

OTTAWA PAINT CONTRACTORS

Paint Types & Finishes

Paint types, sheens, brands and product selection

14 Expert Answers from Paint IQ

ottawapaintcontractors.com/construction-brain

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Q1

How much does a tinted primer help when painting a light colour over red walls in Ottawa?

Tinted primer makes a dramatic difference when painting light colours over red walls — it can reduce your project from three or four coats down to just two coats, saving both time and money. Red is one of the most challenging colours to cover because it has strong pigmentation that bleeds through lighter topcoats, creating a muddy or pinkish result even after multiple applications.

In Ottawa's market, a high-quality tinted primer like Benjamin Moore Fresh Start or Sherwin-Williams ProBlock runs \$45 to \$65 per gallon compared to \$30 to \$40 for standard white primer. The tinted primer is formulated to a grey or beige tone that neutralizes the red undertones and creates a uniform base for your topcoat. This small upfront investment typically saves you \$200 to \$400 in labour costs on a whole-room project because your painter can achieve full coverage in two coats instead of three or four.

The key is matching the primer tint to your final colour family. If you're going to a warm white or beige, request a warm grey primer tint. For cool whites or blues, ask for a cooler grey base. Most Ottawa paint retailers can tint primer to approximately 25% of your final colour's intensity — this gives you maximum coverage without affecting the true colour of your topcoat.

Without tinted primer, you'll likely see red bleeding through even premium paints, especially in areas where the brush or roller applies the paint more thinly. This creates an uneven, blotchy appearance that requires additional coats to achieve uniform coverage. Ottawa's dry winter air actually works in your favour here — the low humidity helps each coat cure properly between applications.

For a project this specific, working with an experienced painter who understands colour theory and primer selection will ensure you get the coverage you want without wasting time and materials on extra coats.

Q2

Is milk paint a durable option for furniture and accent pieces in Ottawa homes?

Milk paint can be a beautiful, eco-friendly choice for furniture and accent pieces, but its durability in Ottawa homes depends heavily on the specific application and environmental conditions. **Milk paint works best on raw wood surfaces and creates a distinctive matte, slightly chalky finish that many homeowners love for farmhouse, vintage, or rustic styling.**

Ottawa's dry winter air actually benefits milk paint since low humidity helps it cure properly and reduces the risk of mold or mildew that can affect this natural, protein-based paint. However, milk paint's porous nature makes it vulnerable to moisture damage, which is a consideration in Ottawa homes where humidity swings dramatically between winter heating season (often below 20% humidity) and summer months. In bathrooms, kitchens, or basement areas where moisture levels fluctuate, milk paint on furniture can absorb humidity and potentially develop water stains or even mold growth.

For durability, milk paint performs well on pieces that won't see heavy wear — decorative furniture, accent tables, picture frames, or bedroom pieces. It's less suitable for high-traffic items like kitchen tables, children's furniture, or pieces that need regular cleaning. The paint can be sealed with natural waxes or water-based topcoats to improve durability, but this changes the authentic milk paint appearance that many people seek. **Expect to pay \$25 to \$40 for enough milk paint powder to cover a typical dresser or side table.**

The biggest limitation is surface preparation. Milk paint bonds poorly to previously painted or sealed surfaces, often requiring complete stripping to bare wood. It also has a learning curve for mixing consistency and application technique. For Ottawa homeowners wanting the milk paint aesthetic with better durability, consider modern "milk paint-style" products from companies like General Finishes or Annie Sloan, which offer similar appearance with improved adhesion and moisture resistance at \$35 to \$50 per quart.

Q3

What Is the Difference Between Acrylic, Latex, and Alkyd Paint for Ottawa Homes?

These three paint types get confused constantly, and the terminology doesn't help — even paint store staff sometimes use the terms loosely. Here's a clear breakdown of what each actually is, how they perform in Ottawa's demanding climate, and when to use each one.

The Quick Definitions

Latex paint is a broad category that means **water-based paint** — water is the carrier that evaporates as the paint dries. The term "latex" is actually misleading because modern latex paints contain no natural latex rubber. It's a legacy name from the 1940s.

Acrylic paint (specifically **100% acrylic latex**) is the **premium subcategory of latex paint**. Instead of cheaper vinyl or vinyl-acrylic resins, it uses **pure acrylic polymers** as the binder. This makes it more durable, more flexible, and better at resisting Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycles. When a paint can says "100% acrylic," that's the good stuff.

Alkyd paint is **oil-based paint** (though modern alkyds use synthetic resins rather than natural oils). The carrier is a petroleum-based solvent that evaporates during drying. Alkyd paints cure through **oxidation** — they chemically react with oxygen to form a hard film — rather than simply drying through evaporation like latex.

The bottom line: **all acrylics are latex, but not all latex is acrylic. Alkyd is the odd one out — it's oil-based.**

Performance Comparison for Ottawa Conditions

Durability in Extreme Temperatures

Ottawa's range from **-30C to +35C** is brutal on paint. Here's how each handles it:

- **100% Acrylic latex: Best performer.** The acrylic resin stays flexible across the full temperature range, expanding and contracting with your siding, window frames, and trim without cracking. This flexibility is critical for Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycling (we can have 20+ freeze-thaw events per spring).
- **Standard vinyl-acrylic latex: Adequate for interior,** but the cheaper vinyl component makes it more brittle in cold temperatures. Not ideal for Ottawa exteriors.
- **Alkyd/oil-based: Becomes brittle over time,** especially in cold weather. Once the oil-based film hardens fully (which continues for years after application), it can't flex with substrate movement. Ottawa's temperature swings cause cracking and peeling faster than in milder climates.

Adhesion and Surface Preparation

- **Alkyd wins on challenging surfaces:** Raw wood, bare metal, stained surfaces, and previously oil-painted surfaces all accept alkyd paint more readily. The oil-based formula penetrates and bonds to porous and irregular surfaces better.
- **Acrylic latex** adheres well to most prepared surfaces but **struggles on bare, tannin-rich wood** (cedar, redwood) without a proper primer. On previously oil-painted surfaces, you **MUST** sand and prime before applying latex over old alkyd.

Drying Time and Ottawa's Short Painting Season

Ottawa's exterior painting window runs roughly **May through October**, and even within that window, overnight temperatures need to stay above **10C for latex** and **7C for alkyd** for proper curing.

- **Acrylic latex:** Dries to touch in **1-2 hours**, recoat in **4 hours**. Faster turnaround means more can get done in Ottawa's short painting season.
- **Alkyd:** Dries to touch in **6-8 hours**, recoat in **16-24 hours**. In Ottawa's humid summer days, this can stretch even longer. A two-coat exterior job takes twice as many days with alkyd.

VOC Content and Ontario Regulations

Ontario follows **federal VOC regulations** that cap volatile organic compound content in architectural coatings. Alkyd paints historically contained **high VOC levels (300-400 g/L)**, though newer "low-VOC alkyd" formulations have brought this down to **100-250 g/L**. Acrylic latex paints typically contain **0-50 g/L**, with many premium lines achieving **zero-VOC** certification.

For interior work, especially in homes with children, elderly residents, or anyone with respiratory sensitivities, **zero-VOC acrylic latex is the clear winner**.

What to Use Where in Your Ottawa Home

| Application | Recommended Type | Why | |---|---|---| | **Interior walls and ceilings** | 100% acrylic latex | Low odour, easy cleanup, durable | | **Exterior siding** | 100% acrylic latex | Flexibility for freeze-thaw, UV resistance | | **Interior trim, doors, cabinets** | Acrylic-alkyd hybrid or alkyd | Harder finish resists scuffing | | **Exterior wood trim** | 100% acrylic latex | Flexibility beats hardness outdoors | | **Bare wood primer** | Alkyd primer + acrylic topcoat | Best penetration + best topcoat durability | | **Metal railings, fences** | Alkyd or DTM acrylic | Direct-to-metal formulations prevent rust | | **Basement floors** | Epoxy-modified acrylic | Handles moisture, abrasion |

Ottawa Pricing

- **Standard vinyl-acrylic latex:** \$30-\$45/gallon
- **100% acrylic latex (premium):** \$55-\$85/gallon
- **Alkyd/oil-based:** \$45-\$70/gallon
- **Hybrid acrylic-alkyd:** \$50-\$75/gallon

For professional guidance on which paint type suits your specific project, the painters listed on **Ottawa Paint Contractors** and in the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** can assess your surfaces and recommend the right product — the correct paint type matters as much as the colour you choose.

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

- Homeupgraders
- JC Carpentry
- Oliver Painting Inc
- Engur Construction

- Valcor Construction

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When Should I Use Oil-Based Paint Instead of Water-Based Paint in Ottawa?

Water-based (latex/acrylic) paint has become the default for good reason — it's easier to work with, dries faster, has lower odour, and performs excellently in most applications. But there are still specific situations where **oil-based (alkyd) paint is genuinely the better choice**, particularly in Ottawa homes that deal with demanding conditions. Here's when to reach for each.

When Oil-Based Paint Is Still the Right Call

1. Interior Trim, Doors, and Cabinetry (Where Hardness Matters)

Oil-based paint cures to a **significantly harder film** than standard latex. For surfaces that take daily physical abuse — door frames hands push against, baseboards vacuum cleaners bump into, kitchen cabinets that get opened 30 times a day — that hardness translates to **better scuff, scratch, and chip resistance**.

The self-leveling properties of alkyd paint also produce a **smoother, glass-like finish** on trim and doors. Brush marks and roller stipple are less visible because the paint flows out before it sets. On a six-panel interior door, the difference between a brushed alkyd finish and a brushed latex finish is immediately obvious.

Ottawa cost comparison for a typical interior door: Professional application runs **\$150-\$250 per door** regardless of paint type. The paint cost difference is minimal — about \$10-\$15 more per gallon for alkyd versus standard acrylic. The real cost is **drying time**: alkyd doors need 16-24 hours between coats, so the painter may need to schedule an additional visit.

2. Priming Bare Wood, Especially Stain-Prone Species

Many older Ottawa homes — particularly in the **Glebe, Old Ottawa South, Centretown, and Sandy Hill** — have original cedar, fir, or pine woodwork. These species contain **tannins and knots that bleed through water-based primers**, leaving yellow or brown stains that telegraph through your topcoat.

Alkyd-based primers (like Zinsser Cover Stain or Benjamin Moore Fresh Start alkyd) seal these stains effectively. The oil-based formula penetrates into the wood grain and blocks tannin migration in a way that water-based primers simply cannot match. Once primed with alkyd, you can topcoat with either oil-based or water-based paint.

3. High-Moisture Metal Surfaces

For **metal railings, wrought iron fences, steel doors, and metal window frames** exposed to Ottawa's wet climate, oil-based paint provides superior **moisture barrier protection and rust inhibition**. While direct-to-metal (DTM) acrylic formulations have improved enormously, alkyd still edges them out for raw or lightly rusted metal in high-exposure situations.

Ottawa's **200+ cm of annual snowfall** means metal surfaces spend months in contact with moisture, road salt splash, and freeze-thaw cycling. Oil-based paint's impermeability gives it an advantage here.

4. Painting Over Previously Oil-Painted Surfaces

If your Ottawa home still has oil-based paint on trim, doors, or radiators (common in pre-1990s homes), **applying oil-based paint over existing oil-based paint** is the most reliable approach. While you CAN apply latex over oil with proper preparation (sanding to degloss + bonding primer), adhesion failures are more common than with an oil-over-oil approach.

When Water-Based Paint Is Clearly Better

Exterior Applications

This might surprise people, but **water-based 100% acrylic paint is superior to oil-based for Ottawa exteriors**. The reason is flexibility: acrylic latex remains elastic across Ottawa's full **-30C to +35C temperature range**, expanding and contracting with your siding and trim. Oil-based paint becomes increasingly brittle as it ages and **cracks during freeze-thaw cycling** — exactly the conditions Ottawa delivers relentlessly from November through April.

Interior Walls and Ceilings

There's virtually no reason to use oil-based paint on interior walls or ceilings. Water-based acrylic is **easier to apply, dries in 1-2 hours versus 6-8, produces far less odour, cleans up with soap and water**, and modern premium formulations (Benjamin Moore Regal Select, Sherwin-Williams Emerald) match or exceed oil-based durability on flat surfaces.

Anywhere Ventilation Is Limited

Ottawa homes are **sealed tight for winter energy efficiency**, which means VOCs from oil-based paint linger longer than in well-ventilated environments. If you're painting in **October through April** (when windows stay closed), water-based paint with low or zero VOC content is the healthier choice. Ontario's **Occupational Health and Safety Act** requires adequate ventilation when using solvent-based coatings in enclosed spaces — in a residential setting, this means fans and open windows, which isn't practical at -20C.

Rooms With Humidity Fluctuations

Bathrooms, kitchens, and laundry rooms experience **rapid humidity swings**. Water-based acrylic paint "breathes" — it allows water vapour to pass through the film rather than trapping it behind the paint, which prevents **blistering and peeling**. Oil-based paint seals the surface completely, trapping moisture behind the film where it causes

adhesion failure.

The Hybrid Solution: Acrylic-Alkyd

The paint industry has developed **hybrid acrylic-alkyd formulations** (like Benjamin Moore Advance) that combine the **hard finish and self-leveling of oil-based paint** with the **easy cleanup, low odour, and flexibility of water-based paint**. For Ottawa homeowners who want oil-paint-quality trim and cabinet finishes without the downsides, these hybrids are an excellent middle ground at **\$55-\$75 per gallon**.

For help determining the right paint type for your specific project, consult the professionals listed on **Ottawa Paint Contractors** and in the **Ottawa Construction Network directory**. A good painter will recommend the right product for each surface rather than defaulting to one type for everything.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- JC Carpentry
- Engur Construction
- ALTIOR CONSTRUCTION
- Powell Painting

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Q5

What Are the Benefits of Zero-VOC Paint for Ottawa Families With Children?

Zero-VOC paint has moved from niche product to mainstream standard, and for Ottawa families with young children, the benefits go well beyond the "green" marketing label. Understanding what VOCs actually are, why they matter more in Ottawa's sealed-up homes, and what zero-VOC paints deliver in real-world performance will help you make an informed decision.

What VOCs Actually Are (and Why They Matter)

Volatile Organic Compounds are carbon-based chemicals that evaporate at room temperature. In conventional paint, VOCs include solvents like formaldehyde, benzene, toluene, and ethylene glycol. When paint dries, these

compounds **off-gas into your indoor air** — that "new paint smell" is literally VOCs entering your lungs.

The health effects of VOC exposure include:

- **Short-term:** Headaches, dizziness, eye/nose/throat irritation, nausea
- **Long-term (chronic exposure):** Respiratory damage, liver/kidney damage, central nervous system effects
- **Children are disproportionately affected:** Kids breathe faster relative to body weight, spend more time on floors (where heavier VOCs settle), and have developing respiratory and neurological systems that are more vulnerable to chemical exposure

Health Canada classifies formaldehyde as a **Group 1 carcinogen** and has set indoor air quality guidelines that conventional high-VOC paints can exceed, particularly in the weeks immediately after application.

Why This Matters MORE in Ottawa Than in Milder Climates

Here's the critical Ottawa-specific factor that many families overlook: **our homes are sealed shut for 5-6 months of the year.**

Ottawa homes — especially those built or renovated to modern Ontario Building Code energy efficiency standards — feature tight building envelopes with **vapour barriers, sealed windows, and controlled ventilation.** From roughly **November through April**, windows stay closed, and fresh air exchange depends entirely on your HVAC system's ventilation capacity.

This means VOCs off-gassing from conventional paint have **nowhere to go.** Instead of dissipating through open windows within days (as they might in a temperate climate), they accumulate in your indoor air. Studies show that **indoor VOC concentrations can be 2-5 times higher than outdoor levels**, and in newly painted, tightly sealed homes, that multiplier can spike to **10 times or more** in the first 72 hours.

If you're painting a nursery in October for a baby due in December, those VOCs are trapped inside with your newborn through the entire winter.

What Zero-VOC Paint Actually Delivers

Health Protection

Zero-VOC paints contain **less than 5 grams of VOCs per litre** (the threshold for the "zero-VOC" label under Canadian standards). By comparison, conventional latex paint can contain **50-200 g/L**, and traditional oil-based paint ranges from **300-400 g/L**. The practical result is:

- **No chemical odour** during or after application — rooms are usable within hours, not days
- **No off-gassing period** — you don't need to "air out" the room before a child sleeps in it

- **Safe for occupied homes** — you can paint a child's bedroom during the day and use it that night

Performance (The Myth-Busting Part)

A decade ago, zero-VOC paints were legitimately inferior — thinner coverage, less durable, limited colour selection. **That era is over.** Modern zero-VOC formulations from major manufacturers perform identically to or better than their conventional counterparts:

- **Benjamin Moore Natura:** Zero-VOC, excellent coverage, full colour range, **\$60-\$75/gallon** in Ottawa
- **Sherwin-Williams Harmony:** Zero-VOC with odour-eliminating technology, **\$55-\$70/gallon**
- **Dulux Lifemaster:** Zero-VOC, scrubbable finish, widely available at Ottawa retailers, **\$45-\$60/gallon**

These paints are **fully scrubbable** — important when small hands leave fingerprints, crayon marks, and mystery smudges on every reachable surface. They hold up to the cleaning that children's rooms demand.

Ontario Regulatory Context

Ontario follows **federal VOC regulations** under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which cap VOC content in architectural coatings. While conventional paints sold in Ontario already meet these caps, zero-VOC products go significantly further. There is no Ontario law requiring zero-VOC paint in residences, but the **Canadian Paediatric Society** recommends minimizing VOC exposure in children's environments.

Practical Recommendations for Ottawa Families

Priority rooms for zero-VOC:

- **Nurseries and children's bedrooms** — highest priority, kids spend 10+ hours per day here
- **Playrooms and family rooms** — extended exposure during waking hours
- **Home offices** (if working from home with children present)
- **Anywhere with limited ventilation** — interior bathrooms, basement playrooms

Cost comparison for a typical child's bedroom (walls + ceiling, roughly 400 sq ft of surface area):

- **Conventional latex (DIY):** \$80-\$120 in paint
- **Zero-VOC latex (DIY):** \$120-\$180 in paint
- **Professional painting with zero-VOC:** \$500-\$800 (labour + materials)

The premium for zero-VOC is roughly **\$40-\$60 per room** in paint cost — a negligible amount when weighed against your children's health.

One Important Caveat

Zero-VOC paint is zero-VOC **in the can**. Once tinted at the paint store, the colourant can add **small amounts of VOCs** back (typically 2-10 g/L depending on the colour depth). Deep, saturated colours require more tint and therefore add more VOCs. If maximum VOC reduction is your goal, **lighter colours in zero-VOC bases produce the cleanest indoor air**.

For professional painting with zero-VOC products, check the listings on **Ottawa Paint Contractors** and the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** — many Ottawa painters stock zero-VOC options as their default and can advise on the best products for your family's needs.

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- JC Carpentry
- Eastern Residential Solution
- MAK Construction and Development Inc
- Prism Services

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Q6

Is Chalk Paint a Good Option for Furniture Refinishing in Ottawa Homes?

Chalk paint has earned a devoted following among Ottawa DIY furniture refinishers, and for good reason — it delivers a specific look with minimal preparation that no other paint type can easily replicate. But it's not a universal solution, and understanding its strengths, limitations, and real costs will help you decide whether it's the right choice for your project.

What Chalk Paint Actually Is

Chalk paint is a **water-based decorative paint** with a high concentration of **calcium carbonate (chalk)** that produces an ultra-matte, velvety finish. The most recognized brand is **Annie Sloan Chalk Paint**, which essentially created the category, but competitors like **Country Chic Paint** (a Canadian brand), **Fusion Mineral Paint**, and **Rustoleum Chalked** now offer similar products at various price points.

The defining characteristics:

- **Ultra-matte, powdery finish** straight from the can
- **Adheres to most surfaces without priming or sanding** — this is the big selling point
- **Easily distressed** for a vintage or shabby-chic look
- **Requires a topcoat** (wax or polyurethane) for durability
- **Thick, creamy consistency** that covers well in 1-2 coats

Where Chalk Paint Excels

Quick Furniture Makeovers With Minimal Prep

If you have a solid wood dresser, side table, or bookcase that's structurally sound but aesthetically tired, chalk paint lets you transform it with **virtually no sanding or priming**. Clean the surface, apply two coats, seal with wax or topcoat, and you're done. For Ottawa homeowners who frequent **estate sales, Ottawa Kijiji, or Facebook Marketplace** for vintage furniture finds, this speed makes chalk paint the ideal refinishing medium.

The Distressed and Vintage Aesthetic

Chalk paint was literally designed for the **farmhouse, cottage, and French country looks** that remain popular in Ottawa homes. The soft, chalky finish sands back easily at edges and high points, revealing the wood or previous paint colour underneath in a way that looks naturally aged. If your home's style leans toward the character found in **Manotick, Almonte, or Merrickville**, chalk paint furniture fits right in.

Decorative and Display Pieces

For furniture that doesn't take heavy daily use — **accent tables, picture frames, decorative shelving, headboards** — chalk paint is an excellent choice. These pieces benefit from the unique finish without being subjected to the wear that exposes chalk paint's durability limitations.

Where Chalk Paint Falls Short

High-Use Surfaces Without Proper Sealing

Chalk paint on its own has **poor abrasion resistance**. Without a protective topcoat, it scuffs, marks, and wears through quickly. For a **kitchen table, children's desk, bathroom vanity, or any surface that gets daily hands-on use**, you **MUST** apply a durable topcoat:

- **Chalk paint wax** (Annie Sloan Soft Wax, etc.): Beautiful feel, but offers only **moderate protection** and needs reapplication every 6-12 months on high-use surfaces. Costs **\$20-\$35 per tin**.

- **Water-based polyurethane:** Much more durable than wax, but changes the finish from matte to **satin or semi-gloss**, which alters the chalk paint aesthetic. Costs **\$25-\$40 per can**.
- **Polycrylic:** Good middle ground — durable, low yellowing, available in matte. **\$20-\$30 per can**.

Kitchen Cabinets (The Controversial One)

Chalk paint on kitchen cabinets is **extremely popular on Pinterest and extremely problematic in practice**. Kitchen cabinets endure moisture, grease, heat, constant handling, and aggressive cleaning. Chalk paint with wax topcoat **cannot withstand this punishment** — within 6-12 months, you'll see wear-through on cabinet edges, staining around handles, and wax breakdown near the stove.

If you want a matte, painted-cabinet look in your Ottawa kitchen, **acrylic-alkyd cabinet paint** (like Benjamin Moore Advance) or **dedicated cabinet coatings** deliver far better long-term results, though they require more surface preparation upfront. Professional cabinet painting in Ottawa runs **\$3,000-\$7,000** depending on kitchen size and condition — not something you want to redo in a year because the finish failed.

Ottawa's Humidity and Temperature Concerns

Chalk paint sealed with wax is **sensitive to humidity and temperature extremes**. Wax softens in heat and becomes tacky, and it doesn't handle the **high humidity** that Ottawa experiences in July and August (average 70-80% relative humidity). A wax-sealed chalk paint surface in a non-air-conditioned cottage or porch can become sticky and attract dust during Ottawa summers. For any furniture placed on **screened porches, three-season rooms, or near patio doors**, use a polyurethane topcoat instead of wax.

Ottawa Pricing for Chalk Paint Projects

- **Annie Sloan Chalk Paint:** \$50-\$55 per litre (available at Ottawa specialty retailers)
- **Country Chic Paint:** \$35-\$45 per litre (Canadian-made, available locally and online)
- **Fusion Mineral Paint:** \$30-\$40 per pint (built-in topcoat, no wax needed)
- **Rustoleum Chalked:** \$25-\$35 per quart (available at Home Depot, Canadian Tire)

For a **standard dresser refinish**, expect to use 1-1.5 litres of chalk paint plus topcoat, totalling **\$60-\$100 in materials** for a DIY project.

Professional furniture refinishing in Ottawa (any paint type) typically runs **\$200-\$600 per piece** depending on size and complexity. Many Ottawa painters listed through **Ottawa Paint Contractors** and the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** offer furniture refinishing services alongside their wall painting work — worth asking about if you have multiple pieces to transform.

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

- Homeupgraders
- Above All Painting Inc.
- Jaiko Cleaning Services
- Prochampion
- Geerts Roofing Inc

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What Type of Paint Resists Mildew Growth in Ottawa Basements?

Ottawa basements have a mildew problem that's fundamentally different from most Canadian cities, and the paint you choose is one critical layer of defense. Between our **high water table along the Ottawa River and Rideau River corridors**, clay-heavy soils that trap moisture against foundations, and the condensation-heavy shoulder seasons (spring and fall), Ottawa basements face persistent humidity challenges that standard interior paint simply isn't designed to handle.

Why Ottawa Basements Are Especially Vulnerable

Three Ottawa-specific factors combine to create prime mildew conditions:

Spring melt moisture: Ottawa's **200+ cm of annual snowfall** melts over a compressed 4-6 week period in March-April, saturating soil around foundations. Even homes with weeping tile and sump pumps see **elevated basement humidity (60-80%+)** during spring melt. Basements in flood-prone areas — along the Ottawa River in Constance Bay, Cumberland, and Britannia — face even more extreme conditions.

Summer condensation: When warm, humid July air (**30-35C with humidex values reaching 40+**) contacts cool basement walls (typically 15-18C), condensation forms on surfaces. This condensation feeds mildew colonies that may have been dormant through winter.

Sealed building envelopes: Modern Ottawa homes built to Ontario Building Code energy standards have tight vapour barriers and limited natural ventilation. Older homes (pre-1970s) often have stone or parged-block foundations with no exterior waterproofing, allowing moisture migration directly through the wall.

The Right Paint Types for Ottawa Basements

1. Mildew-Resistant Interior Paint (For Finished Basements)

For **finished basement walls with drywall**, use a premium interior paint with **built-in mildewcide**. These paints contain antimicrobial additives that prevent mildew spores from colonizing the paint film:

- **Benjamin Moore Aura Bath & Spa (N534):** Formulated for high-humidity environments, contains mildew-resistant agents, zero-VOC. **\$70-\$85/gallon** in Ottawa. Despite the name, it works excellently on any high-humidity surface, including basement walls.
- **Sherwin-Williams Emerald Interior with antimicrobial additive:** Ask for the **Paint Shield** microbicial formulation or standard Emerald with mildew additive. **\$75-\$90/gallon**.

- **Sherwin-Williams Duration Home with antimicrobial:** Mid-range option at **\$60-\$75/gallon** that still provides strong mildew resistance.

Key requirement: Use **satin or semi-gloss sheen** on basement walls, not flat/matte. Higher-sheen finishes create a less porous surface that's harder for mildew to grip and easier to clean when spots appear. Flat paint in a humid basement is asking for trouble.

2. Waterproof Masonry Paint (For Unfinished Basement Walls)

For **bare concrete, block, or stone foundation walls**, you need a paint that blocks moisture migration from outside AND resists mildew on the interior face:

- **Drylok Extreme Masonry Waterproofing:** The gold standard for Ottawa basements. Withstands **15 PSI of hydrostatic pressure**, contains mildewcide, and bonds directly to masonry. **\$45-\$55/gallon**. Requires 2 coats with the first worked into the pores with a stiff brush.
- **Zinsser WaterTite LX:** Latex-based alternative that's easier to apply and lower odour than Drylok. **\$40-\$50/gallon**. Withstands 12 PSI.
- **Sika Concrete Floor and Masonry Coating:** Good for both walls and floors. **\$35-\$45/gallon**.

Critical preparation step: Before applying waterproof masonry paint, **remove any existing efflorescence** (white crystalline deposits) by wire-brushing and treating with muriatic acid or a commercial efflorescence remover. Painting over efflorescence guarantees adhesion failure.

3. Encapsulating Paint (For Known Mildew Issues)

If your Ottawa basement has **active or recurring mildew problems**, you need to **remediate first, then encapsulate**:

- **Clean affected areas** with a mildew-killing solution (1 part bleach to 10 parts water, or commercial mildew remover)
- **Apply a mildew-resistant primer** like Zinsser Mold Killing Primer (**\$30-\$40/gallon**) — this is a specialty primer that kills residual mildew spores and creates a mildew-resistant base
- **Topcoat with mildew-resistant paint** (options listed above)

This three-step approach costs more upfront but prevents the frustrating cycle of painting over mildew only to see it return within months.

What NOT to Use in Ottawa Basements

- **Standard flat interior latex:** No mildew resistance, porous surface that traps moisture and feeds mildew growth

- **Oil-based/alkyd paint on basement walls:** Creates an impermeable film that traps moisture BEHIND the paint, causing bubbling, peeling, and hidden mould growth between the paint and wall
- **Exterior paint used indoors:** While exterior paints contain mildewcides, they're formulated for UV exposure and ventilated conditions — they off-gas more aggressively and may not meet indoor air quality standards, particularly concerning given Ottawa's sealed-window winter months

The Bigger Picture: Paint Alone Isn't Enough

The honest truth is that **no paint can overcome a fundamentally wet basement**. If water is actively entering through cracks, the floor-wall joint, or through porous masonry, you need to address the water source first:

- **Ensure gutters and downspouts direct water at least 6 feet from the foundation**
- **Grade soil away from the foundation** (minimum 1-inch drop per foot for 6 feet)
- **Run a dehumidifier** targeting **45-50% relative humidity** during spring melt and summer months — budget **\$30-\$50/month in electricity** for a full-sized unit running April through September
- **Consider interior weeping tile and sump pump** if water intrusion is chronic — **\$5,000-\$12,000** installed in Ottawa

Once you've controlled the moisture source, mildew-resistant paint becomes an effective final barrier rather than a band-aid.

For professional assessment of your basement painting needs, the contractors listed on **Ottawa Paint Contractors** and in the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** can evaluate your moisture conditions and recommend the right combination of preparation, products, and ongoing maintenance to keep mildew at bay.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- Above All Painting Inc.
- Vanguard Environmental
- Tanner Irwin-Robertson
- Demontigny Carpentry

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Should I use exterior masonry paint on my Ottawa home's foundation walls?

Great question — foundation walls take a real beating in Ottawa, and choosing the right coating makes a huge difference in how long your finish lasts. The short answer is yes, **exterior masonry paint is absolutely the right choice** for exposed foundation walls, but you need to pick the right product and prep properly for our climate.

Why Masonry Paint Specifically?

Regular latex house paint will peel off concrete, block, or parged foundations within a season or two. **Masonry paint is formulated to bond with alkaline surfaces** like concrete and cinder block, and it allows moisture vapour to pass through — which is critical in Ottawa where our freeze-thaw cycles run from late October through April. A paint that traps moisture behind it will blister and flake as that water freezes and expands.

The best products for Ottawa foundations include **elastomeric masonry coatings**, which stretch and contract with temperature swings from **-30C in January to +35C in July**. These coatings bridge hairline cracks up to 1/16 inch and keep water from penetrating. Expect to pay **\$55 to \$75 per gallon** for a quality elastomeric masonry paint — roughly 10-15% less than you'd see at GTA retailers.

Product Recommendations for Ottawa Conditions

Sherwin-Williams Loxon is one of the most popular choices among Ottawa painters for foundation walls. It's a self-priming acrylic designed specifically for concrete and masonry, and it handles our **200+ cm of annual snowfall** piling against foundations without breaking down. **Benjamin Moore's Super Spec Masonry Coating** is another solid option that performs well through our extreme temperature range.

For below-grade foundation walls that are partially buried, you want a **waterproofing membrane product** rather than paint. Paint alone won't stop hydrostatic pressure from pushing water through. Products like Drylok or Xypex are designed for that purpose and run **\$40 to \$60 per gallon**.

Surface Preparation Is Non-Negotiable

This is where most DIY foundation paint jobs fail. Before any masonry paint goes on, you need to:

- **Power wash** the foundation to remove efflorescence (that white powdery salt deposit Ottawa foundations are notorious for)
- **Repair all cracks** with hydraulic cement or masonry patching compound — even small ones, because water gets in and freezes
- **Let the surface cure and dry completely** — masonry paint won't bond to damp concrete

- **Apply a masonry primer** if the surface has never been painted or if the old coating is severely degraded. Skipping prep on a foundation wall is basically throwing your money away. The paint will look fine for a few weeks, then Ottawa's first freeze-thaw cycle will pull it right off.

Heritage District Considerations

If your home is in one of Ottawa's **heritage conservation districts** — the Glebe, Sandy Hill, New Edinburgh, Rockcliffe Park, or Lowertown — check with the city before painting a previously unpainted foundation. Some heritage guidelines restrict changes to original masonry surfaces, and painting stone foundations in these areas may require approval. A professional painter familiar with heritage properties can advise you on what's permitted.

Cost to Have It Done Professionally

Hiring a painter to prep and coat your foundation walls typically runs **\$3 to \$6 per square foot** in Ottawa, depending on the condition of the surface and accessibility. A typical bungalow with 150-200 square feet of exposed foundation might cost **\$500 to \$1,200** for a complete job including patching, priming, and two coats of masonry paint.

Professional application matters here because foundation walls often have irregular surfaces, old parging that needs attention, and drainage concerns that affect how the paint will perform long-term.

When to Apply

Timing is everything in Ottawa. **Masonry paint needs temperatures above 10C for at least 48 hours after application** — both air and surface temperature. That typically means **mid-May through mid-October** is your safe window. Avoid painting foundations in the spring when snowmelt is still saturating the ground around your home.

If you're looking for a professional to handle your foundation walls, the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** lists experienced painters who specialize in masonry and exterior coatings. And if you have more questions about the right paint for your specific foundation type, **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** is here to help you sort through the options.

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

- Homeupgraders

- RenoMotion Inc.
- Titley Construction
- All Pro Painters
- BFI Renovations

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q9

What paint works best on metal railings and fences in Ottawa's climate?

Metal railings and fences in Ottawa face some of the harshest conditions in the country — **extreme temperature swings from -30C to +35C**, road salt spray, over **200 cm of snow** piling against them every winter, and constant moisture from rain and humidity. Choosing the wrong paint means you'll be redoing the job in a year or two.

The Best Paint Types for Ottawa Metal

Direct-to-metal (DTM) acrylic paints are the top choice for most Ottawa applications. These are formulated to bond directly to metal surfaces and include built-in rust inhibitors. They flex with temperature changes instead of cracking, which is essential when your railing goes from -30C to +20C in the span of a week during a January thaw.

For the absolute best durability, **alkyd-modified acrylic enamels** give you the hard, glossy finish of traditional oil-based paint with the flexibility and cleanup ease of latex. Products like **Sherwin-Williams Pro Industrial DTM Acrylic** or **Benjamin Moore Corotech DTM** are widely used by Ottawa painters and run **\$50 to \$70 per gallon**.

Oil-based rust-preventive paints like Tremclad or Rust-Oleum Protective Enamel are still popular for fences and railings that take heavy abuse. They create an extremely hard shell that resists chipping from snow shovels, ice, and general impact. At **\$30 to \$45 per gallon**, they're budget-friendly, but they take longer to dry and require mineral spirits for cleanup.

The Rust Factor

Ottawa's combination of **road salt, sand, and moisture** makes rust the number one enemy of metal railings. Any exposed ferrous metal will start rusting within weeks if unprotected. Your paint system needs to include:

- **Rust conversion or removal** — wire brush, sandpaper, or a chemical rust converter on any existing rust
- **Rust-inhibitive primer** — products containing zinc phosphate or zinc chromate create a chemical barrier against future corrosion. Budget **\$35 to \$55 per gallon** for a quality metal primer

- **Two coats of topcoat** — one coat is never enough on metal exposed to Ottawa winters

Aluminum and Wrought Iron: Different Approaches

Wrought iron and steel railings need the full rust-prevention treatment described above. These are the railings you see on older Ottawa homes in Centretown, the Glebe, and Sandy Hill.

Aluminum railings and fences don't rust, but the paint still needs to bond properly. Use a **self-etching primer** designed for aluminum before your topcoat. Aluminum expands and contracts significantly with temperature changes, so a flexible acrylic topcoat outperforms rigid oil-based options.

Galvanized steel fences and railings (common on newer Ottawa properties) are tricky — regular paint won't stick to the zinc coating. You need a **galvanized metal primer** like Rust-Oleum's Cold Galvanizing Compound or a vinegar etch treatment before painting.

Colour and Finish Considerations

Semi-gloss or gloss finishes are standard for metal railings because they shed water and resist dirt buildup. Darker colours absorb more heat and expand more — something to consider if your railing is in direct sun. **Black remains the most popular** railing colour in Ottawa, followed by dark bronze and white.

If your property is in an Ottawa **heritage conservation district**, check whether your railing colour needs to match historical standards. Some heritage guidelines specify acceptable colours for visible metalwork.

Professional vs. DIY

Metal painting is one area where professional work genuinely lasts longer. The prep — **sanding, degreasing, priming every surface including undersides and joints** — is tedious and easy to shortcut. Professional painters typically charge **\$4 to \$8 per linear foot** for railings in Ottawa, which includes full prep, priming, and two topcoats.

A typical front porch railing (15-20 linear feet) runs **\$200 to \$450** professionally. A full perimeter iron fence might cost **\$1,500 to \$3,500** depending on the style and condition.

Best Time to Paint Metal in Ottawa

Metal surfaces heat up fast in direct sun, which can cause paint to dry too quickly and not bond properly. **Early morning or late afternoon application** works best during summer. Avoid painting when temperatures are below **10C** or when rain is expected within 24 hours. The ideal Ottawa window is **late May through September**.

For recommendations on painters experienced with metal railings and fences, browse the **Ottawa Construction Network directory**. **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** has more answers on specialty coating questions if

you're tackling a unique metal surface.

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

- 613Bins
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Nic's D.U.C.T Works Inc
- Engur Construction
- Custom By Arie

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Is Benjamin Moore or Sherwin-Williams more popular with Ottawa painters?

This is one of the most common questions we get, and the honest answer is that **both brands are extremely well-represented in Ottawa** — but they tend to dominate in slightly different segments of the market.

The Ottawa Market Breakdown

Benjamin Moore has historically had stronger brand loyalty among Ottawa residential painters and homeowners. This is partly due to the **extensive network of independent Benjamin Moore dealers** across the Ottawa area — shops like Randall's, John G. Young, and various independent paint stores that carry BM exclusively and offer expert colour matching. These stores have deep roots in Ottawa neighbourhoods and have built relationships with local painters over decades.

Sherwin-Williams has been gaining significant ground in Ottawa, particularly among **commercial painters and larger residential crews**. Their company-owned stores (there are several across Ottawa, including locations on Merivale, Innes, and in Kanata) offer contractor pricing programs and bulk discounts that make them attractive for high-volume work. Many Ottawa painters maintain accounts at both.

Product-by-Product Comparison

For **interior walls**, Benjamin Moore's **Regal Select** and **Aura** lines are the gold standard among Ottawa painters who work on higher-end homes. Aura runs **\$75 to \$90 per gallon** in Ottawa (roughly 10-15% less than GTA pricing) and offers exceptional coverage — often true one-coat on colour-to-colour changes. Sherwin-Williams' **Emerald** line competes directly with Aura at **\$70 to \$85 per gallon** and has gained a strong following.

For **exterior work** in Ottawa's brutal climate (**-30C winters, +35C summers, 200+ cm of snow**), both brands perform well. Benjamin Moore's **Aura Exterior** and Sherwin-Williams' **Duration Exterior** are both formulated for extreme temperature ranges. Duration has a slight edge in flexibility at very low temperatures according to some Ottawa painters, while Aura Exterior is praised for its colour retention.

For **trim and doors**, Benjamin Moore's **Advance** (waterborne alkyd) has become the go-to for Ottawa painters who want the smooth, hard finish of oil-based paint without the fumes or yellowing. Sherwin-Williams' **Emerald Urethane Trim Enamel** is the direct competitor and equally well-regarded.

Pricing in Ottawa

Ottawa paint pricing runs **10-15% below GTA prices** for both brands. Here's a rough comparison for their premium interior lines:

| Product | Ottawa Price (approx.) | |-----|-----| | BM Aura (interior) | \$75-\$90/gallon | | SW Emerald (interior) | \$70-\$85/gallon | | BM Regal Select | \$60-\$72/gallon | | SW Cashmere | \$55-\$68/gallon | | BM Advance (trim) | \$55-\$70/gallon | | SW Emerald Urethane | \$55-\$68/gallon |

Both brands offer **contractor pricing** that's typically 20-35% below retail, which is why the brand your painter uses often comes down to which supplier gives them the best deal.

What Ottawa Pros Actually Say

Most experienced Ottawa painters will tell you that **the differences between the two top-tier lines are minimal** in real-world performance. What matters far more is:

- **Proper surface preparation** — the best paint in the world fails on a poorly prepped surface
- **Correct product selection** for the specific application (bathroom vs. living room vs. exterior)
- **Application technique** — roller nap size, brush quality, number of coats
- **Timing** for exterior work — both brands need temperatures above 10C for proper curing

Other Brands Worth Knowing

Dulux (PPG) has a solid presence in Ottawa, particularly in the commercial and multi-residential segment. **Para Paints** (now owned by PPG) was a Canadian favourite for decades and still has loyal users. **Cloverdale Paint** and **General Paint** show up on some commercial jobs.

For heritage homes in Ottawa's conservation districts (the Glebe, Sandy Hill, Rockcliffe), some painters prefer **specialized heritage colour palettes** — both Benjamin Moore and Sherwin-Williams offer historical colour collections, though BM's Historical Collection tends to be more referenced for Ottawa heritage projects.

The Bottom Line

You genuinely can't go wrong with either brand at the premium tier. **Pick your painter based on their skill and reputation, not their paint brand preference.** A great painter using mid-range Sherwin-Williams will outperform a mediocre painter using top-of-the-line Benjamin Moore every time.

The **Ottawa Construction Network directory** lists painters across the city — many of their profiles mention their preferred paint brands so you can match your preference. And if you have more questions about which specific product is right for your project, **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** is always here.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Whole Home Beauty (WHB)
- Kaizer's Precision Painting
- Dave's Painting & Home Improvement

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Q11

What is limewash paint and is it suitable for Ottawa home exteriors?

Limewash has become one of the hottest trends in home exteriors across North America, and Ottawa homeowners are increasingly asking about it. It creates that beautiful, **chalky, Old World European finish** with natural colour variation and depth that flat latex paint simply can't replicate. But Ottawa's climate adds some real considerations that you need to understand before committing.

What Exactly Is Limewash?

Limewash is made from slaked lime (calcium hydroxide) mixed with water and natural pigments. It's been used for centuries — literally thousands of years — on stone, brick, and stucco buildings across Europe. Unlike modern paint that sits on top of a surface, limewash actually **penetrates into porous masonry** and bonds chemically through a process called carbonation, where it essentially turns back into limestone.

This gives it a completely unique look: **soft, matte, slightly translucent** with subtle variations in tone that change depending on the light. It ages beautifully, developing a gentle patina rather than peeling or flaking like conventional paint.

Can Limewash Handle Ottawa's Climate?

Here's where it gets complicated. **Traditional limewash was designed for mild European climates**, not Ottawa's extreme range of **-30C to +35C** with **200+ cm of annual snowfall** and aggressive freeze-thaw cycles.

The challenges in Ottawa:

- **Freeze-thaw damage** — Water absorbed into the limewash layer can freeze and cause spalling on the underlying brick or stone. Ottawa typically goes through 30-40 freeze-thaw cycles per winter
- **Road salt exposure** — Salt-laden snow and spray from roads can chemically react with lime, causing premature breakdown
- **Heavy rain and snow** — Traditional limewash erodes with heavy precipitation, requiring reapplication every 2-3 years in our climate
- **Short application window** — Limewash needs temperatures above **10C** and no rain for 24+ hours, limiting you to roughly May through September

Modern Limewash Products Change the Equation

Newer mineral-based limewash products have significantly improved durability for cold climates. Brands like **Romabio** (the most popular in Ottawa), **Bauwerk Colour**, and **KEIM Mineral Paints** add modern binders and sealers that retain the limewash look while performing much better through harsh winters.

Romabio Classico Limewash runs **\$55 to \$70 per gallon** in Ottawa and is the product most local painters are working with. It's specifically formulated for brick and goes on easily with a large masonry brush. **Romabio Masonry Flat** is their more durable option for extreme climates at **\$60 to \$80 per gallon** — it gives a similar aesthetic with better weather resistance.

Where Limewash Works Best in Ottawa

Brick homes are the ideal candidate. Ottawa has thousands of beautiful brick homes, and limewash over brick creates a stunning effect — especially on the red and buff brick common in neighbourhoods like the Glebe, Old Ottawa South, and Westboro.

Limewash does NOT work on:

- Wood siding
- Vinyl or aluminum siding
- Previously painted surfaces (unless stripped to bare masonry)
- Smooth, non-porous surfaces like metal

Heritage District Warning

This is important for Ottawa homeowners: if your brick home is in a **heritage conservation district**, limewashing previously unpainted brick may require city approval. Heritage guidelines in areas like **Sandy Hill**, **Lowertown**, **New Edinburgh**, and **Rockcliffe Park** often aim to preserve original masonry appearance.

Limewash is generally considered less destructive than regular paint (since it's breathable and can be removed), but **check with the City of Ottawa heritage planning office before proceeding.**

Cost of Professional Limewash Application

Professional limewash application in Ottawa typically costs **\$4 to \$8 per square foot**, which is comparable to high-quality exterior painting. A typical two-storey brick home might run **\$4,000 to \$8,000** depending on surface condition and detail work.

The application process is different from regular painting — it involves **wetting the brick thoroughly**, applying limewash with a wide block brush in a crosshatch pattern, and sometimes distressing the finish while wet to create that authentic aged look. It's genuinely an art form, and experience matters significantly in the final result.

Maintenance Expectations

Even with modern formulations, expect to **touch up or reapply limewash every 3-5 years** in Ottawa (compared to 7-10 years for quality exterior latex paint). The good news is that touch-ups are straightforward and blend naturally with the existing finish — no scraping or priming needed.

If you're seriously considering limewash for your Ottawa home, find a painter with specific limewash experience through the **Ottawa Construction Network directory**. This isn't a product that every painter is comfortable with, and technique makes all the difference. **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** can help you figure out whether limewash is the right fit for your specific home and neighbourhood.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- JC Carpentry
- Hannah's Colour Wave
- L.L. Renovation
- Valcor Construction

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Q12

What type of floor paint holds up best in an Ottawa garage with road salt exposure?

Ottawa garage floors face some of the most punishing conditions you can throw at a coating. Between **road salt, sand, calcium chloride ice melt, snowmelt puddles, and hot tire pickup**, whatever you put down needs to be seriously tough. Standard floor paint from the hardware store will fail within one Ottawa winter — guaranteed.

The Winner: Polyurea or Polyaspartic Coatings

Polyurea and polyaspartic floor coatings are the gold standard for Ottawa garage floors. These are the professional-grade systems that installers apply, and they outperform every other option in our conditions:

- **Chemical resistance** — shrugs off road salt, calcium chloride, gasoline, oil, and brake fluid
- **Flexibility** — expands and contracts through Ottawa's **-30C to +35C** temperature range without cracking
- **Abrasion resistance** — handles snow shovels, car jacks, and heavy tools without chipping
- **Fast cure** — many polyaspartic systems cure in 24 hours, even at lower temperatures
- **UV stable** — won't yellow or fade in sunny garages

Professional polyurea/polyaspartic installation in Ottawa runs **\$5 to \$9 per square foot**, so a standard two-car garage (400-500 sq ft) costs **\$2,000 to \$4,500** installed. That includes surface grinding, crack repair, and typically a decorative flake broadcast.

The Strong DIY Option: Epoxy

Two-part epoxy coatings are the most popular DIY choice and perform well in Ottawa when properly applied. The key distinction: **industrial-grade 100% solids epoxy** versus **water-based epoxy kits** from the hardware store.

100% solids epoxy (professional grade):

- Virtually impervious to salt and chemicals
- Extremely hard and durable
- Requires professional application or serious DIY commitment
- Costs **\$3 to \$6 per square foot** for materials alone, or **\$1,800 to \$3,500** professionally installed

Water-based epoxy kits (Rust-Oleum EpoxyShield, Quikrete, etc.):

- Budget-friendly at **\$80 to \$150 per kit** (covers 200-250 sq ft)
- Decent performance for 2-3 years in Ottawa conditions
- **Will eventually peel** where salt and moisture concentrate, especially near the garage door

- Best considered a temporary solution rather than a permanent one

What to Avoid Completely

Single-part garage floor paint (acrylic latex floor paint) — these products are essentially thick house paint. They have almost zero chemical resistance and will peel off in sheets after one Ottawa winter of salt-laden snow melting off your car. Don't waste your money, even if the can says "garage floor."

Oil-based floor enamel — marginally better than latex but still inadequate for Ottawa's salt exposure. It goes down easy but chips and yellows quickly.

The Critical Prep Work

Every coating system, no matter how premium, will fail without proper preparation. Ottawa garage floors need:

- **Surface profiling** — diamond grinding or shot blasting opens the concrete pores so the coating can bond. This is the most important step and the one most DIYers skip. Professional shops bring in grinders; DIYers can rent them for **\$150-\$250 per day**
- **Moisture testing** — Ottawa homes with high water tables (common in parts of Barrhaven, Orleans, and near the Rideau River) may have moisture vapour transmission through the slab. A simple plastic sheet test (tape plastic to the floor for 24 hours and check for condensation) will reveal this. Excess moisture requires a moisture-mitigating primer
- **Crack and joint repair** — every crack needs filling with a flexible polyurea crack filler, not rigid concrete patch
- **Degreasing** — any oil stains must be removed or the coating won't bond in those areas

Salt-Specific Strategies

Road salt is the number one destroyer of garage floor coatings in Ottawa. Some additional strategies:

- **Seal the coating with a polyurethane or polyaspartic topcoat** — this adds chemical resistance even to basic epoxy systems. Budget **\$40 to \$60 per gallon**
- **Use containment mats** in winter — heavy-duty garage floor mats with raised edges trap salt-laden snowmelt and protect the coating underneath. They run **\$150 to \$300** for a car-sized mat
- **Rinse the floor monthly** through winter — a quick hose-down prevents salt buildup from attacking the coating

Best Application Timing

Garage floor coatings need the concrete to be **above 10C** and the space well-ventilated. In Ottawa, that means **mid-May through October** for most garages. If your garage is heated, you have more flexibility, but avoid applying coatings when outdoor humidity is very high (July-August heat waves can cause adhesion issues if the garage isn't climate-controlled).

For professional garage floor coating installation, check the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** for contractors experienced with Ottawa conditions. **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** has more answers about specialty coatings and surface preparation if you're planning a DIY approach.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- Above All Painting Inc.
- Denys Builds Designs Renovations
- ALTIOR CONSTRUCTION
- Don Sincennes Painting

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What Is the Difference Between Paint Primer, Sealer, and Undercoat for Ottawa Homes?

These three terms get thrown around interchangeably at the paint counter, and honestly, even some painters use them loosely. But they serve **distinct purposes**, and knowing the difference saves you money and prevents coating failures — especially in Ottawa homes where our extreme climate puts every paint system to the test.

Let me break down each one clearly.

Primer: The Bonding Agent

Primer is designed to create adhesion between the surface and your topcoat. Think of it as the handshake between the wall and the paint. Its primary jobs are:

- **Bonding to difficult surfaces** — glossy paint, bare wood, patched drywall, metal
- **Providing a uniform base** so the topcoat absorbs evenly
- **Blocking minor stains** from showing through

In Ottawa homes, primer is essential in several common situations:

New drywall and patches: Every new drywall surface or patched area needs primer. The joint compound is more porous than the paper face of the drywall, and without primer, you get "**flashing**" — visible differences in sheen where patches were made. This is especially noticeable in Ottawa homes during winter when **low-angle sunlight streams through windows** and highlights every imperfection.

Bare wood: Ottawa's climate is brutal on wood. Interior trim that's been stripped, new baseboards, or window casings all need primer before paint. Bare wood absorbs paint unevenly and the topcoat will look blotchy without it.

Surface changes: Painting over high-gloss with flat? Over dark with light? Over oil-based with latex? Primer bridges these transitions.

Common primers used in Ottawa:

- **PVA (polyvinyl acetate) primer** — for new drywall. Budget option at **\$20-\$30 per gallon**
- **Latex bonding primer** — general purpose for most interior situations. **\$30-\$45 per gallon**
- **Shellac-based primer** (like Zinsser BIN) — the heavy hitter for severe stains, knots, and odour sealing. **\$45-\$60 per gallon**

Sealer: The Moisture and Stain Barrier

Sealer is designed to block something from coming through — moisture, stains, tannins, or odours. While primer focuses on adhesion, sealer focuses on **containment**.

In Ottawa homes, sealers are critical for:

Water stain damage: After a roof leak or ice dam (extremely common in Ottawa with our **200+ cm of annual snowfall**), water stains on ceilings contain dissolved minerals that bleed through regular paint. A proper sealer — typically **shellac-based like Zinsser BIN or Kilz Original** — locks these stains in permanently. Simply priming and painting over water stains without sealing will result in the stain returning within weeks.

Smoke and fire damage: Ottawa homes affected by kitchen fires or heavy cigarette smoke need sealer to block odour and discolouration. Shellac-based sealers are the only reliable option here.

Tannin bleed on wood: Cedar and redwood (used in some Ottawa home features) bleed tannins that create brown stains through paint. A tannin-blocking sealer stops this.

Concrete and masonry: Basement walls in Ottawa homes — especially in older neighbourhoods like **Alta Vista, Manor Park, and Civic Hospital** — need masonry sealer before painting to block moisture vapour transmission and efflorescence (white salt deposits).

Common sealers used in Ottawa:

- **Shellac-based sealer** (Zinsser BIN) — best for stains, smoke, odour. **\$45-\$60 per gallon**
- **Masonry sealer** — for basement and garage concrete. **\$35-\$55 per gallon**
- **Exterior wood sealer/preservative** — protects decks, fences, and siding. **\$40-\$65 per gallon**

Undercoat: The Foundation Layer

Undercoat is a high-build product designed to create a smooth, uniform surface for the topcoat. It's thicker than primer and focuses on:

- **Filling minor imperfections** — small scratches, texture differences, roller stipple
- **Building film thickness** for better coverage and durability
- **Creating a consistent base** for the topcoat colour, especially with dramatic colour changes

Undercoat is particularly valuable in Ottawa for:

Older homes with imperfect walls: Homes in **Westboro, Hintonburg, Old Ottawa East, and the Glebe** often have plaster walls with decades of paint layers, minor cracks, and texture variations. A good undercoat smooths

these out far better than primer alone.

Dramatic colour changes: Going from a dark burgundy accent wall to a pale cream? An undercoat (usually tinted to a mid-tone grey) saves you from needing four coats of topcoat. This alone can save **\$200-\$400 per room** in material and labour.

High-quality finishes: If you're investing in premium paint at \$70+ per gallon, a proper undercoat ensures that expensive topcoat performs at its best.

Common undercoats:

- **Latex undercoat/high-build primer** — most versatile. **\$35-\$50 per gallon**
- **Alkyd (oil-based) undercoat** — superior smoothness for trim and cabinetry. **\$40-\$55 per gallon**

When You Need Which (Ottawa Decision Guide)

Situation	Primer	Sealer	Undercoat	-----	-----	-----	-----	New drywall	Yes	No	Optional
Patched walls	Yes	No	Recommended					Water stains	No	Yes	No
Dramatic colour change	Yes	No	Yes					Bare wood trim	Yes	No	Optional
Basement concrete	No							Old plaster walls	Yes	Only if stained	Yes

Combination Products

Many products today are marketed as "**primer-sealer**" or "**primer and undercoat.**" Products like **Benjamin Moore Fresh Start** or **Sherwin-Williams PrepRite** do a respectable job at multiple functions. For most standard Ottawa interior repaints, a quality primer-sealer combination is perfectly adequate.

But for **severe stains, major colour changes, or problematic surfaces**, dedicated products outperform combos every time. An experienced painter knows when the shortcut works and when it doesn't.

If you're unsure what your Ottawa home needs, the painting professionals listed in the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** can assess your specific surfaces and recommend the right system. Ottawa Paint Contractors always recommends getting a proper assessment before buying product — the right prep system saves money on topcoat and prevents callbacks.

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
- EasySave Painting
- Jaiko Cleaning Services

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Q14

Are Mineral-Based Paints a Good Option for Ottawa Homes With Stone or Brick Facades?

Mineral-based paints — particularly **potassium silicate (mineral silicate) paints** — are actually one of the best-kept secrets for Ottawa masonry. They work fundamentally differently from standard latex or acrylic paints, and for **stone, brick, lime-mortared, and concrete surfaces**, they outperform conventional coatings in almost every metric that matters in our climate.

Here's why they deserve serious consideration for your Ottawa home.

What Are Mineral-Based Paints?

Mineral silicate paints (sometimes called **silicate masonry paints**) use **potassium waterglass (liquid potassium silicate)** as their binder instead of the acrylic or latex polymers in regular paint. When applied to a mineral substrate like brick, stone, concrete, or lime plaster, they undergo a chemical reaction called **silicification** — literally bonding at a molecular level with the surface.

This is completely different from conventional paint, which sits **on top** of the surface as a film. Mineral paint becomes **part of the surface itself**. This distinction has massive implications for Ottawa homes.

Leading brands include **KEIM (the original, developed in 1878 in Germany)**, Beeck, and Romabio. KEIM is the most widely available in Canada through specialty suppliers.

Why Mineral Paint Excels on Ottawa Masonry

Freeze-thaw performance: This is the big one. Ottawa experiences roughly **100+ freeze-thaw cycles per year** — temperatures crossing 0°C back and forth from late October through April. Conventional acrylic paint forms a film that can trap moisture inside masonry. When that trapped moisture freezes, it expands, pushing the paint film off in sheets. This is why you see **peeling, blistering, and flaking paint on brick homes** all over Ottawa, from

Centretown to Vanier to Barrhaven.

Mineral paint is **fully vapour-permeable** — it lets the masonry breathe. Moisture moves freely through the coating, so there's nothing to trap, freeze, and push off. Buildings in Europe painted with mineral silicate paint have maintained their finish for **over 100 years** in climates similar to Ottawa's.

UV resistance: Mineral pigments are **inorganic** — they don't break down under UV radiation the way organic pigments in conventional paint do. Ottawa's summers deliver intense UV (we're at roughly the same latitude as Bordeaux, France), and mineral paints resist fading far better than acrylics. Colours stay true for **20-30+ years** versus 5-10 years for quality acrylic masonry paint.

Salt and efflorescence resistance: Ottawa's road salt spray hits facades along busy streets, and groundwater wicking causes efflorescence on many Ottawa foundations. Mineral paint handles both of these challenges because it doesn't form a film that salt deposits can push off.

Ottawa Heritage Applications

Mineral silicate paint is the **preferred coating for heritage masonry restoration** in many jurisdictions, and for good reason. Ottawa has significant heritage stock — homes and buildings in **Sandy Hill, New Edinburgh, Lowertown, the ByWard Market, Rockcliffe Park**, and along **Sussex Drive** often have original limestone, sandstone, or hand-pressed brick that deserves proper treatment.

The **City of Ottawa Heritage Conservation Districts** guidelines emphasize maintaining the **breathability of original masonry**. Sealing historic brick or stone with acrylic paint traps moisture and accelerates deterioration — the exact opposite of preservation. Mineral paint maintains breathability while providing colour and protection.

If your home is in a **Heritage Conservation District (HCD)** — such as Lowertown West, Centretown, or New Edinburgh — using mineral paint may actually be the most compliant choice for any exterior masonry coating.

Limitations and Honest Considerations

Mineral paint isn't for every situation:

Surface compatibility: Mineral paint only works on **mineral substrates** — brick, stone, concrete, lime plaster, lime render, cement stucco. It will **not bond to wood, metal, previously painted acrylic surfaces, or gypsum drywall**. If your Ottawa brick home was previously painted with acrylic or latex paint, you'd need to either **fully strip the existing coating** or use a mineral paint system with a special bonding primer (KEIM Optil, for example, bridges this gap but at additional cost).

Colour range: Mineral paint colours are based on **natural mineral pigments**, which means the palette tends toward earth tones, muted hues, and historically appropriate colours. You won't find neon or ultra-vivid colours. For Ottawa heritage homes, this is actually a benefit — the palette naturally aligns with period-appropriate colours.

Cost: This is the main barrier. Mineral silicate paint costs significantly more than conventional masonry paint:

- **KEIM Mineral Paint: \$120 to \$200+ per litre** (not per gallon — per litre)
- **Standard acrylic masonry paint: \$40 to \$70 per gallon**
- **Total project cost** for a typical Ottawa brick home exterior: **\$8,000 to \$18,000** for mineral paint versus **\$4,000 to \$9,000** for quality acrylic

However, factor in longevity: if mineral paint lasts 25-30 years and acrylic needs repainting every 8-10 years, the **lifecycle cost is comparable or lower** for mineral paint.

Application expertise: Mineral paint requires **different application techniques** than conventional paint. Surface preparation is different (no acrylic primers), application windows are temperature-sensitive (must be above 5°C, which limits the Ottawa season), and the curing process involves chemical reaction rather than simple evaporation. Not every painter is experienced with these products.

Cost Breakdown for Ottawa Homeowners

Item Mineral Silicate Acrylic Masonry ----- ----- ----- Paint material (full house) \$3,000 - \$6,000 \$800 - \$1,500 Surface prep \$1,500 - \$4,000 \$1,000 - \$2,500 Labour \$3,500 - \$8,000 \$2,500 - \$5,000 Total \$8,000 - \$18,000 \$4,000 - \$9,000 Expected lifespan 25-30+ years 8-10 years Repaint cycles over 30 years 1 3-4
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The Bottom Line

For Ottawa homes with **original unpainted brick, stone, or concrete masonry**, mineral silicate paint is an excellent investment — particularly for heritage properties where breathability is essential. The upfront cost is higher, but the **durability in Ottawa's freeze-thaw climate is unmatched**.

If your masonry has already been painted with acrylic, the economics are less clear-cut — full stripping adds significant cost. A consultation with a painter experienced in mineral coatings can help you weigh the options.

The **Ottawa Construction Network directory** lists painting contractors in the Ottawa area, and Ottawa Paint Contractors can help connect you with professionals who have experience with mineral-based coating systems. This is specialized work — make sure whoever you hire has actually worked with these products before, not just read the brochure.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- Above All Painting Inc.
- Innovation Concrete Grind & Polish
- Pure Flow Water Solutions inc.
- True Tone Painting

[View all contractors ?](#)

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Paint Contractors. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any painting project. Information is current as of May 10, 2026 and may change. Visit ottawapaintcontractors.com for the latest answers.