottawa's **200+ cm of annual snowfall**, prevailing northwest winter winds, and the freeze-thaw cycling that comes with it.

How Snow Actually Damages Paint

Snow itself isn't the main villain — it's everything that comes with it:

Ice damming and meltwater: When snow accumulates on roofs and melts during daytime thaws, water runs down fascia, soffits, and upper wall surfaces. This repeated wetting and drying degrades paint films from the top down. Homes in neighbourhoods like Barrhaven and Kanata South, which are more exposed to wind-driven snow, often see fascia paint failure **2-3 years before wall paint**.

Snow banking against walls: When snow piles up against your foundation and lower siding — which happens constantly in Ottawa from December through March — the prolonged moisture contact causes paint at the base of walls to fail first. That **bottom 2-3 feet of your exterior** will always need repainting sooner than the rest.

Salt and sand splash: Municipal salt and sand thrown by plows and traffic coats lower walls near streets and driveways. This is particularly aggressive in urban Ottawa — think Bank Street, Rideau, or any main road. Salt is hygroscopic (attracts moisture), keeping surfaces damp longer and accelerating paint breakdown.

Freeze-thaw cycling: Ottawa averages **150+ freeze-thaw transitions** annually. Each cycle stresses the paint film. Moisture that entered through micro-cracks freezes, expands, and widens those cracks.

Factors That Shorten Lifespan

Several Ottawa-specific conditions push paint toward the shorter end of those ranges:

- **North-facing walls**: Less sun means slower drying after snow contact. Moss and mildew growth (common in shaded areas of the Glebe, Old Ottawa South, Rockcliffe) traps moisture under the paint film.
- **Overhanging trees**: Mature tree canopy prevents walls from drying. Also drops sap and organic debris that stains and degrades paint.
- **Poor ventilation**: Older Ottawa homes — especially pre-1960 builds without modern vapour barriers — push interior moisture through walls, causing paint to bubble from behind.
- **Single coat application**: A single coat gives roughly 4-5 mils of film thickness. Ottawa's climate demands **8-12 mils minimum** (two coats) for adequate protection.
- **Cheap paint**: Vinyl-acrylic blends lose flexibility in cold weather and fail 30-40% sooner than 100% acrylic products.

Factors That Extend Lifespan

- **Quality prep**: Scraping, sanding, priming bare wood with alkyd primer, and caulking gaps can add **3-5 years** to paint life.

- **Premium paint**: Products like Benjamin Moore Aura or Sherwin-Williams Duration at **$70-$90/gallon** outperform budget paints by years, not months.
- **Proper drainage**: Keeping snow cleared from foundation walls, maintaining gutters, and ensuring downspouts direct water away from the house all reduce moisture exposure.
- **Timely touch-ups**: Addressing small chips and cracks before winter rather than waiting for full failure prevents moisture infiltration that causes large-scale peeling.

Heritage District Considerations

Ottawa has several **heritage conservation districts** — including parts of Sandy Hill, Lowertown, New Edinburgh, and the Glebe — where paint colour and material choices may be subject to municipal guidelines. Heritage homes often have unique substrates (original wood clapboard, lime-based stucco) that require **specialized primers and breathable paint systems**. Using modern vapour-barrier paints on a heritage home can actually trap moisture inside old walls and accelerate decay.

If your home falls within a heritage overlay, check with the City of Ottawa's heritage planning staff before committing to a paint system. A qualified painter experienced with older Ottawa homes will know the difference.

When to Repaint — The Warning Signs

Don't wait for dramatic peeling. Watch for:

- **Chalking**: Rub your hand on the surface. If you get white powder, the binder is breaking down.
- **Fading**: Colour loss of more than 20-30% means UV protection is gone.
- **Hairline cracks**: Especially on south and west faces after summer sun exposure.
- **Bubbling at the base**: Snow-contact zones showing raised spots mean moisture is getting behind the film.

Catching these early and doing targeted touch-ups can extend your full repaint by **2-4 years**.

For professional assessment of your home's exterior paint condition, the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** lists experienced local painters. And **Ottawa Paint Contractors** has a growing library of Paint IQ answers to help you make informed decisions about your home's exterior.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Homeupgraders

- Above All Painting Inc.
- BFI Renovations
- Dave’s Painting & Home Improvement
- Capital Paint

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Q4

What Temperature Range Is Safe for Exterior Painting in Ottawa's Spring and Fall?

Temperature is the single biggest factor in whether your exterior paint job succeeds or fails in Ottawa's shoulder seasons. Get this wrong, and you're looking at adhesion failure, cracking, and a repaint within a year. Here's exactly what you need to know.

The Hard Numbers

For **latex/acrylic exterior paint** (which is what 95% of Ottawa homes should use):

- **Minimum air temperature**: 10C (50F) and rising
- **Minimum surface temperature**: 10C (50F)
- **Maximum temperature**: 32C (90F)
- **Overnight low must stay above**: 5C (41F) for 24-48 hours after application

  For **alkyd/oil-based primers** (used on bare wood before latex top coats):

- **Minimum air temperature**: 5C (41F)
- **Can handle slightly cooler overnight lows**: down to 2C (35F)

  That overnight requirement is critical in Ottawa. Our spring and fall nights routinely drop **10-15 degrees below daytime highs**. A beautiful 18C afternoon in late April can easily be followed by a 2C night — and that will ruin fresh latex paint.

Ottawa's Realistic Painting Windows

Spring Window: Mid-May to Mid-June

Ottawa spring is deceptive. Daytime temperatures hit 15-20C as early as late April, which feels warm enough to paint. But the data tells a different story:

- **April**: Average overnight low is **1C**. Too cold for latex curing. Don't paint.
- **Early May**: Overnight lows average **5-7C**. Risky — one cold snap and your paint is compromised.
- **Mid-May onward**: Overnight lows consistently above **8-10C**. This is your safe start date.
- **Late May through June**: Ideal conditions. Daytime 20-28C, nights 12-16C.

Spring caution: Ottawa's notorious spring rain can delay projects. Budget extra days in your timeline. Paint needs **4-6 hours of dry weather** after application, and morning dew must fully evaporate before you start (usually by 10-11 AM in spring).

Fall Window: September to Early October

Fall painting in Ottawa is often better than spring — drier air, stable temperatures, less pollen and insects sticking to wet paint:

- **September**: Excellent conditions. Daytime 18-24C, nights 10-14C. This is arguably **Ottawa's best painting month**.
- **Early October**: Still workable. Daytime 12-18C, nights 5-8C. Start early in the day and stop by 2-3 PM to ensure adequate drying before temperature drops.
- **Mid-to-late October**: Daytime temps can still hit 12-15C, but overnight lows frequently dip to **0-3C**. Very risky for standard latex.
- **November**: Average high is 5C. Season is over for exterior painting.

Low-Temperature Paint Products

Some manufacturers offer **low-temperature formulations** that cure down to **2-4C**:

- **Benjamin Moore Aura Exterior** (low-temp formula): Application down to 4C (40F). About **$80-$90/gallon** in Ottawa.
- **Sherwin-Williams Resilience**: Rated to 2C (35F). About **$70-$85/gallon**.
- **PPG Manor Hall Exterior**: Low-temp version rated to 2C. About **$55-$70/gallon**.

These products use **coalescing agents** that help paint film formation at lower temperatures. They genuinely work and can extend your fall window by **2-3 weeks** — potentially through the end of October in a mild year.

However, low-temp paints are not magic. They still need the surface to be **dry and frost-free**. If there's frost on your siding at 7 AM, you must wait until it fully evaporates and the surface warms above the minimum threshold.

Surface Temperature vs. Air Temperature

This is where many DIY painters get tripped up. **Surface temperature can be very different from air temperature**:

- **North-facing walls** in spring may be 5-8C colder than the air temperature because they receive no direct sun.
- **Metal surfaces** (aluminum siding, steel doors) cool faster at night and warm slower in the morning.

- **Brick and masonry** retain cold from overnight and may take until noon to reach paintable temperature in spring.
- **Dark-coloured surfaces** in direct sun can be 15-20C warmer than air temperature on a sunny fall afternoon — which can cause paint to dry too fast and not bond properly.

  A **$15-$25 infrared thermometer** from any Ottawa hardware store is the most valuable painting tool you can own. Point it at the surface before you start. If it reads below 10C, wait.

What Happens When You Paint Too Cold

Painting in temperatures below the rated minimum causes specific, predictable failures:

- **Poor film formation**: Latex paint particles don't coalesce (fuse together) properly below 10C. The result is a powdery, chalky surface that washes off in the first rain.
- **Cracking**: Paint that doesn't fully cure before cold overnight temps becomes brittle. Ottawa's first hard frost will crack it.
- **Adhesion failure**: Cold paint doesn't bond to cold surfaces. You'll see peeling within weeks to months.
- **Mildew growth**: Slow-drying paint in cool, damp conditions is a breeding ground for mildew — a common problem on north-facing Ottawa walls painted in late fall.

Practical Ottawa Scheduling Advice

Based on decades of combined Ottawa painting experience:

- **Book your exterior painter for late May through September**. This is the reliable window.
- **If scheduling for fall**, insist on a start date no later than **September 15** for large projects. A full-house exterior takes 5-10 working days, and you need weather buffer.
- **Watch Environment Canada forecasts closely** during shoulder seasons. A cold front moving through means postponing, not pushing through.
- **Start south and west walls first** in spring (they warm up earliest) and **finish north walls last** (when temperatures are most reliably warm).

  The **Ottawa Construction Network directory** is a great resource for finding painters who understand these seasonal constraints. And for more climate-specific painting advice, **Ottawa Paint Contractors** has Paint IQ answers covering every aspect of painting in our unique four-season environment.

  Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Homeupgraders
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- Prochampion
- Tanner Irwin-Robertson
- Transitions Renovations

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Q5

Should I Choose Acrylic or Latex Exterior Paint for My Ottawa Home?

This is one of the most common questions Ottawa homeowners ask, and there's actually a terminology issue that trips people up. Let me clear it up and then tell you exactly what works best in Ottawa's climate.

The Acrylic vs. Latex Confusion

Here's the thing most paint store staff won't clearly explain: **all acrylic paint IS latex paint**. The term "latex" simply means water-based (as opposed to oil/alkyd-based). It has nothing to do with actual rubber latex.

What actually matters is the **binder type** within the latex category:

- **100% Acrylic Latex**: Uses pure acrylic polymers as the binder. Premium product.
- **Vinyl-Acrylic Latex**: Uses a blend of vinyl and acrylic as the binder. Budget product.
- **Vinyl Latex**: Uses mostly vinyl binder. Cheapest option.

  When someone says "acrylic vs. latex," they usually mean **100% acrylic latex vs. vinyl-acrylic latex**. And in Ottawa's climate, this distinction is genuinely important.

Why 100% Acrylic Is the Right Choice for Ottawa

100% acrylic latex paint outperforms vinyl-acrylic blends in every category that matters for Ottawa's extreme conditions:

Flexibility in Cold

Ottawa hits **-25C to -30C** regularly in January and February. At those temperatures, vinyl-acrylic paint becomes rigid and brittle. When the substrate (wood, stucco, etc.) expands and contracts through **150+ annual freeze-thaw cycles**, rigid paint cracks. 100% acrylic maintains flexibility down to approximately **-30C**, moving with the

substrate instead of cracking.

Moisture Resistance

With over **200 cm of annual snowfall**, snow banking against walls for months, and spring meltwater cascading down every surface, moisture resistance isn't optional in Ottawa — it's survival. 100% acrylic forms a tighter, more complete film that resists water penetration significantly better than vinyl blends.

UV Resistance

Ottawa's south-facing walls get hammered by UV from April through September. Pure acrylic resins resist UV degradation far better than vinyl, which chalks (turns powdery) and fades much faster. This is especially noticeable on darker colours — a deep red or navy in vinyl-acrylic will fade noticeably within **2-3 years**, while the same colour in 100% acrylic holds **5-7 years**.

Adhesion

100% acrylic bonds more tenaciously to properly prepared surfaces. In Ottawa, where winter wind loads, ice formation, and temperature stress constantly try to peel paint away, adhesion strength matters enormously.

Cost Comparison in Ottawa

Here's the real pricing at Ottawa paint retailers:

| Product Type | Price Per Gallon | Coverage | Realistic Lifespan | |---|---|---|---|---| | Vinyl-acrylic latex | $30-$45 | 350-400 sq ft | 4-6 years | | Mid-grade 100% acrylic | $50-$65 | 350-400 sq ft | 7-10 years | | Premium 100% acrylic | $70-$90 | 400-500 sq ft | 8-12 years |

For a typical Ottawa home exterior (1,500-2,000 sq ft of paintable surface), the material cost difference between vinyl-acrylic and premium 100% acrylic is roughly **$150-$300 total**. That's a trivial amount compared to the **$3,000-$6,000** you'll spend on labour for a professional exterior paint job.

Spending $200 more on paint to gain 4-5 extra years of lifespan is one of the best returns on investment in home maintenance. The labour cost to repaint is the same regardless of paint quality.

Specific Product Recommendations for Ottawa

Best Overall

Benjamin Moore Aura Exterior ($80-$90/gallon): Exceptional durability, self-priming on most surfaces, excellent colour retention. The low-temperature formula can be applied down to 4C, which extends your painting season.

Best Value

Benjamin Moore Regal Select Exterior ($60-$75/gallon): 100% acrylic, excellent performance, slightly less premium than Aura but outstanding for the price. This is what many Ottawa painting contractors use as their standard.

Strong Alternative

Sherwin-Williams Duration ($70-$85/gallon): Extremely durable, good coverage, and the moisture-resistant film performs very well through Ottawa winters.

Budget 100% Acrylic

Dulux Diamond Exterior ($55-$70/gallon): Canadian-made, solid 100% acrylic performance at a more accessible price point. Good choice for sheds, garages, and rental properties where premium pricing is hard to justify.

When Vinyl-Acrylic Might Be Acceptable

There are a few narrow scenarios where the cheaper option isn't terrible:

- **Interior painting** (not exposed to freeze-thaw or UV)
- **Temporary structures** you plan to replace within 3-5 years
- **Protected surfaces** like a covered porch ceiling that never sees direct weather

  But for any exterior wall, trim, or surface exposed to Ottawa weather, **100% acrylic is the only sensible choice**.

What About Oil-Based/Alkyd Paint?

Alkyd exterior paint still has one important role in Ottawa: **primer**. An alkyd primer on bare wood provides superior penetration and adhesion compared to latex primers. The ideal Ottawa exterior system is:

- **Alkyd primer** on bare/exposed wood (e.g., Zinsser Cover Stain at $25-$35/gallon)
- **Two coats of 100% acrylic latex** as the top coat

  This gives you the penetrating power of oil-based primer with the flexibility and longevity of acrylic top coats. It's the system most professional Ottawa painters use, and it's worth the extra step.

  For professional guidance on choosing the right paint system for your specific home, the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** connects you with experienced local contractors. And **Ottawa Paint Contractors** has Paint

IQ answers covering everything from product selection to application techniques tailored to our climate.

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- Renovo Construction
- Capital City Drywall
- Custom By Arie

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Q6

How Do I Prevent Paint from Peeling on the North-Facing Side of My Ottawa House?

North-facing walls are the Achilles' heel of Ottawa home exteriors. They peel, they grow mildew, and they fail years before every other side of your house. The good news is that this is a solvable problem — you just need to understand why it happens and attack every contributing factor.

Why North Walls Fail First in Ottawa

Minimal direct sunlight is the root cause, and everything cascades from there:

- **Slow drying**: After rain, snow melt, or morning dew, north walls can stay damp for **hours or even days** longer than south-facing walls. In Ottawa's spring, a north wall might not fully dry between rain events for weeks at a time.
- **Extended freeze-thaw exposure**: Because north walls stay colder, moisture on and in the paint film freezes more often and stays frozen longer. More freeze-thaw cycles mean more micro-cracking.
- **Mildew and algae**: Ottawa's humid summers (routinely 70-80%+ humidity in July and August) combined with persistent shade create perfect conditions for mildew. Mildew grows beneath paint films, breaking the bond between paint and substrate.

- **Snow retention**: Snow banks against north foundations last weeks longer than south-side banks. In neighbourhoods with mature trees (the Glebe, Old Ottawa South, Rockcliffe, New Edinburgh), north walls may have snow contact from December through April.

Step 1: Address Moisture Sources

Before you even think about paint, you need to reduce the amount of moisture hitting and staying on that north wall:

Exterior moisture management:

- **Clean and repair gutters**. Overflowing gutters dump water directly onto wall surfaces. This is the single most common cause of north-wall paint failure I see on Ottawa homes. Budget **$150-$300** for professional gutter cleaning and repair.
- **Extend downspouts** at least 4-6 feet away from the foundation. North-side soil stays saturated longer, and splash-back coats the bottom 2-3 feet of siding.
- **Trim vegetation** back at least 12 inches from the wall. Bushes and vines trap moisture against siding.
- **Grade the soil** away from the foundation. A minimum **2% slope** (about 1 inch per foot for the first 6 feet) directs meltwater and rain away from the wall.

Interior moisture management:

- **Ensure bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans vent outside**, not into the attic. Warm, moist air migrating through wall cavities and hitting the cold north exterior sheathing condenses and pushes moisture outward through the paint film.
- **Check attic ventilation**. Poor soffit ventilation on the north side traps warm, moist air that condenses on the underside of roof sheathing and drips into wall cavities.
- Many older Ottawa homes (pre-1980) lack proper **vapour barriers**. Interior moisture drives right through the wall assembly and collects behind exterior paint. A home energy audit (**$300-$500**, often with rebates through the Canada Greener Homes program) can identify these issues.

Step 2: Proper Surface Preparation

Prep is everything on north walls. **Skipping prep is why north-wall paint jobs fail within 2-3 years.**

- **Power wash** with a mildew-killing solution (1 part bleach to 3 parts water, or a commercial product like Jomax). North walls almost always have mildew you can't see with the naked eye. Painting over mildew guarantees peeling.

- **Let the wall dry for 48-72 hours minimum** after washing. In Ottawa's spring humidity, this might take longer. Use a moisture meter — the wood should read **below 15% moisture content** before priming.
- **Scrape and sand** all loose, peeling, or flaking paint back to a sound edge. Don't just scrape the obvious spots — run a putty knife firmly over the entire surface. Anything that lifts needs to come off.
- **Fill gaps and cracks** with exterior-grade, paintable caulk. Pay special attention to joints around windows, door frames, and where siding meets trim. These are moisture entry points.

Step 3: Use the Right Primer

On north-facing walls in Ottawa, primer selection is critical:

- **Bare wood**: Use an **alkyd (oil-based) primer** like Zinsser Cover Stain ($25-$35/gallon). Alkyd primers penetrate deeper into wood fibres and provide a moisture-resistant base that latex primers can't match.
- **Previously painted surfaces**: Use a **bonding primer** like Zinsser Bulls Eye 1-2-3 or Sherwin-Williams Extreme Bond ($30-$45/gallon). These create a strong mechanical bond even on slightly chalked or weathered existing paint.
- **Mildew-prone areas**: Look for primers with **built-in mildewcide**. Zinsser Mold Killing Primer ($30-$40/gallon) is specifically designed for this.

Step 4: Choose the Right Paint

- **100% acrylic latex** — non-negotiable for north walls. The flexibility at cold temperatures prevents the cracking that lets moisture in.
- **Satin or semi-gloss finish** on north walls, even if you use flat on other sides. The smoother surface sheds water faster and resists mildew growth better than flat finishes.
- **Mildew-resistant formulas**: Benjamin Moore Aura Exterior and Sherwin-Williams Duration both contain mildewcide. For Ottawa's north walls, this isn't a luxury — it's a necessity.
- **Two full coats minimum**. On north walls, I'd argue for **a heavy prime coat plus two top coats** — three total layers of protection.

Step 5: Timing and Application

- **Paint north walls in mid-summer** (July-August) when drying conditions are best. Avoid spring and fall for north-face work specifically.
- **Start mid-morning** after dew has fully evaporated.
- **Finish by 3-4 PM** to allow maximum drying time before evening humidity rises.

- **Check the 48-hour forecast**. You need at least 24 hours of dry weather after application for proper curing.

Maintenance Schedule for North Walls

Even with perfect prep and premium paint, north walls need more attention:

- **Annual spring inspection**: Walk the north side every April after snow melts. Look for new cracks, peeling spots, or mildew growth.
- **Wash annually**: A gentle wash with mildew-killing solution each spring prevents mildew from establishing under the paint film. A garden sprayer and soft brush is sufficient — no power washer needed for maintenance.
- **Touch up immediately**: Don't wait for widespread failure. A $20 quart of matching paint and 30 minutes of touch-up work in June can prevent a $3,000+ full-side repaint.

For help assessing and addressing north-wall paint problems on your Ottawa home, the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** has painting contractors experienced with our local conditions. And **Ottawa Paint Contractors** covers dozens of painting topics specific to our climate in the Paint IQ section.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- Above All Painting Inc.
- Rrenovatios
- 613PAINTING INC
- Dave’s Painting & Home Improvement

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Q7

What Preparation Is Needed Before Painting Cedar Siding on an Older Ottawa Home?

Cedar siding on an older Ottawa home is a beautiful feature — but it's also one of the most demanding surfaces to prep and paint properly. Cedar's natural oils, tannin content, and decades of Ottawa weather exposure create specific challenges. Rush the prep, and you'll be repainting in two years. Do it right, and your paint job will last **8-12 years**.

Understanding What You're Working With

Ottawa homes built from the **1940s through the 1980s** commonly feature western red cedar clapboard, shingles, or board-and-batten siding. After 40-80 years of exposure to Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycles, UV radiation, and over **200 cm of annual snowfall**, you'll typically find:

- **Multiple layers of old paint** (some homes have 6-10 layers)
- **Bare, greyed-out wood** where paint has completely failed
- **Tannin bleeding** — dark brown/black stains that have bled through previous paint
- **Raised grain** from moisture cycling
- **Soft or punky spots** where rot has set in, particularly near the foundation, around windows, and on the north side
- **Exposed nail heads** that have rusted and stained surrounding wood

  Every one of these conditions requires specific treatment. Here's the full prep sequence.

Step 1: Inspection and Rot Repair ($200-$800+)

Before anything else, walk the entire perimeter and probe the cedar with a screwdriver or awl:

- **Press firmly into the wood** every few feet, especially at the bottom edge of each board, around window and door frames, and at corner joints.
- **Sound cedar** resists penetration. **Rotted cedar** crumbles or the tool sinks in easily.
- **Mark all soft spots** with painter's tape.

  Small rot areas (less than 6 inches) can be treated with **epoxy wood consolidant** ($25-$40 per kit) followed by **epoxy wood filler** ($20-$35 per quart). Larger sections need **cedar board replacement** — a skilled carpenter can splice in new cedar for **$150-$400 per board** depending on accessibility.

Do not paint over rot. Paint won't stop rot progression, and the failure will show through within one winter.

Step 2: Lead Paint Assessment

If your Ottawa home was built before **1978**, there's a significant chance older paint layers contain lead. Ontario's **Occupational Health and Safety Act** and federal **Consumer Product Safety regulations** require safe handling:

- Use a **3M LeadCheck test kit** ($15-$25 at Ottawa hardware stores) on any surface you plan to sand or scrape.
- If positive, **do not dry-sand or heat-strip**. Lead dust is a serious health hazard.
- Options: **wet scraping with drop cloths** for small areas, or hiring a **lead-safe certified contractor** for large-scale removal.

  Professional lead-safe exterior prep adds **$1,500-$4,000** to a project depending on home size. It's not optional if lead is present.

Step 3: Washing and Mildew Treatment

Power wash the entire surface at moderate pressure (1,500-2,000 PSI with a 25-degree tip). Cedar is softer than most siding materials — high pressure or a narrow tip will gouge the wood.

- Add a **mildew-killing solution** to the wash: 1 part bleach to 3 parts water, or a commercial product like Jomax or Mold Armor.
- Focus especially on **north-facing walls, under eaves, and shaded areas** where Ottawa's humidity promotes mildew growth.
- **Allow 48-72 hours minimum drying time** before proceeding. In Ottawa's spring or fall humidity, this may take longer. Use a moisture meter — cedar should read **below 15% moisture content**.

Step 4: Scraping and Sanding ($500-$2,000 labour)

This is the most labour-intensive step and the one that determines whether your paint job lasts:

- **Scrape all loose, peeling, and flaking paint** with a sharp pull scraper or carbide scraper. On older Ottawa cedar homes with multiple paint layers, this can remove 30-50% of the existing coating.
- **Feather edges**: Where old paint remains firmly adhered, sand the edges smooth so there's no abrupt ridge between painted and bare areas. Use **80-100 grit sandpaper**.
- **Sand bare wood lightly** with 80-grit to remove surface grey and open the wood grain for primer absorption. Cedar's natural oils create a waxy surface layer on weathered wood that prevents paint adhesion — sanding

removes this.

- **Sand glossy old paint** to create tooth for the new primer to grip.
- **Remove all dust** with a brush or clean cloth before priming.

Step 5: Tannin Stain Treatment

Cedar contains water-soluble tannins — natural extractives that cause **dark brown or reddish-brown staining** through paint. Ottawa's wet climate constantly activates these tannins. On a bare cedar board, you can see the brown discolouration where water has run.

To prevent tannin bleed-through:

- **Use an alkyd (oil-based) stain-blocking primer** — this is non-negotiable for cedar. Latex primers do not block tannin effectively.
- **Recommended products**: Zinsser Cover Stain ($25-$35/gallon), Kilz Original ($22-$30/gallon), or Benjamin Moore Fresh Start alkyd primer ($35-$50/gallon).
- **Apply one full coat** to all bare wood and any areas showing previous tannin bleed.
- If staining is severe, a **second primer coat** may be needed.

Skipping the alkyd primer and using latex primer on cedar is the most common cause of brown stains showing through fresh white or light-coloured paint on Ottawa homes. I see it constantly.

Step 6: Caulking and Sealing

- **Caulk all joints**: Where siding meets window and door trim, at corner boards, and where siding meets the foundation. Use **paintable exterior silicone-modified caulk** ($5-$8/tube).
- **Replace missing or cracked putty** around window glazing on older wood-frame windows.
- **Set exposed nail heads** slightly below the surface with a nail set, then fill with exterior wood filler.
- **Replace any rusted nails** with **stainless steel ring-shank siding nails** that won't rust and stain.

Step 7: Priming

- **Bare wood**: Alkyd stain-blocking primer (see Step 5).
- **Previously painted surfaces in good condition**: A bonding primer or simply scuff-sand and apply top coat.
- **Allow primer to cure** according to manufacturer directions — typically 24 hours for alkyd primers.

Step 8: Top Coat Application

- **100% acrylic latex** in your chosen colour and sheen. Satin or semi-gloss for trim, flat or low-sheen for siding is the typical Ottawa preference.
- **Two full coats**: This is not optional on cedar. The naturally textured surface absorbs more paint than smooth siding, and a single coat leaves thin spots that fail first.
- **Paint in the right conditions**: Surface temperature **10-30C**, humidity below 80%, no rain for 24 hours.

Total Cost Estimate for Ottawa

For a typical **1,500 sq ft** older Ottawa home with cedar siding:

| Component | DIY Cost | Professional Cost | |-----------|----------|-------------------| | Rot repair | $100-$300 | $400-$1,500 | | Washing | $50-$100 | $200-$400 | | Scraping/sanding | Your time | $1,000-$3,000 | | Primer + paint (materials) | $400-$700 | Included below | | Full professional job | N/A | $5,000-$10,000 |

These are Ottawa prices — roughly **10-15% below Toronto** for equivalent work.

For experienced painters who specialize in older cedar homes, the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** is a solid starting point. And **Ottawa Paint Contractors** has dozens of Paint IQ answers covering cedar care, heritage home painting, and other topics specific to Ottawa's housing stock.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- Above All Painting Inc.
- M.O.T. CONSTRUCTION INC.
- Leeds Property Maintenance
- Custom By Arie

View all contractors ?

Q8

Can I Paint My Ottawa Home Exterior in Late October Before the First Frost?

The short answer: **maybe, but it's a gamble** — and October 2026 could go either way. Let me give you the data so you can make an informed decision rather than a hopeful one.

Ottawa's October Weather Reality

Historically, Ottawa's October looks like this:

- **Average daily high**: 11-13C (early Oct) dropping to 7-9C (late Oct)
- **Average overnight low**: 3-5C (early Oct) dropping to **-1C to 1C** (late Oct)
- **First frost date**: Typically between **October 5-15**, though it can range from late September to early November
- **Rainfall**: October averages 75-85mm, spread across 10-12 rain days

  Those overnight lows are the killer. Standard latex paint needs **overnight temperatures above 5C for 24-48 hours after application** to cure properly. By mid-October, Ottawa's nights regularly drop below that threshold.

The Risk Assessment

Early October (1st-10th): Possible but Tight

- Daytime highs of 12-16C give you workable conditions
- Overnight lows of 2-5C are right on the edge
- You need a warm spell with overnight lows staying above 5C for at least 2 consecutive nights after painting
- **Risk level: Medium**. Check the extended forecast daily and be ready to paint at short notice when a warm window appears.

Mid-October (11th-20th): High Risk

- Daytime highs dropping to 8-12C
- Overnight lows frequently hitting **0-3C**
- First hard frost has likely already occurred
- Standard latex paint will almost certainly fail to cure properly
- **Risk level: High** with standard paint. **Medium** with low-temperature formulas.

Late October (21st-31st): Not Recommended

- Daytime highs of 5-9C
- Overnight lows routinely at or below freezing
- Even low-temperature paints are borderline

- Any paint applied may not cure before sustained cold arrives in November
- **Risk level: Very high**. This is gambling your paint budget.

Low-Temperature Paint Options

If you're set on late-season painting, **low-temperature formulations** can extend your window:

- **Benjamin Moore Aura Exterior (low-temp)**: Application down to **4C** ($80-$90/gallon in Ottawa)
- **Sherwin-Williams Resilience**: Rated to **2C** ($70-$85/gallon)
- **PPG Manor Hall Exterior (low-temp)**: Rated to **2C** ($55-$70/gallon)

These products use modified coalescent technology that helps paint particles fuse into a continuous film at lower temperatures. They're legitimate products, not marketing gimmicks — but they still have limits:

- **Surface must be dry and frost-free**. If there's frost on your siding at 8 AM, you wait until it fully evaporates AND the surface warms above the minimum temp.
- **Overnight lows must stay above -2C** for at least 24 hours. Below that, even these formulas won't cure.
- **Humidity matters more in cold weather**. Cool air holds less moisture, but Ottawa's fall humidity combined with slow evaporation at low temps can prevent proper drying.

What Happens If You Paint Too Late

I want to be direct about the consequences, because the cost of failure is significant:

Immediate failure (within weeks):

- Paint that didn't coalesce properly will chalk, powder, or wash off with the first rain or snowmelt
- You lose the entire cost of materials ($300-$700 for a typical house) and labour ($3,000-$6,000 professional)

Slow failure (within 6-12 months):

- Paint that partially cured will look okay through winter but start cracking and peeling during spring thaw
- Moisture trapped behind improperly cured paint causes accelerated wood damage
- You'll need to strip, prep, and repaint the following summer — effectively paying twice

Hidden damage:

- Improperly cured paint is more porous, allowing moisture into the wood substrate all winter
- That moisture freezes and expands, causing wood fibre damage you won't see until you scrape next year
- What was a simple repaint becomes a repaint plus wood repair

A Smarter Alternative: Partial Approach

If your paint is failing and you genuinely can't wait until spring, consider this strategy:

October priorities:

- **Scrape and prime exposed bare wood** with an **alkyd primer** (oil-based primers work down to 5C and cure differently than latex). This seals the wood against winter moisture. Cost: $100-$200 in materials.
- **Spot-prime any active peeling areas** to prevent water infiltration.
- **Caulk open gaps** around windows, doors, and trim joints. Exterior caulk works down to about 5C.

Spring finish:

- Apply your top coats in **May-June** when conditions are ideal.

This two-stage approach costs a bit more in labour but protects your home through winter without risking a failed paint job. The primer seals the wood, prevents further deterioration, and gives you a perfect base for spring top-coating.

What Professional Ottawa Painters Do

Most experienced Ottawa painting contractors wind down exterior work by **mid-September to early October**. They know the risks and don't want callbacks from failed late-season jobs. If a contractor is pushing you to do a full exterior paint job in late October, that's a yellow flag.

Reputable painters will:

- Check the **7-day forecast** before committing to start
- Use low-temperature paint if working in October
- **Start early in the day** (8-9 AM) and stop by 2 PM to maximize drying time before evening cool-down
- Paint **south and west walls first** (warmest surfaces) and leave north walls for the warmest days
- Be honest if conditions aren't safe and recommend the prime-now, paint-in-spring approach

The Bottom Line

Early October: Yes, if you watch the forecast, use quality paint, and get lucky with a warm spell. Have low-temperature paint on hand.

Mid-October: Only with low-temperature formulations and a confirmed warm window of at least 3 consecutive days with overnights above 3C.

Late October: Prime bare wood and caulk gaps. Save the top coats for spring. Your wallet will thank you.

The **Ottawa Construction Network directory** lists painting contractors who can assess your specific situation and timeline. And **Ottawa Paint Contractors** has Paint IQ answers covering seasonal planning, product selection, and more for Ottawa homeowners.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Homeupgraders
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Nic’s D.U.C.T Works Inc
- Dump n Dash Hauling
- Floor-2-Wall Inc

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Q9

What Is the Best Way to Paint Exterior Brick on a Century Home in Ottawa?

Painting exterior brick on a century home in Ottawa is a significant decision — and one that's essentially permanent. Once brick is painted, you're committed to maintaining that paint for the life of the home. Let me walk you through how to do it right, the Ottawa-specific challenges, and the honest costs involved.

Should You Paint the Brick at All?

Before we get into the how, consider the **should**. Ottawa has many century homes — particularly in **Sandy Hill, Lowertown, Centretown, the Glebe, and Old Ottawa South** — with original unpainted brick that is part of the neighbourhood's architectural character.

Reasons to paint:

- Severely deteriorated mortar and spalling brick that's been patched with mismatched materials
- Previous lime wash or paint that's failing and needs a uniform finish
- Efflorescence (white salt deposits) that keeps returning despite cleaning
- Personal aesthetic preference for a painted look

Reasons not to paint:

- Your brick is in good condition with sound mortar
- Your home is in a **heritage conservation district** (check with the City of Ottawa's heritage planning department — painting may require approval or be discouraged)
- You don't want to commit to repainting every 10-15 years
- Original unpainted brick with properly maintained mortar is lower-maintenance than painted brick

If you're in a heritage area, painting original brick can affect your property's heritage status and potentially your neighbours' property values. Check before you commit.

Step 1: Masonry Assessment and Repair ($500-$3,000)

Century-old Ottawa brick has endured **100+ years of freeze-thaw cycles** — that's conservatively **15,000 freeze-thaw transitions**. The mortar and brick need careful assessment:

Mortar joints:

- Century homes typically have **lime mortar**, which is softer and more flexible than modern Portland cement mortar. This is intentional — lime mortar absorbs movement and moisture, protecting the brick.
- **Repoint failing joints with lime mortar**, not Portland cement. Portland cement is too hard for old soft brick and will cause the brick faces to spall (pop off) as moisture is forced through the brick instead of the joints.
- Professional **tuckpointing with lime mortar** costs **$15-$35 per square foot** in Ottawa. For a full-house repoint, budget **$5,000-$15,000**, but most century homes need only partial repointing.

Brick condition:

- Look for **spalling** (brick faces flaking off), **crumbling**, or **soft spots**.
- Individual damaged bricks can be replaced with salvaged period-appropriate brick. Ottawa has suppliers who stock reclaimed century brick for **$3-$8 per brick** plus installation.
- **Do not paint over severely spalled brick** — paint won't stop the deterioration, and moisture behind the paint will accelerate it.

Critical point: All masonry repairs must be completed and fully cured (**minimum 28 days for new mortar**) before painting.

Step 2: Cleaning ($300-$800 professional)

Century brick accumulates a lot of surface contamination that will prevent paint adhesion:

- **Efflorescence**: White crystalline salt deposits. Brush off dry with a stiff brush. If recurring, the underlying moisture source must be addressed first.
- **Dirt and biological growth**: Decades of soot, moss, algae, and lichen. Clean with a masonry cleaner and **low-pressure wash** (800-1,200 PSI maximum). High pressure damages old mortar.
- **Old paint or lime wash remnants**: Scrape or wire-brush loose material. If the previous coating is well-adhered, you can paint over it after cleaning.

  Allow 3-7 days drying time after washing. Use a moisture meter — brick should read **below 12% moisture content** before painting. Ottawa's humidity can make this a multi-day wait.

Step 3: Choosing the Right Paint System

This is where Ottawa's climate makes the decision for you. Century brick needs a paint system that is **breathable** — it must allow moisture vapour to pass through from inside the wall to outside. Trapping moisture inside old brick walls causes catastrophic damage in Ottawa's freeze-thaw environment.

The Right Choice: Mineral/Silicate Paint

Mineral silicate paint (like Keim Granital or Romabio Masonry Flat) chemically bonds to the mineral substrate of brick and mortar. It's:

- **Fully breathable** — vapour-permeable, won't trap moisture
- **Extremely durable** — 15-25 year lifespan on masonry
- **UV and freeze-thaw resistant**
- **Does not peel or flake** — because it bonds chemically, not just mechanically
- **$80-$120 per gallon** — expensive but the lifespan justifies it

  This is what conservation professionals use on heritage masonry across Europe and increasingly in Ottawa.

The Acceptable Choice: Elastomeric Masonry Paint

Elastomeric paint creates a thick, flexible membrane that bridges hairline cracks and resists water penetration:

- **Good moisture resistance** from the outside
- **Stretches with thermal movement** — important for Ottawa's -30C to +35C range
- **10-15 year lifespan** on masonry
- **$50-$70 per gallon**
- Must use a breathable formulation specifically rated for masonry

What to Avoid

- **Standard acrylic latex house paint**: Not designed for masonry porosity. On century brick, it can trap moisture and cause spalling within 2-3 Ottawa winters.
- **Non-breathable elastomeric coatings**: Some elastomerics are designed for modern concrete, not old brick. Check that the product is vapour-permeable.
- **Epoxy or urethane coatings**: Completely seal the brick. Will cause severe moisture damage in Ottawa's climate.

Step 4: Priming

On century brick, primer serves two purposes — adhesion and alkali resistance:

- **Use a masonry-specific primer** rated for alkaline surfaces. Fresh mortar (from repointing) is highly alkaline and will attack standard primers.
- **Zinsser Watertite** ($35-$45/gallon) or manufacturer-specific masonry primers work well.
- **Apply one coat** and allow to dry 24 hours.

Step 5: Application

- **Apply two coats** using a long-nap roller (3/4" to 1-1/4" nap) that gets into brick texture and mortar joints. Back-brush to ensure full coverage of recessed mortar joints.
- **Do not spray** unless you have excellent masking skills — overspray on windows, trim, and neighbouring surfaces is difficult to remove from masonry.
- **Timing**: Paint in **June through September** when Ottawa temperatures are reliably between 10-30C and overnight lows stay above 10C. Masonry holds temperature longer than wood, so surface temperature may differ significantly from air temperature.
- **Start on the north side** in morning (cooler surface, paint won't dry too fast), then move to south and west as those surfaces cool in afternoon.

Total Cost Estimate

For a typical Ottawa century home (approximately 2,000-2,500 sq ft of brick surface):

Component	Cost Range
Masonry repair (partial repointing)	$1,500-$5,000
Cleaning	$300-$800
Primer	$200-$400
Paint (mineral silicate, 2 coats)	$600-$1,200
Professional labour	$4,000-$8,000
Total	**$6,600-$15,400**

Using standard elastomeric instead of mineral silicate reduces the paint material cost but not the labour, which is the majority of the expense.

Ontario Building Code Considerations

The **Ontario Building Code** doesn't specifically regulate exterior paint on existing residential masonry, but if your repointing or repairs involve structural elements, a building permit may be required. Heritage conservation districts have additional requirements under the **Ontario Heritage Act** — unauthorized changes to designated properties can result in orders to restore original condition.

For contractors experienced with Ottawa's century homes and heritage masonry, the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** is a valuable resource. And **Ottawa Paint Contractors** has a growing library of Paint IQ answers covering brick painting, heritage home considerations, and more.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- 613Bins
- Above All Painting Inc.
- Home Front Services
- Rrenovatios
- Stef's Quality Painting

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Q10

How Do Ottawa Painters Handle Lead Paint on Older Home Exteriors?

Lead paint is a serious concern for Ottawa homeowners — and one that many people underestimate. If your home was built before **1978** (the year lead paint was effectively banned in Canada under the **Hazardous Products Act**), there's a strong probability that older paint layers contain lead. Here's how professional Ottawa painters handle it safely and what you need to know as a homeowner.

How Common Is Lead Paint in Ottawa?

Ottawa has a large stock of older homes:

- **Pre-1960 homes** (Sandy Hill, Lowertown, Centretown, the Glebe, Old Ottawa South, Rockcliffe, Westboro): **Very high likelihood** of lead paint, especially in original layers. Homes from this era often have multiple lead-containing layers.
- **1960-1978 homes** (early suburban Nepean, Gloucester, early Kanata): **Moderate likelihood**. Lead content in paint decreased through the 1960s and 70s but wasn't eliminated until 1978.
- **Post-1978 homes**: Lead paint was not used. However, if older paint was applied during renovations (using leftover stock), trace amounts are possible.

  Ottawa's **heritage districts** contain some of the oldest housing stock, and exterior surfaces — especially window frames, door trim, soffits, and fascia — were commonly painted with lead-based products because of their superior durability and gloss retention.

Step 1: Testing ($15-$300)

Never assume. Always test before disturbing old paint:

DIY Test Kits ($15-$25)

- **3M LeadCheck swabs** are available at Ottawa hardware stores. Rub the swab on a paint chip or freshly exposed cut. A colour change indicates lead presence.
- **Limitations**: DIY kits test the exposed surface layer. If lead is in a buried layer (common — it's often the original coat under 5-8 later coats), you need to cut through all layers or test a chip that includes all layers.

Professional Lab Testing ($30-$80 per sample)

- Collect paint chips down to bare substrate and send to an accredited lab. Several Ontario labs accept mail-in samples.

- **XRF testing** ($200-$300 for a full home scan): A technician uses a handheld X-ray fluorescence gun that reads lead content through all paint layers without disturbing them. This is the gold standard and gives you a complete picture of every surface.

Step 2: Understanding the Regulations

Ontario and federal regulations govern lead paint handling:

Federal

- **Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations** set exposure limits for lead dust at **0.05 mg/m3** (8-hour time-weighted average).
- **Hazardous Products Act** banned lead in consumer paint (1978).

Ontario

- **Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)**: Requires employers (including painting contractors) to protect workers from lead exposure. Contractors must have a **lead exposure control plan** for work on pre-1978 homes.
- **Ontario Regulation 490/09** (Designated Substances): Lead is a designated substance. Employers must assess exposure risk before work begins and implement controls.
- **WSIB** (Workplace Safety and Insurance Board): Contractors performing lead work must carry active WSIB coverage. Verify this before hiring.

Municipal

- The City of Ottawa follows Ontario's **Environmental Protection Act** regarding lead-contaminated waste disposal. Lead paint chips and debris cannot go in regular garbage — they must be taken to a **household hazardous waste depot**.

Step 3: Safe Removal and Containment Methods

Professional Ottawa painters use several approaches depending on the scope and condition of lead paint:

Method A: Encapsulation (Paint Over)

If the existing lead paint is **firmly adhered, not flaking, and in good condition**, the safest approach is often to leave it in place and paint over it:

- **Clean** the surface with a damp cloth (no sanding, no scraping)

- Apply a **bonding primer** like Zinsser Bulls Eye 1-2-3 or a dedicated encapsulant
- Apply two coats of quality 100% acrylic latex top coat
- The new paint system effectively **encapsulates** the lead, preventing exposure

Cost: Essentially the same as a standard repaint — **$3,500-$7,000** for a typical Ottawa home exterior.

Limitation: This only works if the old paint is sound. If it's peeling, flaking, or chalking, encasulation won't hold and you must use removal methods.

Method B: Wet Scraping and HEPA Containment

This is the most common professional approach for failing lead paint on Ottawa exteriors:

- **Ground containment**: Heavy-duty poly sheeting extends **6-10 feet from the building perimeter** to catch all debris. Weighted and sealed at edges.
- **Wet scraping**: The surface is kept **continuously misted with water** during scraping. Wet paint chips don't generate airborne dust — which is the primary exposure pathway for lead.
- **No dry sanding**: Absolutely no dry sanding, grinding, or wire brushing of lead paint. Period.
- **HEPA vacuum cleanup**: All chips and dust are collected with a HEPA-filtered vacuum, then the ground sheeting is carefully folded inward and bagged.
- **Worker protection**: Painters wear **P100 respirators** (minimum), disposable coveralls, and gloves. They decontaminate before leaving the work area.

Cost: **$5,000-$12,000** for a typical Ottawa home exterior, depending on the extent of lead paint and the home's complexity.

Method C: Chemical Stripping

For detailed trim, ornamental woodwork, or surfaces where scraping would damage the substrate:

- **Lead-safe chemical strippers** (like Peel Away or Smart Strip) are applied in thick layers, covered with laminate paper, and left for 12-48 hours.
- The stripper softens all paint layers, which are then peeled away with the paper in a wet, contained mass — **minimal dust generation**.
- Very effective but **slow and expensive**: $8-$15 per square foot of treated surface.

Method D: Heat Removal (Limited Use)

- **Infrared paint removers** (like the Speedheater) heat paint to approximately **200C** — enough to soften it for scraping but **below the 370C threshold** at which lead paint releases toxic fumes.
- Traditional heat guns are **not recommended** — they easily exceed safe temperatures.
- Used primarily for thick paint buildup on detailed trim where chemical stripping is impractical.

Step 4: Waste Disposal

All lead paint waste — chips, dust, plastic sheeting, disposable coveralls, HEPA filters — is **hazardous waste** in Ontario:

- Bag in **6-mil poly bags**, sealed and labelled
- Do not place in regular residential garbage
- Take to the City of Ottawa's **household hazardous waste depot** (Trail Road facility accepts from residents) or arrange commercial hazardous waste pickup for larger quantities
- Professional painters include disposal in their quoted price

Step 5: Clearance and Documentation

After lead paint work, professional Ottawa painters should:

- **Visually inspect** all work areas for remaining chips or dust
- **Wipe test** (optional but recommended): Wipe surfaces with a damp cloth and send to a lab to confirm lead dust levels are below **40 micrograms per square foot** (the clearance standard)
- **Document** the work performed, including test results, methods used, and waste disposal records
- Provide you with documentation you can keep with your home records — useful for future renovations and resale

What Homeowners Should Know

For DIY exterior work on pre-1978 Ottawa homes:

- Test before you scrape. Always.
- If lead is present, **wet scraping with ground containment** is the minimum safe approach for small areas (a single window frame, for example).
- Wear a **P100 half-face respirator** ($30-$50 at safety supply stores) and disposable coveralls.
- Keep children and pets away from the work area.

- Never use a belt sander, orbital sander, or grinder on lead paint. The dust disperses widely and contaminates soil.

  For hiring a professional:

- Ask specifically about their **lead paint protocol**. A vague answer is a red flag.
- Confirm they carry **WSIB coverage** (mandatory in Ontario for painting contractors with employees).
- Ask for references from other pre-1978 Ottawa home projects.
- Get the lead handling approach **in writing** as part of the contract.

  The **Ottawa Construction Network directory** lists painting contractors across the region, and you can look for those experienced with older homes. **Ottawa Paint Contractors** covers lead paint, heritage home painting, and many other Paint IQ topics specific to Ottawa's housing stock.

  Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- RenoMotion Inc.
- All Pro Painters
- CONSTRUST BK INC
- Prism Services

View all contractors ?

Q11

What Exterior Paint Colour Choices Help Reduce Heat Absorption on Ottawa Homes?

Great question — and one that matters more than most Ottawa homeowners realize. With our summers now regularly pushing **+35°C** and south-facing walls soaking up direct sun from May through September, your exterior colour choice has a real impact on **indoor comfort, cooling costs, and how long your paint job lasts**.

Here's how colour science plays out on Ottawa homes, and what to keep in mind.

How Colour Affects Heat Absorption

Dark colours absorb significantly more solar radiation than light ones. A **black or charcoal exterior** can reach surface temperatures of **65–75°C** on a sunny July afternoon, while a **white or light cream** surface might only hit **35–45°C** under the same conditions. That 30-degree difference translates directly into:

- **Higher cooling bills** — your AC works harder when exterior walls radiate heat inward
- **Faster paint degradation** — heat accelerates chalking, fading, and adhesion failure
- **Expanded wood movement** — more thermal cycling means more cracking and peeling

Best Colour Ranges for Ottawa's Climate

Light neutrals are your best performers: think **soft whites, warm greys, light tans, sage greens, and pale blues**. These colours reflect **60–80% of solar radiation** while still giving your home character. A few Ottawa-specific picks:

- **Warm white or antique cream** — classic for heritage neighbourhoods like the Glebe, New Edinburgh, and Rockcliffe Park. Keeps surfaces cool and pairs beautifully with darker trim.
- **Light grey with blue undertones** — modern and clean, reflects heat well, and doesn't show Ottawa's springtime pollen and dust as readily as pure white.
- **Sage or muted green** — a natural fit in Ottawa's tree-lined neighbourhoods like Westboro and Old Ottawa South, with good reflective properties.
- **Pale stone or sandstone tones** — warm without absorbing excessive heat, and they complement both brick and siding.

What About Darker Accents?

You don't have to go all-light. A smart approach many Ottawa painters use is **light body colour with darker trim and accents**. Your trim, shutters, and front door can be navy, forest green, or charcoal without significantly increasing heat load because those surfaces are small relative to the total wall area.

If you love a darker body colour, look for paints with **infrared-reflective (IR) pigment technology**. Benjamin Moore's Aura Exterior and Sherwin-Williams Emerald lines both offer formulations where darker colours reflect more infrared light than traditional pigments. A dark grey in IR-reflective paint might perform like a medium tone in standard paint. Expect to pay **$75–$95 per gallon** for these premium lines in Ottawa, versus **$55–$70** for standard exterior acrylics.

Heritage District Considerations

If your home sits in one of Ottawa's **Heritage Conservation Districts** — the Glebe, New Edinburgh, Lowertown, or Rockcliffe Park — colour choices may need to align with neighbourhood guidelines. The City of Ottawa's heritage planning team reviews exterior changes on designated properties. Light, historically appropriate palettes are generally encouraged, which happens to align perfectly with heat reduction goals. Your painter should be aware of these requirements before you commit to a colour.

The Ottawa Climate Factor

Remember, we're not just managing summer heat. Ottawa's **-25°C to -30°C winter lows** mean your paint also needs to handle extreme cold, freeze-thaw cycling, and **200+ cm of annual snowfall**. Lighter colours that reflect heat in summer also tend to show less **salt staining and winter grime** than mid-tones. A good quality **100% acrylic latex** rated for temperatures down to **-40°C** is non-negotiable here.

Cost Expectations

A full exterior repaint on a typical Ottawa two-storey home runs **$4,500–$8,500** depending on size, prep work, and paint quality. Choosing light, heat-reflective colours won't change the upfront cost, but it can **extend your paint life by 2–3 years** compared to dark colours on the same exposure — that's real savings over time.

Finding the Right Painter

Colour choice is only half the equation — proper **surface prep, priming, and application** determine whether your paint actually performs to its rated lifespan. Browse the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** to connect with experienced local painting contractors who understand Ottawa's climate demands, and check out **Ottawa Paint Contractors** on the network for pros who specialize in exterior colour consulting and application.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- 613Bins
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Dreamwood Construction & Renovations
- Regimbal
- Tanner Irwin-Robertson

View all contractors ?

Q12

Should I Pressure Wash My Ottawa Home Exterior Before Repainting It?

Short answer: **almost always yes**, but with some important caveats that apply specifically to Ottawa homes. Pressure washing is one of the most critical prep steps for a long-lasting exterior paint job, but doing it wrong — or at the wrong time — can cause real damage.

Let me walk through what you need to know.

Why Pressure Washing Matters

Ottawa exteriors take a beating. Between **road salt overspray** from November through April, **pollen and mildew buildup** in spring and summer, **200+ cm of annual snowfall**, and general dust and pollution, your siding accumulates a layer of contaminants that paint simply will not bond to properly.

If you paint over a dirty surface, you're essentially gluing your new paint to a layer of grime rather than to the substrate. The result? **Peeling within 1–3 years** instead of the 7–10 year lifespan you should expect from quality exterior paint in Ottawa's climate.

Pressure washing removes:

- **Loose and flaking old paint**
- **Mildew, algae, and mould** (common on north-facing walls and shaded areas)
- **Chalking residue** from degraded paint film
- **Salt deposits** from winter road treatment
- **Dirt, cobwebs, and oxidation**

The Right Way to Pressure Wash in Ottawa

Pressure settings matter enormously. Ottawa homes feature a wide range of exterior materials, and each requires different treatment:

- **Vinyl siding**: **1,200–1,500 PSI** with a 25-degree or 40-degree tip. Higher pressure can crack vinyl panels or force water behind the siding.
- **Wood siding and trim**: **1,000–1,500 PSI** maximum. Too much pressure damages wood fibres, creating a fuzzy surface that drinks paint unevenly.
- **Brick and masonry**: **1,500–2,500 PSI** with care around mortar joints. Ottawa's older brick homes (especially in Sandy Hill, Centretown, and the Glebe) may have soft lime mortar that erodes under high pressure.

- **Stucco**: **1,200–1,500 PSI** only. Stucco is porous and can be gouged or have its texture destroyed by aggressive washing.

  Always wash top to bottom, hold the nozzle at least **12–18 inches from the surface**, and work at a **45-degree downward angle** to prevent water intrusion behind siding or into window frames.

When NOT to Pressure Wash

There are situations where pressure washing is the wrong call:

- **Lead paint risk**: Homes built before **1978** may have lead-based paint layers. Pressure washing blasts lead paint chips into your yard and garden, creating a **health hazard** and potential **Ontario Environmental Protection Act** violation. These homes need **chemical stripping or careful hand scraping** with proper containment. A lead test kit from any Ottawa hardware store costs **$15–$30** and takes 30 seconds.
- **Severely deteriorated wood**: If your wood siding is soft, punky, or heavily rotted, pressure washing will accelerate the damage. Replace compromised sections first.
- **Heritage-designated properties**: Some heritage homes in Ottawa have original wood detailing that's irreplaceable. **Low-pressure washing (under 1,000 PSI)** or hand washing with a TSP solution is safer for ornamental trim and period features.

Timing for Ottawa

Pressure washing needs **at least 48–72 hours of drying time** before priming and painting. In Ottawa, the ideal window is **late May through mid-September** when daytime temperatures stay above **10°C** and humidity is manageable. Washing too late in fall means your siding may not dry properly before temperatures drop, and trapped moisture under new paint is a recipe for **blistering and peeling** once freeze-thaw cycles begin.

Avoid washing on days when rain is forecast within 24 hours — you want the surface to dry completely.

DIY vs. Professional

You can rent a pressure washer from Ottawa tool rental shops for **$75–$150 per day**. However, there's a real skill component: wrong pressure, wrong angle, or wrong tip can gouge siding, blast water into wall cavities, or shatter window seals. Professional pressure washing as part of a paint prep package typically costs **$300–$600** for a standard Ottawa home and is usually included in full exterior painting quotes of **$4,500–$8,500+**.

What Comes After Washing

Once dry, your painter should inspect for:

- **Remaining loose paint** that needs scraping
- **Bare wood** requiring primer (oil-based for raw wood, or a quality acrylic bonding primer)
- **Caulking failures** around windows, doors, and trim joints
- **Mildew stains** that survived washing (treat with a bleach/water solution before priming)

The Bottom Line

Pressure washing is one of the most cost-effective things you can do to ensure your exterior paint job lasts. Skipping it to save a few hundred dollars often means repainting **3–4 years earlier** than necessary. Connect with experienced painting professionals through the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** and explore **Ottawa Paint Contractors** for local pros who include thorough prep work — including proper pressure washing — as a standard part of their exterior painting process.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- Above All Painting Inc.
- Alain Renovations
- SIR Custom
- Leeds Property Maintenance

View all contractors ?

Q13

How Do I Choose Exterior Paint That Withstands Ottawa's Summer Humidity and Winter Cold?

Ottawa's climate is genuinely extreme by Canadian standards — we swing from **-30°C wind chills in January** to **+35°C humidex readings in July**, with **200+ cm of snow**, spring freeze-thaw cycling, and summer humidity that can hover at **80–90%** for weeks. Your exterior paint needs to handle all of it without cracking, peeling, blistering, or fading.

Here's what actually matters when choosing paint for Ottawa conditions.

Resin Type: 100% Acrylic Latex is Non-Negotiable

The single most important factor is **resin quality**. For Ottawa exteriors, you need **100% acrylic latex paint** — no exceptions. Here's why:

- **Flexibility**: Acrylic resin stays flexible at low temperatures, expanding and contracting with Ottawa's massive thermal swings without cracking. Alkyd (oil-based) paints become brittle in cold and will crack within 2–3 winters.
- **Moisture management**: Acrylic latex is **breathable** — it allows trapped moisture to escape through the paint film. This is critical during Ottawa's spring thaw when ice melt can push moisture through wall assemblies from the inside out. Non-breathable coatings trap that moisture and blister.
- **UV resistance**: Ottawa gets **2,000+ hours of sunshine annually**. Acrylics hold colour and resist chalking far better than vinyl-acrylic or alkyd formulations.

Specific Product Recommendations for Ottawa

Not all acrylics are created equal. For Ottawa's climate demands, look for these **premium-tier products**:

- **Benjamin Moore Aura Exterior** (~$85–$95/gallon in Ottawa) — excellent adhesion, colour retention, and flexibility. Their proprietary Color Lock technology resists fading even on south-facing walls.
- **Sherwin-Williams Duration** (~$80–$90/gallon) — outstanding moisture resistance and self-priming capability. Handles Ottawa humidity well.
- **Sherwin-Williams Emerald Exterior** (~$85–$95/gallon) — top-tier UV and mildew resistance.
- **PPG Manor Hall Exterior** (~$55–$70/gallon) — solid mid-range option with good cold-weather performance.

Avoid bargain paints under **$40/gallon**. They use lower-quality resins and fewer solids, meaning poorer coverage, faster fading, and a shorter lifespan — typically **3–4 years** versus **8–12 years** for premium products.

Key Performance Specs to Check

When comparing products, look at the **Technical Data Sheet (TDS)** for these numbers:

- **Minimum application temperature**: Should be **4°C or lower**. Some newer formulations go down to **2°C**, extending Ottawa's painting season into late October.
- **Elongation percentage**: This measures flexibility. Look for **300%+ elongation** — it means the paint film can stretch significantly without cracking, essential for Ottawa's thermal cycling.
- **Permeability (perms)**: Higher is better for breathability. Aim for **8+ perms** to allow moisture vapour to escape.
- **Volume solids**: Higher percentage means thicker, more durable film per coat. Premium paints run **40–45% volume solids** versus **25–30%** for cheap paint.

Sheen Selection for Ottawa

Sheen affects both appearance and durability:

- **Flat/Matte**: Hides surface imperfections well. Best for siding on older Ottawa homes with less-than-perfect substrates. Less durable against physical abrasion but modern premium flats (like Aura) have good washability.
- **Low-lustre/Satin**: The **most popular choice for Ottawa exteriors**. Good balance of durability and appearance. Sheds dirt and mildew better than flat. Recommended for most applications.
- **Semi-gloss**: Best for **trim, doors, shutters, and railings**. Extremely durable and easy to clean. Shows surface imperfections, so prep work must be thorough.

Primer Matters as Much as Topcoat

Don't skip primer, even with "self-priming" paints. Ottawa conditions demand it:

- **Bare wood**: Use an **oil-based or alkyd primer** (like Zinsser Cover Stain, ~$35–$45/gallon) for maximum penetration and adhesion. Follow with acrylic topcoats.
- **Previously painted surfaces in good condition**: A quality **acrylic bonding primer** is sufficient.
- **Chalky or weathered surfaces**: Use a **penetrating acrylic primer** designed to bind chalky residue.

The Ottawa Humidity Factor

Summer humidity creates two specific challenges:

- **Slow drying**: High humidity extends drying times. Paint applied in **80%+ humidity** may stay tacky for hours, attracting bugs, dust, and pollen. Professional painters in Ottawa schedule summer work for **early morning**

starts when humidity is lower.

- **Mildew growth**: Ottawa's humid summers promote mildew on painted surfaces, especially north-facing walls and areas near landscaping. Choose paints with **built-in mildewcide** and ensure good airflow around your home's exterior.

Budget Planning

For a typical Ottawa two-storey home (1,800–2,500 sq ft of paintable surface), expect:

- **Paint materials only**: $600–$1,200 for premium products (primer + two topcoats)
- **Full professional exterior repaint**: $4,500–$8,500 including prep, primer, two coats, and cleanup
- **Cost per year of service**: Premium paint at $7,000 lasting 10 years = $700/year. Cheap paint at $4,000 lasting 4 years = $1,000/year. **Premium paint is cheaper long-term.**

The **Ottawa Construction Network directory** lists local painting contractors who work with these premium products daily. Check out **Ottawa Paint Contractors** on the network to find professionals who can recommend the right product system for your specific home and exposure conditions.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Vanguard Environmental
- MAK Construction and Development Inc
- The Granite shop

View all contractors ?

Q14

What Type of Primer Works Best for Ottawa Exterior Wood Surfaces?

Primer is the unsung hero of any exterior paint job — and on Ottawa wood surfaces, it's arguably **more important than the topcoat itself**. Our climate puts wood through punishing cycles: **-30°C winters** freeze moisture inside

wood fibres, **spring thaws** push that moisture outward, and **+35°C summers** bake everything dry. Without the right primer bridging wood and topcoat, even the best paint will fail prematurely.

Let me break down your options.

The Three Primer Types and When Each Wins

1. Oil-Based (Alkyd) Primer — Best for Bare and Weathered Wood

This is the gold standard for Ottawa exterior wood. Oil-based primers penetrate deep into wood fibres, creating a bond that acrylic primers simply can't match on raw surfaces.

Best products for Ottawa:

- **Zinsser Cover Stain** (~$35–$45/gallon) — excellent penetration, blocks tannin bleed from cedar and redwood
- **Kilz Original Oil-Based** (~$30–$40/gallon) — strong adhesion on weathered wood
- **Benjamin Moore Fresh Start Alkyd** (~$45–$55/gallon) — premium adhesion, good flexibility for thermal cycling

  Use oil-based primer when:

- Painting **bare, never-before-painted wood** (new trim, replacement boards, exposed patches)
- Working on **weathered, grey wood** that's been stripped or exposed for a season
- Dealing with **tannin-rich species** like cedar, redwood, or Douglas fir — tannin bleed creates brown stains through latex paint if not sealed with oil-based primer
- Covering **knots** in pine or spruce (common in Ottawa home trim)

  Ottawa-specific advantages: Oil-based primers can be applied at **slightly lower temperatures** than many latex primers and create a moisture-resistant barrier that helps protect wood during our harsh winters.

  Drawback: Longer dry time (8–24 hours vs. 1–4 hours for latex), strong fumes, cleanup requires mineral spirits. Ottawa's short painting season makes this a scheduling consideration.

2. Acrylic Latex Primer — Best for Previously Painted Wood in Good Condition

Use this when the existing paint is intact and you're recoating. Modern acrylic primers offer good adhesion, flexibility, and fast dry times.

Best products for Ottawa:

- **Benjamin Moore Fresh Start Acrylic** (~$40–$50/gallon) — excellent flexibility through freeze-thaw cycles
- **Sherwin-Williams Extreme Bond Primer** (~$45–$55/gallon) — bonds to glossy surfaces without heavy sanding

- **PPG Gripper** (~$30–$40/gallon) — reliable all-purpose option

Use acrylic primer when:

- Repainting over **sound, well-adhered existing paint**
- The wood is **clean, dry, and free of chalking**
- You need **fast recoat times** to maximize Ottawa's painting season
- Priming **composite or engineered wood trim** (increasingly common in Ottawa new builds and renovations)

Ottawa advantage: Acrylic primers stay **flexible at low temperatures**, which matters when Ottawa wood expands and contracts through **40–60°C temperature swings** across seasons. This flexibility helps prevent cracking.

3. Shellac-Based Primer — Best for Problem Stains and Extreme Sealing

The nuclear option — shellac primers seal virtually anything.

Best product:

- **Zinsser BIN Shellac Primer** (~$45–$55/gallon)

Use shellac primer when:

- Blocking **severe tannin bleed** that oil-based primer couldn't contain
- Sealing **water stains or smoke damage** on exterior wood
- Covering **persistent knot bleed** on pine trim
- Priming small **spot repairs** where maximum adhesion is critical

Ottawa limitation: Shellac primer is **brittle** and doesn't flex well with temperature changes. It works as a **spot primer** under a flexible acrylic topcoat, but using it as a full-coverage exterior primer in Ottawa's climate is risky — it can crack during thermal cycling.

Ottawa Wood-Specific Challenges

Cedar Siding and Trim

Extremely common on Ottawa homes, especially in neighbourhoods like Westboro, Alta Vista, and Manor Park. Cedar contains **water-soluble tannins** that bleed through latex paint as brown/reddish stains. **Always use oil-based primer on cedar** — one coat minimum, two coats on new cedar.

Pressure-Treated Lumber

Decks, railings, and some trim use pressure-treated wood. This material needs to **dry for 3–6 months** before

priming. In Ottawa, that means wood installed in spring shouldn't be primed until late summer or fall. Use a **quality acrylic primer** designed for treated wood.

Heritage Wood Trim

Ottawa's heritage homes (Glebe, Sandy Hill, New Edinburgh, Lowertown) often have **original wood trim** with decades of paint layers. The best approach is **oil-based primer on any scraped-to-bare areas**, with acrylic primer over intact existing paint. If the home was built before **1978**, test for lead paint before any scraping — this is an **Ontario regulation** and a serious health concern.

Prep Before Priming

Primer only works on properly prepared surfaces:

- **Scrape all loose, flaking, or peeling paint** down to a sound edge
- **Sand glossy surfaces** with 80–120 grit to create a profile for primer adhesion
- **Clean the surface** — pressure wash at **1,000–1,500 PSI** for wood, then allow **48–72 hours drying time**
- **Fill holes and cracks** with exterior wood filler, sand smooth
- **Caulk joints** between trim pieces and where trim meets siding

Cost and Coverage

Primer typically covers **300–400 sq ft per gallon** on wood (less on rough or porous surfaces). For a typical Ottawa two-storey exterior with wood trim, budget **$150–$300 in primer materials** as part of a total repaint costing **$4,500–$8,500** professionally.

Never let a painter skip primer to save money. It's the foundation of your entire paint system. Connect with experienced professionals through the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** — **Ottawa Paint Contractors** listed on the network understand which primer systems perform best on local wood species and in our demanding climate.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- Above All Painting Inc.
- Dump n Dash Hauling

- Stef's Quality Painting
- Dreamwood Construction & Renovations

View all contractors ?

Q15

Can I Paint Over Chalky Exterior Surfaces on My Ottawa Home Without Full Stripping?

Yes, you absolutely can paint over chalky surfaces in most cases — **full stripping is rarely necessary**. But you do need to address the chalk properly first, or your new paint will bond to the loose chalk layer instead of the substrate, and you'll be watching it peel off within a year or two. Ottawa's climate makes this especially important because freeze-thaw cycling will exploit any adhesion weakness relentlessly.

Here's the practical approach.

What Chalking Actually Is

Chalking is the powdery residue that forms on aging exterior paint when the resin binder breaks down under UV exposure. Rub your hand across the siding — if you get a white or coloured powder on your palm, that's chalk. It's a natural end-of-life process for paint, not a defect.

In Ottawa, chalking tends to be **worse on south and west-facing walls** that get the most direct sun exposure, and it accelerates on lower-quality paints that use weaker resins. Homes painted with flat finishes chalk more than those with satin or semi-gloss.

The Rub Test: How Bad Is It?

Before deciding your approach, assess the severity:

- **Light chalking**: Faint powder transfers to your hand with firm rubbing. Surface still feels relatively smooth. **Easy to address — standard prep is sufficient.**
- **Medium chalking**: Obvious powder transfers easily. Surface feels dusty. **Needs washing and may need a penetrating primer.**
- **Heavy chalking**: Thick powder coats your hand with a light touch. Paint underneath may be deteriorating. **Needs thorough washing, possible power washing, and definitely a specialty primer.**

Step-by-Step for Ottawa Homes

Step 1: Wash the Surface Thoroughly

This is the most critical step. You **must** remove as much chalk as possible before priming or painting.

- **Pressure washing** at **1,200–1,500 PSI** with a 25-degree tip removes most chalk effectively. Work top to bottom, maintaining **12–18 inches** from the surface.
- For heavy chalk on wood siding, add a **TSP (trisodium phosphate) solution** — about **1/4 cup per gallon of water** — to help cut through the chalk layer.
- After washing, allow **48–72 hours of drying time** in good Ottawa weather (above 10°C, dry conditions).

  Ottawa timing note: Schedule this for **late May through mid-September** when temperatures support proper drying. Washing in fall and painting the next spring means the surface re-accumulates grime over winter.

Step 2: Re-Test After Washing

Once dry, rub the surface again. If chalk still transfers significantly, you need a **chalk-binding primer**. If the surface feels clean and firm, you can proceed with a standard primer.

Step 3: Prime with the Right Product

For chalky surfaces, these primers are specifically designed to penetrate and bind chalk residue:

- **Zinsser Peel Stop Triple Thick** (~$35–$45/gallon) — a high-build bridging primer that fills hairline cracks and binds moderate chalk. Excellent for Ottawa homes with light-to-medium chalking.
- **Benjamin Moore Fresh Start Acrylic Primer** (~$40–$50/gallon) — good penetration on moderately chalky surfaces, with the flexibility Ottawa's climate demands.
- **Sherwin-Williams Extreme Bond Primer** (~$45–$55/gallon) — bonds aggressively to difficult surfaces including moderately chalky paint.
- **Emulsabond** or similar bonding additives (~$15–$25/quart, mixed into primer) — for heavy chalk, adding a bonding agent to your primer dramatically improves adhesion.

  For **heavily chalky surfaces**, an **oil-based penetrating primer** like **Zinsser Cover Stain** (~$35–$45/gallon) is often the best choice because it soaks into the chalk layer and locks it down more aggressively than latex primers.

Step 4: Topcoat with Quality Paint

After proper primer, apply **two coats of 100% acrylic latex exterior paint**. In Ottawa's climate, you need a paint rated for temperatures from **-40°C to +50°C** with high elongation (flexibility). Premium products like **Benjamin Moore Aura Exterior** or **Sherwin-Williams Duration** ($80–$95/gallon) are worth the investment on properly prepped chalk-prone surfaces.

When Full Stripping IS Necessary

Full stripping is only needed when:

- The paint is **peeling in large sheets** down to bare substrate — this goes beyond chalking to complete adhesion failure
- Multiple layers are **alligatored** (cracked in a pattern resembling alligator skin) — no primer will bridge this
- You're dealing with **lead paint** on a pre-1978 Ottawa home and the surface is in poor condition — Ontario regulations require proper containment and disposal procedures. Budget **$2,000–$5,000+** for professional lead paint removal on a full exterior.
- The **substrate itself is damaged** — rotted wood, crumbling stucco, or deteriorated masonry needs repair before any paint system will hold.

Cost Comparison

| Approach | Typical Cost (Ottawa 2-storey) | |---|---| | Wash + chalk-binding primer + 2 topcoats | **$5,000–$8,500** | | Full chemical stripping + prime + 2 topcoats | **$10,000–$18,000+** | | Full stripping with lead abatement | **$15,000–$25,000+** |

The difference is substantial — and in most cases, proper washing and priming over chalk gives you a paint job that lasts **8–10+ years**, making full stripping unnecessary.

Heritage Homes

For designated heritage properties in Ottawa's conservation districts, always consult with the City's heritage planning staff before major exterior work. In many cases, painting over chalk with proper prep is actually the **preferred approach** because it preserves original materials rather than removing them through aggressive stripping.

To find painting professionals experienced with chalky Ottawa exteriors, browse the **Ottawa Construction Network directory**. **Ottawa Paint Contractors** featured on the network can assess your specific situation and recommend the most cost-effective prep approach for your home.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- 613Bins
- JC Carpentry
- Capital City Drywall
- Humble Homes - property maintenance
- Titley Construction

View all contractors ?

Q16

How Often Should I Repaint the Exterior of My Ottawa Home to Prevent Weather Damage?

The honest answer depends on several factors specific to your home, but here are the general timelines Ottawa homeowners should plan around — and the warning signs that mean it's time regardless of the calendar.

Repainting Timelines by Surface Material

Wood Siding and Trim

Every 5–7 years with quality paint, or **3–5 years** with budget products.
Wood is the most vulnerable exterior material in Ottawa's climate. The **-30°C to +35°C temperature range** causes wood to expand and contract constantly, stressing the paint film. Add **200+ cm of annual snowfall**, spring freeze-thaw cycles pushing moisture through the grain, and summer UV exposure, and you've got a surface that demands regular maintenance.

South and west-facing wood walls degrade fastest — budget for these faces needing attention **1–2 years before** north and east faces.

Vinyl Siding

Rarely needs painting unless you're changing colour. Factory finishes on vinyl last **20–30 years**. If you do paint vinyl (increasingly common as homeowners refresh dated colours), expect **7–10 years** between repaints using paint formulated for vinyl, like **Sherwin-Williams VinylSafe** or **Benjamin Moore's vinyl-safe colours**.

Brick

Painted brick lasts 7–10 years in Ottawa. However, think carefully before painting brick — once painted, you're committed to repainting indefinitely. Ottawa's older brick (especially the distinctive **buff and red brick** in Centretown, Sandy Hill, and Lowertown) is porous, and **paint traps moisture** that would normally evaporate through the brick face. This can cause **spalling** (brick face crumbling) during freeze-thaw cycles. Many Ottawa heritage guidelines discourage painting original brick.
If your brick is already painted, keep up with repainting to maintain the moisture barrier.

Stucco

Every 5–7 years. Stucco is porous and absorbs moisture readily. In Ottawa, this moisture freezes and expands during winter, causing hairline cracks that worsen each season if the paint seal is compromised. **Elastomeric paint** ($50–$75/gallon) is ideal for Ottawa stucco because it stretches to bridge cracks up to 1/16 inch.

Aluminum Siding

Every 7–10 years. Aluminum holds paint well but oxidizes over time. When the factory finish chalks and fades, it's time to prime and paint.

Warning Signs It's Time to Repaint Now

Don't rely solely on timelines. Inspect your exterior every **spring after snow melt** (April/May in Ottawa) and watch for:

- **Peeling or flaking paint** — moisture is getting underneath the film. This accelerates rapidly once it starts.
- **Chalking** — rub the surface with your hand. Powdery residue means the paint binder is breaking down.
- **Cracking or alligatoring** — surface cracks in a pattern. Ottawa's thermal cycling is the primary cause.
- **Fading** — especially on south and west walls. When colour is noticeably uneven between faces, the UV protection is failing.
- **Bare wood visible** — exposed wood absorbs moisture immediately. In Ottawa, unprotected wood can develop **rot within 1–2 seasons**.
- **Mildew or dark staining** — common on north-facing walls and near landscaping. While mildew can be cleaned, persistent growth often indicates the paint's mildewcide has depleted.
- **Caulk failure** — gaps around windows, doors, and trim joints let water infiltrate wall cavities. Recaulking should happen with every repaint.

The Cost of Waiting Too Long

This is where Ottawa homeowners often get burned. Delaying a repaint by **2–3 years past when it's needed** doesn't just mean more fading — it means:

- **Wood rot**: Replacing rotted trim boards and siding sections adds **$500–$3,000+** to a paint job. A full board replacement on a two-storey home can exceed **$5,000** in carpentry alone.
- **Increased prep time**: Extensively peeling paint requires hours of scraping and sanding that a timely repaint wouldn't need. This can add **$1,000–$2,500** in labour.
- **Moisture damage**: Water infiltrating through failed paint can damage sheathing, insulation, and framing. Repairs can run into the **tens of thousands**.

A proactive repaint at $5,000–$8,500 prevents $15,000+ in repairs. That's the real math.

How to Extend Paint Life in Ottawa

- **Use premium 100% acrylic paint** — Benjamin Moore Aura, Sherwin-Williams Duration, or equivalent. They cost **$80–$95/gallon** but last **2–3 years longer** than budget paint.
- **Apply two full topcoats** — never settle for one. The second coat adds years of protection.
- **Ensure proper prep** — washing, scraping, priming bare spots, and caulking are what make paint last. Prep accounts for **60–70% of a good paint job's labour**.
- **Maintain trees and landscaping** — trim branches and shrubs away from siding to improve airflow and reduce moisture/mildew.
- **Clean your exterior annually** — a garden hose rinse in spring removes salt, dirt, and early mildew before they degrade the paint film.
- **Address spot failures immediately** — if one area starts peeling, scrape, prime, and touch up rather than waiting for the whole house to fail.

Ottawa Repainting Season

Exterior painting requires sustained temperatures above **10°C** and low rain probability. In Ottawa, the reliable painting window runs **mid-May through mid-October**, with peak conditions in **June through September**. Book your painter early — spring is when most homeowners notice winter damage, and quality painters fill their schedules by April.

Browse the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** to connect with experienced local painters. **Ottawa Paint Contractors** on the network can provide assessments of your exterior's current condition and recommend the right repainting timeline for your specific home.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Callandgone
- Stef's Quality Painting
- Whole Home Beauty (WHB)

View all contractors ?

Q17

Best Exterior Paint Sheen for Wood Siding on Ottawa Heritage Homes?

Choosing the right sheen for wood siding on an Ottawa heritage home is not just an aesthetic decision — it affects durability, moisture protection, and in many cases, **compliance with heritage district guidelines**. Having worked with Ottawa's unique heritage housing stock, I can tell you the answer is more nuanced than most paint store employees will suggest.

The Short Answer

Satin (or low-lustre) is the best all-around choice for wood siding on Ottawa heritage homes. It strikes the ideal balance between moisture protection, historical appearance, and long-term durability in our extreme climate. But let me explain why and when you might choose differently.

Understanding Sheen Levels for Exterior Wood

| Sheen | Light Reflectance | Durability | Heritage Appearance | |-------|-------------------|------------|---------------------| | Flat/Matte | 0-10% | Lowest | Most historically accurate | | Satin/Low-Lustre | 10-25% | Good | Acceptable in most districts | | Semi-Gloss | 25-40% | Very Good | Too shiny for main siding | | Gloss | 40%+ | Highest | Only for trim/accents |

Why Satin Wins in Ottawa

Moisture resistance: Ottawa wood siding endures an extraordinary range of conditions — from **-30°C January windchills** to **+35°C July humidity**, plus **200+ cm of annual snowfall** piling against lower courses. Higher sheen paints form a tighter film that resists moisture penetration better than flat. Satin gives you significantly better moisture protection than flat while avoiding the plastic-looking shine of semi-gloss.

Freeze-thaw performance: Ottawa's notorious freeze-thaw cycles (we can see temperature swings of **20-25°C in a single March day**) are brutal on flat exterior paint. Water penetrates the more porous flat film, freezes, and causes micro-cracking and peeling. Satin's tighter film dramatically reduces this.

UV resistance: Satin reflects slightly more UV radiation than flat, slowing colour fade. This matters on south and west-facing walls that take the brunt of Ottawa's summer sun. A quality satin will hold its colour **2-3 years longer** than flat on the same exposure.

Surface forgiveness: Wood siding on Ottawa heritage homes (many dating to the **1860s-1920s** in areas like New Edinburgh, the Glebe, Sandy Hill, and Lowertown) is rarely perfectly smooth. It has been painted many times, has patches, nail holes, and natural wood grain variation. Satin hides these imperfections far better than semi-gloss or

gloss, which highlight every bump and ripple.

Heritage District Requirements

If your home is in one of Ottawa's **Heritage Conservation Districts** (HCDs) or is individually designated under the **Ontario Heritage Act**, sheen choice may not be entirely up to you.

Ottawa HCDs with specific painting guidelines include:

- **Lowertown West HCD**
- **Centretown HCD**
- **New Edinburgh HCD**
- **Rockcliffe Park (Village)**
- **Woodroffe-Iris (Carlington)**

  Most HCD plans **recommend flat or satin finishes** for clapboard and wood siding because they replicate the appearance of historical paints. Semi-gloss and gloss on main siding surfaces are generally **discouraged** (though permitted on trim, window frames, and doors).

  Before painting, check with the City of Ottawa's **Heritage Planning Branch** at 613-580-2400 ext. 13455 if your home is in an HCD. You may need a **heritage permit** for colour changes (though sheen changes within the same colour typically do not require one).

When to Choose Flat Instead

Pick flat exterior paint if:

- Your heritage home has **very rough or heavily textured siding** where any sheen will highlight imperfections
- The HCD guidelines specifically require flat
- You are matching an adjacent section that was recently painted flat
- You are using a **premium flat** like Benjamin Moore Aura Exterior Flat (**$70-$80/gallon** in Ottawa) — high-end flats have much better moisture resistance than budget flats

  Never use cheap flat exterior paint on Ottawa wood siding. Budget flat paints (under $40/gallon) have poor moisture resistance and will peel within 2-3 winters. If you choose flat, spend for quality.

When Semi-Gloss Is Appropriate

Semi-gloss is the correct choice for:

- **Trim, window casings, door frames, and fascia boards** — these elements were historically painted in higher-sheen finishes
- **Porch ceilings** (traditionally haint blue in high gloss on Victorian homes)
- **Front doors and shutters**

  Using satin on siding with semi-gloss on trim creates a historically accurate **two-sheen system** that gives depth and visual interest to heritage facades.

Product Recommendations for Ottawa Heritage Wood

- **Benjamin Moore Aura Exterior Satin:** Top performer for Ottawa's climate. Self-priming, excellent adhesion to old paint layers. **$70-$80/gallon** at Ottawa dealers.
- **Dulux Diamond Exterior Satin:** Strong Canadian-formulated option. **$55-$65/gallon**.
- **PPG Timeless Exterior Satin:** Good value with built-in primer. **$50-$60/gallon**.

  All three are **100% acrylic latex** — the correct chemistry for Ottawa wood siding. Do not use oil-based exterior paints; they become brittle in our cold winters and crack.

Preparation Is Everything on Heritage Wood

No sheen will save poorly prepared siding. Ottawa heritage homes often have **8-15 layers** of old paint. Proper preparation includes:

- **Lead paint testing** — homes built before **1960** likely have lead paint in lower layers. Ontario requires safe work practices under **O.Reg. 490/09**.
- **Scraping loose and flaking paint** down to a sound surface
- **Sanding rough edges** where old paint layers create ridges
- **Priming bare wood** with an alkyd or bonding primer
- **Caulking gaps** at joints, window casings, and corner boards

  Professional exterior painting on Ottawa heritage wood siding typically runs **$3.50-$5.50 per square foot** including preparation, primer where needed, and two coats of satin finish. A typical two-storey heritage home might cost **$6,000-$12,000** depending on condition and detail work.

  For painters experienced with Ottawa heritage homes, check the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** or browse **Ottawa Paint Contractors** to find professionals who understand both the technical and regulatory requirements of working on designated heritage properties.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- JC Carpentry
- All Pro Painters
- Don Sincennes Painting
- Oliver Painting Inc

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Q18

How Ottawa Painters Deal With Paint Adhesion Issues on Previously Stained Wood Siding?

Paint adhesion failure on previously stained wood siding is one of the most frustrating problems Ottawa homeowners face. The paint goes on fine, looks great for a few months, then starts **peeling, flaking, or lifting in sheets** — often after the first winter. Understanding why this happens and how professional Ottawa painters solve it will save you from repeating the same expensive mistake.

Why Paint Fails on Stained Wood

Wood stains and wood paints work in fundamentally different ways:

- **Stain** penetrates into the wood fibres and does not form a surface film
- **Paint** sits on top of the surface and bonds to whatever is beneath it

  When you apply paint over stain, the paint is trying to bond to a surface that has been saturated with stain oils, pigments, and water repellents — all designed to repel things from sticking. The result is **poor mechanical adhesion**. The paint film sits on top without truly gripping, and Ottawa's brutal freeze-thaw cycles do the rest.

  Ottawa's climate makes this problem worse than almost anywhere else in Canada. We see **40-50 freeze-thaw cycles per winter** in a typical season. Each cycle drives moisture under the poorly bonded paint film, freezes and expands, and progressively lifts the paint away from the stained wood.

The Correct Professional Approach

Here is the step-by-step process that experienced Ottawa painters use to get paint to adhere permanently over previously stained siding:

Step 1: Identify the Stain Type

This determines your entire approach:

- **Solid stain:** Looks like paint but thinner. Forms a partial film. Easier to paint over.
- **Semi-transparent stain:** Shows wood grain. Partial penetration. Moderate difficulty.
- **Transparent/clear stain:** Shows full wood grain. Fully penetrated. Most difficult to paint over.
- **Oil-based stain:** Repels water-based (latex) paint. Must be addressed.
- **Water-based stain:** More compatible with latex paint. Easier transition.

The test: Sprinkle water on the stained surface. If it beads up, the stain is still actively repelling moisture and paint will not bond without intervention.

Step 2: Surface Preparation (The Make-or-Break Phase)

Power washing: Start with a thorough power wash at **1,500-2,000 PSI** to remove loose stain, mildew, dirt, and chalking. Keep the nozzle **12-18 inches** from the siding and use a 25-degree fan tip to avoid gouging the wood. In Ottawa, schedule this for a **dry week in late May or June** — you need 48-72 hours of dry weather afterward.

Chemical stripping (for stubborn oil stains): If the water bead test still shows active repellency after power washing, apply a **stain stripper** like Flood StripPeel or Behr Wood Stain & Finish Stripper. Cost is roughly **$25-$35 per gallon**, and one gallon covers about **100-150 sq ft**. Follow the manufacturer's dwell time, then power wash off.

Sanding: After the wood dries completely (minimum **48 hours in Ottawa's summer conditions**), sand the surface with **80-grit sandpaper** on a random orbital sander. This does two critical things:

- Creates a mechanical profile for paint adhesion (tooth)
- Removes the top layer of stain-saturated wood fibres

For large siding areas, Ottawa painters typically use **3M Pro Grade Precision sanding sheets** and a pole sander for upper courses. Budget **$30-$50** in sandpaper for a full house side.

Step 3: The Right Primer (This Is Where It All Matters)

Using the wrong primer over stain is the #1 reason DIY paint-over-stain projects fail. **Regular latex primer will not work.**

The correct primers for stained wood in Ottawa:

- **Oil-based/alkyd bonding primer:** The professional standard. Penetrates into stain-saturated wood and creates a bondable surface. **Zinsser Cover Stain** or **KILZ Original** are the go-to products. Cost: **$35-$45/gallon** in Ottawa.
- **Shellac-based primer (Zinsser B-I-N):** Even more aggressive bonding and stain blocking. Best for heavily oil-stained wood. **$45-$55/gallon.**

  Apply one full coat of bonding primer to all siding. Allow **24 hours** to cure in Ottawa's typical summer conditions (15-25°C). In cooler spring or fall temperatures (below 10°C), switch to shellac-based primer as it cures in cold better than oil-based.

Step 4: Paint Application

Once properly primed, you can use any quality **100% acrylic latex exterior paint**. Apply **two full coats** with 4-6 hours between coats.

Recommended products for Ottawa's climate:

- Benjamin Moore Aura Exterior: **$70-$80/gallon** — best freeze-thaw resistance
- Dulux Diamond Exterior: **$55-$65/gallon** — excellent value
- PPG Timeless Exterior: **$50-$60/gallon** — good self-priming backup

  Use a **satin or low-lustre sheen** for maximum moisture resistance on siding.

The Adhesion Test Before Full Commitment

Smart Ottawa painters always do this: after priming a test section and applying one coat of paint, wait **7 days** for full cure, then perform a **cross-hatch adhesion test**:

- Score an X pattern into the painted surface with a utility knife
- Press painter's tape firmly over the scored area
- Pull the tape off sharply at a 45-degree angle
- If the paint stays put, adhesion is good. If paint lifts with the tape, more preparation is needed.

Cost Expectations in Ottawa

Painting over previously stained siding costs more than a standard repaint because of the extra preparation:

| Service | Cost per sq ft | |---------|---------------| | Standard exterior repaint | $3.00-$4.50 | | Stain-to-paint conversion | $4.50-$7.00 | | With chemical stripping needed | $6.00-$9.00 |

A typical **1,500 sq ft** of Ottawa siding (two-storey home, one side) converted from stain to paint runs **$6,750-$10,500** professionally, or **$2,000-$3,500** in materials for a careful DIY job.

The Alternative: Re-Stain Instead

If the preparation cost seems steep, consider whether **re-staining** makes more sense. A quality solid stain gives a paint-like appearance with better adhesion to previously stained wood and typically costs **30-40% less** in labour. Many Ottawa heritage homes look excellent with solid stain.

For professional advice on your specific siding situation, browse painters in the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** or visit **Ottawa Paint Contractors** to connect with exterior specialists who have handled stain-to-paint conversions on Ottawa homes.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Homeupgraders
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Speedy Pete's Inc
- M.O.T. CONSTRUCTION INC.
- Prochampion

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Q19

What Happens to Exterior Paint in Ottawa if It Rains Within 24 Hours of Application?

This is one of the most common worries for Ottawa homeowners who have just had their house painted or are planning a DIY exterior project. Ottawa's weather is notoriously unpredictable — you can start a perfectly sunny June morning and face an afternoon thunderstorm by 2 PM. Let me walk you through exactly what happens and what to do about it.

The Critical Window: Dry Time vs. Cure Time

First, understand that there are **two different timelines** at play:

- **Dry to touch:** The paint feels dry on the surface. For quality latex exterior paint in Ottawa summer conditions (20-28°C, moderate humidity), this takes **1-2 hours**.
- **Dry to recoat:** Safe to apply a second coat. Typically **4-6 hours** in good conditions.
- **Full cure:** The paint film has fully hardened, cross-linked, and reached maximum adhesion. This takes **7-14 days** for latex and **14-30 days** for oil-based.

  Rain during different phases causes different levels of damage.

Rain Within 0-2 Hours (Before Dry to Touch)

This is the worst-case scenario. If rain hits freshly applied paint before it has dried to touch:

- **Water washes the paint off the surface** — you will see visible streaks, runs, and thin spots
- **Binder (the adhesive component) gets diluted** — even areas that look okay may have compromised adhesion
- **Pigment separates from the binder** — causing uneven colour and chalky spots

  What to do: Wait for the surface to dry completely (48 hours of dry weather in Ottawa conditions). Inspect carefully. You will likely need to **repaint the affected areas from scratch** — light sanding, spot prime any bare spots, then full recoat. Material cost for a re-do section: **$50-$150** depending on area size.

Rain at 2-4 Hours (Partially Dry)

The paint is surface-dry but not fully set. Rain at this stage:

- **Leaves water spots and dimples** in the paint film (called "water marking")

- **Causes the surface to appear blotchy** — some areas look flat, others have a slight sheen
- **Can create adhesion weak points** that may peel 6-12 months later during Ottawa's winter

  What to do: Let the surface dry completely and inspect. Minor water marking can often be **fixed with a light sanding and one additional topcoat**. Severe spotting may require a full recoat of the affected section.

Rain at 4-8 Hours (Dry but Not Cured)

Good news — at this stage, the paint film has formed sufficiently to resist most rain:

- **Light rain (drizzle):** Usually no visible damage. The surface may look slightly duller in spots. This typically self-corrects as the paint continues to cure.
- **Heavy downpour:** Can cause minor water marking or a slight whitish haze (called **surfactant leaching** — it looks alarming but is cosmetic)

  What to do about surfactant leaching: Those brownish or whitish streaks are water-soluble surfactants being pulled out of the paint by moisture. They are cosmetic, not structural. Wait for dry weather, then **wash the affected areas with water and a soft cloth**. The streaks wash off completely. Do not sand or repaint — just clean.

Rain After 24+ Hours

By 24 hours, quality latex paint has formed a solid enough film to handle rain without damage. However, the paint is **not fully cured** (that takes 7-14 days), so:

- Avoid power washing for at least **30 days**
- Do not scrub or clean painted surfaces for **2 weeks**
- Pollen, tree sap, and bird droppings should be gently rinsed, not scrubbed

Ottawa-Specific Weather Factors

Dew and overnight moisture: Ottawa summer nights can produce heavy **dew**, especially in river-adjacent neighbourhoods (Rockcliffe, New Edinburgh, Britannia, Manotick). If paint was applied late in the afternoon and has not had 4+ hours of warm, dry curing before dew forms, you can get the same water marking issues as light rain. **Stop painting by 3-4 PM** on Ottawa summer days to allow adequate drying before evening dew.

Humidity: Ottawa's summer humidity regularly hits **70-85%** (humidex values of 35-45°C). High humidity dramatically slows paint drying:

| Humidity | Dry to Touch | Dry to Recoat | |----------|-------------|---------------| | 40-50% | 1 hour | 3-4 hours | | 60-70% | 2 hours | 5-6 hours | | 80%+ | 3-4 hours | 6-8 hours |

In **high-humidity Ottawa conditions**, the rain vulnerability window extends significantly. Plan accordingly.

Morning moisture on shaded walls: North-facing walls on Ottawa homes stay damp longer from overnight dew and stay cooler longer in the morning. Professional painters typically start on the **south and west walls** in the morning (they dry fastest) and paint north-facing walls in the afternoon when they have had maximum sun exposure.

How Professional Ottawa Painters Manage Rain Risk

Experienced Ottawa exterior painters use several strategies:

- **Weather monitoring:** Checking Environment Canada forecasts obsessively — not just daily forecasts but **hourly precipitation probabilities** for the specific Ottawa area
- **Phased painting:** Working on one wall or section at a time rather than half-finishing the whole house, so completed sections are safe if weather turns
- **Fast-dry products:** Using **quick-dry exterior formulas** that reach rain resistance in 60-90 minutes instead of 4 hours. Products like Benjamin Moore Aura Exterior and Sherwin-Williams Duration have faster rain-resistance times.
- **Scheduling buffer:** Building rain days into the project timeline — a 5-day exterior job in Ottawa summer realistically needs a **7-8 day window** booked

What About Paint Applied in Ottawa's Shoulder Seasons?

Some Ottawa painters work into **late September and early October** or start in **late April and May**. At these temperatures (5-15°C), paint takes **2-3 times longer to dry** than in summer. The rain vulnerability window extends to **8-12 hours or more**. If you are painting in the shoulder season, you need an even longer dry weather window.

Minimum temperatures for exterior painting in Ottawa:

- Latex/acrylic paint: **Above 10°C** (daytime AND overnight for 48 hours after application)
- Some cold-weather formulas: Down to **4°C** (check the can — Benjamin Moore Aura Exterior is rated to 4°C)

Bottom Line: Your Action Plan

If rain hit your freshly painted Ottawa home:

- **Do not panic** — wait for it to dry completely (48 hours minimum)
- **Inspect in direct sunlight** — look for streaks, spots, haze, peeling edges
- **Wash any surfactant leaching** with water and a soft cloth
- **Spot-repaint** only areas with visible damage
- **Document the timing** — if a professional crew applied the paint knowing rain was forecast, they should warranty the repair

  For exterior painting projects where weather timing is critical, working with an experienced local crew makes a real difference. Browse the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** or visit **Ottawa Paint Contractors** to find painters who know how to schedule around Ottawa's unpredictable weather patterns.

  Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Oliver Painting Inc
- All Pro Painters
- Stef's Quality Painting

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