

OTTAWA PAINT CONTRACTORS

---

# Preparation & Priming

Surface preparation, priming, patching and repair  
before painting

18 Expert Answers from Paint IQ

[ottawapaintcontractors.com/construction-brain](https://ottawapaintcontractors.com/construction-brain)

# Table of Contents

---

1. What do Ottawa painters use to fill large gaps between baseboards and uneven floors before painting?
2. What is the proper way to prepare an Ottawa sunroom with condensation issues for painting?
3. How do I prep a wood deck that still has peeling semi-transparent stain in Ottawa?
4. How important is surface preparation before painting the exterior of an Ottawa home?
5. What happens if I skip priming before painting walls in my Ottawa home?
6. How do Ottawa painters prep rooms before starting an interior paint job?
7. Should I repair all drywall cracks before repainting my Ottawa home interior?
8. How do Ottawa painters deal with mould on walls before applying new paint?
9. What sanding is needed between coats of paint on Ottawa interior walls?
10. How do I prepare wood trim for repainting in an older Ottawa home?
11. Should peeling exterior paint be fully stripped or just spot-repaired in Ottawa?
12. How do Ottawa painters mask off areas to protect floors and fixtures during painting?
13. What is the proper way to clean exterior siding before painting in Ottawa?
14. How do I fill nail holes and gaps before painting walls in my Ottawa home?
15. Should I caulk around windows and trim before exterior painting in Ottawa?
16. How do Ottawa painters prepare a previously stained deck for a fresh coat?
17. What primer is best for blocking nicotine stains on Ottawa home walls?
18. How should I prep kitchen cabinets for painting to ensure the finish lasts in Ottawa?

## Q1

### What do Ottawa painters use to fill large gaps between baseboards and uneven floors before painting?

**Ottawa painters typically use paintable acrylic caulk or flexible wood filler to fill large gaps between baseboards and uneven floors, with the choice depending on the gap size and whether the floor will expand and contract.** For gaps up to 6mm, high-quality paintable acrylic caulk like DAP Alex Plus or Tremco Dymonic 100 (\$8 to \$12 per tube) works well because it remains flexible and won't crack when Ottawa's extreme temperature swings cause floor movement.

The key challenge in Ottawa homes is that our dramatic seasonal humidity changes cause hardwood and engineered floors to expand in summer and contract in winter, sometimes by several millimetres. Rigid fillers like standard wood putty will crack and fall out within a year. For gaps larger than 6mm, painters often use a two-step approach: backing rod (foam rope) pushed into the gap first, then topped with flexible caulk. This prevents the caulk from sinking too deep and ensures proper adhesion to both the baseboard and floor edge.

For very large gaps (over 10mm), which are common in older Ottawa homes with settling foundations, painters may use paintable expanding foam followed by trimming and caulk, or install quarter-round moulding to bridge the gap entirely. The quarter-round approach costs more upfront (\$3 to \$8 per linear foot installed) but provides a cleaner, more permanent solution that handles significant movement.

**Critical timing consideration:** Never fill these gaps during Ottawa's dry winter months (December through March) when floors are at maximum contraction. Fill them in late spring or early summer when floors have expanded, or you'll end up with caulk failure when the floor swells and pushes against the filler. Always choose caulk rated for 25% joint movement or higher to handle Ottawa's seasonal extremes.

When you're ready to tackle baseboard painting with proper gap filling, you can browse experienced painting contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory who understand these local challenges.

---

## Q2

### What is the proper way to prepare an Ottawa sunroom with condensation issues for painting?

**Sunroom condensation must be eliminated before any painting begins, or the new paint will fail within months.** In Ottawa's climate, sunrooms are particularly vulnerable to moisture problems due to extreme temperature swings and the large glass surface area that creates thermal bridging and condensation points.

The preparation process starts with identifying and fixing the moisture source. Check all window seals, door weatherstripping, and any gaps where the sunroom connects to the main house. Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycles can open up cracks that weren't visible during construction. Install or improve ventilation — many Ottawa sunrooms lack adequate air circulation, especially those built as three-season additions. A bathroom exhaust fan rated for the square footage can help, but it needs to vent outside, not into the attic or basement. Consider a dehumidifier during humid summer months when condensation is worst.

Once moisture is controlled, remove any existing paint that's peeling, bubbling, or showing water damage. Sand these areas down to bare substrate and clean thoroughly with TSP (trisodium phosphate) solution to remove any mildew or residue. Prime all bare areas with a high-quality stain-blocking primer like Kilz Original or Benjamin Moore Fresh Start — these products seal against moisture and prevent bleed-through. For previously painted surfaces in good condition, clean with mild detergent and allow to dry completely.

**Critical timing consideration:** Never paint a sunroom during Ottawa's spring thaw (March through early May) when humidity spikes and temperature swings are most extreme. Late May through September offers the most stable conditions. Use a moisture meter to verify surfaces are below 15% moisture content before priming.

If condensation issues persist despite your efforts, consider having the Ottawa Construction Network directory connect you with a painting contractor who has experience with sunroom moisture problems — they often recommend specific primer-paint systems designed for high-humidity environments.

---

Q3

## How do I prep a wood deck that still has peeling semi-transparent stain in Ottawa?

**Proper deck prep in Ottawa requires removing all loose and peeling stain before applying any new finish, as our freeze-thaw cycles will quickly destroy a coating applied over compromised surfaces.** Start by power washing the deck with a fan tip nozzle to remove dirt, mildew, and loose stain, then allow 48 to 72 hours of dry weather for the wood to fully dry before proceeding with further prep work.

Ottawa's extreme temperature swings cause semi-transparent stains to fail by losing adhesion to the wood substrate, creating the peeling and flaking you're seeing. This is especially common on south and west-facing deck surfaces that take the most UV punishment and thermal cycling. The key is getting down to sound, adhered stain or bare wood before applying your new finish.

After power washing, use a stiff-bristled brush or paint scraper to remove any remaining loose stain. For stubborn areas, a deck stain stripper (\$25 to \$40 per gallon at Ottawa home centers) will soften the old finish for easier removal. Apply the stripper according to manufacturer directions, scrub with a stiff brush, then rinse thoroughly. Some contractors use orbital sanders with 80-grit paper for heavy prep, but be careful not to gouge the wood. Always sand with the grain direction.

Once you've removed the peeling stain, inspect the deck boards for any soft spots, splinters, or damaged areas. Replace any boards that are spongy or severely weathered. Allow the deck to dry completely — typically 2 to 3 days of sunny weather in Ottawa's climate. The wood should feel completely dry to the touch before staining.

**Critical timing consideration:** Plan this work for late May through September when you'll have several consecutive days without rain. Ottawa's unpredictable spring and fall weather can ruin deck prep work if moisture gets into freshly stripped wood. Never apply stain if rain is forecast within 24 hours.

For a deck showing significant peeling, expect to spend \$3 to \$8 per square foot on professional prep and restaining, depending on the condition and size. When the prep work becomes extensive or involves a large elevated deck, browsing painting contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory can help you find professionals with the right equipment and experience for safe, efficient deck restoration.

---

## How important is surface preparation before painting the exterior of an Ottawa home?

I'll be straight with you: **surface preparation is THE most important factor** in how long your exterior paint job lasts. In Ottawa's climate, it's not just important — it's the difference between a finish that lasts 8-10 years and one that starts peeling after a single winter. I've seen too many homeowners invest in premium paint only to watch it fail because the prep was rushed.

### Why Ottawa's Climate Makes Prep Even More Critical

Ottawa's exterior surfaces endure punishment that most Canadian cities don't match. We get:

- **Temperature swings of 65+ degrees** (-30C to +35C) causing constant expansion and contraction
- **200+ cm of snow** annually, with snowbanks sitting against siding for months
- **30-40 freeze-thaw cycles** per winter, driving moisture into every gap and crack
- **Intense summer UV** that breaks down coatings already weakened by winter damage
- **Ice damming** that forces water behind trim and soffits

Paint is only as strong as what it's bonded to. On a poorly prepped surface, Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycles will find every weak spot and exploit it.

### The Essential Prep Steps for Ottawa Exteriors

#### 1. Washing and Cleaning (\$0.15-\$0.30/sq ft)

**Power washing** is always the first step. Ottawa homes accumulate road salt spray, dirt, mildew, pollen, and pollution that prevent paint adhesion. A thorough power wash at **1,500-2,500 PSI** removes surface contaminants and loose old paint. Professionals typically charge **\$200 to \$500** to wash an average Ottawa home.

**Mildew treatment** is essential on north-facing walls and shaded areas — common in mature neighbourhoods like the Glebe, Alta Vista, and Manor Park where large trees shade exterior walls. A bleach or TSP solution kills mildew; painting over it just traps it underneath.

#### 2. Scraping and Sanding (\$1-\$3/sq ft for affected areas)

**All loose, peeling, or flaking paint must be removed.** In Ottawa, this often means significant scraping on the south and west faces (which take the most sun damage) and around windows where ice has worked paint loose.

For homes built **before 1980**, assume the old paint contains lead until proven otherwise. Ontario's **Occupational Health and Safety Act** requires lead-safe work practices — containment, proper respiratory protection, and waste disposal. Professional lead-safe prep adds **\$1 to \$3 per square foot** to the job.

Any bare wood exposed during scraping needs to be **sanded smooth** (80-120 grit) to create a uniform surface for primer.

### 3. Caulking and Repair (\$200-\$800)

Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycles **destroy caulking faster than almost any other climate**. Every joint where different materials meet — siding to trim, trim to window frame, corner boards — needs inspection and likely re-caulking with a **high-quality paintable polyurethane or silicone-modified caulk**.

**Rotted wood** must be replaced or repaired with epoxy consolidant before painting. Painting over soft, rotted wood is a waste of money — the paint will fail within a year. Common rot locations in Ottawa homes include **windowsills, bottom courses of siding, fascia boards, and porch columns** where snow contact is prolonged.

### 4. Priming (\$0.50-\$1.50/sq ft)

**Bare wood, patched areas, and stain-prone surfaces all need primer**. In Ottawa, I'd argue that a full prime coat over the entire surface is worthwhile for any exterior that hasn't been painted in 8+ years. Quality exterior primer runs **\$40 to \$65 per gallon**.

For **knots and tannin-rich wood** (cedar, which is common on older Ottawa homes), use a **shellac-based stain-blocking primer** like Zinsser BIN to prevent bleed-through.

### Heritage Home Considerations

Ottawa has extensive heritage conservation districts where exterior changes face scrutiny. If your home is in **Sandy Hill, Lowertown, New Edinburgh, Centretown, or Rockcliffe Park**, the prep approach may need to preserve original woodwork rather than replace it. **Epoxy consolidation of original trim and mouldings** is often preferred over replacement in heritage contexts.

### The Cost of Skipping Prep

Here's the math that matters: **proper prep adds 40-60% to the cost of an exterior paint job** but doubles or triples the lifespan of the finish. A properly prepped and painted Ottawa exterior should last **8-12 years**. Skip the prep and you're looking at **2-4 years** before peeling starts — meaning you'll pay for the full job twice in the same timeframe.

A professional exterior paint job in Ottawa (including thorough prep) runs **\$4,000 to \$10,000** for an average two-storey home. The prep alone often accounts for **\$2,000 to \$5,000** of that total — and it's worth every dollar.

## Timing Prep Work in Ottawa

Start prep work as soon as temperatures consistently hit **10C or above** — typically mid to late April. Allow **2-5 days of prep** before painting begins. The ideal exterior painting season in Ottawa runs **May through October**, with the best conditions in June and September (moderate temperatures, lower humidity).

Browse the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** for painters who emphasize preparation in their process — it's a reliable indicator of quality work. **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** has more detailed answers on specific prep techniques for different siding materials.

---

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- JC Carpentry
- L.L. Renovation
- Leeds Property Maintenance
- Oliver Painting Inc

[View all contractors ?](#)

---

Q5

## What happens if I skip priming before painting walls in my Ottawa home?

Skipping primer is one of the most common shortcuts homeowners take — and one of the most regretted. **Primer isn't just an optional first coat; it's the foundation that makes your finish coat actually work.** Here's exactly what happens when you leave it out, and when you can occasionally get away without it.

### The Problems That Show Up Without Primer

#### Uneven Sheen ("Flashing")

This is the most visible problem. **Flashing** is when your finish paint looks blotchy — shiny in some spots, matte in others — even though you used the same product everywhere. It happens because different surfaces absorb paint at different rates. Patched drywall areas, bare joint compound, and the surrounding painted surface all have different porosity. **Primer seals everything to the same absorption level** so your topcoat dries uniformly.

In Ottawa homes, flashing is especially noticeable because we rely on artificial lighting for **5+ months of the year** during our short winter days. Overhead pot lights and side-mounted fixtures cast raking light across walls that highlights every sheen inconsistency.

## Poor Adhesion and Peeling

Paint needs something to grab onto. On **new drywall, skim-coated surfaces, or bare joint compound**, latex paint without primer will sit on top of a chalky, dustite surface and can peel or rub off with normal wear. This shows up fastest in high-traffic areas — hallways, stairwells, and around door frames.

In Ottawa, **heating season humidity swings** make adhesion problems worse. We go from **30-40% indoor humidity in winter** (when furnaces dry everything out) to **60-70% in summer**. Paint that isn't properly bonded will bubble and lift as moisture levels change.

## Stains Bleeding Through

**Water stains, smoke damage, tannin from wood trim, marker, crayon, and nicotine** will all bleed through standard latex paint without a stain-blocking primer. Ottawa homes with older radiator heating systems often have water stain marks on ceilings from past leaks — those will ghost right through two or three coats of premium paint if you skip primer.

For serious stains, you need a **shellac-based primer** like Zinsser BIN (**\$45-\$60 per gallon** in Ottawa) or an oil-based primer like Kilz Original. Regular latex primer won't block heavy stains.

## Poor Coverage and Extra Coats

**Skipping primer usually costs you more in paint.** Without primer, porous surfaces soak up your first coat of expensive finish paint like a sponge. Instead of one coat of primer (\$30-\$40/gallon) and two coats of finish, you end up needing three coats of finish paint (\$60-\$90/gallon per coat). You literally spend more money trying to save money.

## Colour Accuracy Problems

If you're making a **dramatic colour change** — going from dark to light or light to dark — primer is essential for true colour accuracy. Painting pale grey over burgundy without primer means the burgundy will influence the final colour

no matter how many coats you apply. A **tinted primer** (most paint stores will tint primer toward your finish colour for free) gets you to accurate colour in two finish coats instead of four.

## When You CAN Skip Primer

There are legitimate situations where primer isn't necessary:

- **Repainting the same colour or going slightly darker** over existing paint that's in good condition (no peeling, clean surface)
- **Using a premium paint-and-primer-in-one product** like Benjamin Moore Aura or Sherwin-Williams Emerald on previously painted walls in good shape. These products (**\$70-\$90/gallon** in Ottawa) contain enough binder and pigment to act as their own primer in simple repaint scenarios
- **Freshly painted walls** that just need a colour tweak — the existing paint provides the sealed surface primer would create

## When You Absolutely MUST Prime

- **New drywall or patches** — always, no exceptions
- **Over wallpaper adhesive residue** — extremely common in older Ottawa homes, especially in Rockcliffe, Alta Vista, and the Glebe where 1960s-80s wallpaper was everywhere
- **Smoke or water damage** — shellac primer is the only reliable solution
- **Bare wood trim** — wood grain will telegraph through paint without primer
- **Going from dark to light colours**
- **Over glossy surfaces** — a bonding primer is needed for paint to adhere to semi-gloss or gloss finishes
- **After mould remediation** — use a mould-resistant primer after treating the underlying moisture issue

## Ottawa-Specific Primer Tips

**Humidity matters for drying.** In summer, primer dries quickly. In winter, if you're painting with the furnace running and humidity at 25%, primer (especially oil-based) can dry too fast and not level properly. Keep rooms at **40-50% humidity** during application if possible.

**Cold rooms and basements** in Ottawa homes are often damp — use a **moisture-resistant primer** like Zinsser Mold Killing Primer on basement walls before painting.

A professional painter in Ottawa will include proper priming as part of their standard process. If a quote doesn't mention primer, ask about it — it's a red flag. Browse the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** for painters,

and keep exploring **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** for more prep and product guidance.

---

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- JC Carpentry
- The Deck Store Inc
- Insta Reno
- Valcor Construction

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q6

## How do Ottawa painters prep rooms before starting an interior paint job?

Professional room prep is what separates a paint job that looks magazine-worthy from one that looks like a weekend rush job. **Ottawa painters who do this for a living follow a systematic process** that protects your home, ensures the paint bonds properly, and produces clean, crisp results. Here's exactly what that process looks like.

### Step 1: Room Assessment and Planning

Before anything gets moved, a good painter walks the room and notes:

- **Wall condition** — cracks, nail pops, drywall damage, peeling paint
- **Moisture issues** — especially in Ottawa homes where **winter condensation** on cold exterior walls is common, and basements in areas with high water tables (Barrhaven, parts of Orleans, riverside neighbourhoods)
- **Lead paint risk** — homes built before **1980** may have lead paint. Ontario's **Occupational Health and Safety Act** requires specific handling. Professional painters test suspect surfaces before disturbing them
- **Ceiling condition** — popcorn/stipple ceilings common in Ottawa homes from the 1970s-90s need special attention
- **Trim and baseboard condition** — warped or damaged trim that needs caulking

## Step 2: Furniture and Floor Protection

**Everything gets moved.** Professional Ottawa painters either:

- Move all furniture to the centre of the room and cover with **heavy-duty canvas drop cloths** (not plastic — plastic is slippery and doesn't absorb drips)
- Move furniture out of the room entirely for larger jobs

**Floors get protected** with canvas drop cloths or **rosin paper taped to hardwood** with painter's tape. In Ottawa homes with expensive hardwood floors (especially the refinished originals in Glebe and Westboro century homes), painters use extra care — typically **rosin paper plus canvas** for double protection.

**Light fixtures** get either removed or bagged with plastic and tape. Outlet and switch plates are **always removed** — taping around them is an amateur shortcut that leaves visible edges.

## Step 3: Cleaning Walls

Dirt, dust, grease, and cobwebs prevent paint adhesion. Ottawa homes present specific cleaning challenges:

- **Kitchen walls** — grease film from cooking, even in well-ventilated kitchens, needs degreasing with **TSP (trisodium phosphate)** or TSP substitute. Cost: **\$8-\$15** for enough to do a kitchen
- **Bathroom walls** — soap residue and potential mould/mildew, especially in older Ottawa bathrooms without exhaust fans
- **Heating vent areas** — dust streaking above/below forced-air vents is common. Ottawa homes run furnaces 6-7 months per year, so dust buildup is significant
- **All walls** get a wipe-down with a damp cloth or dry sponge at minimum

## Step 4: Wall Repair

This is where time and skill really show. Ottawa homes are notorious for **seasonal movement cracks** caused by our temperature extremes. Common repairs include:

- **Hairline cracks** along drywall seams and above door/window frames — filled with **flexible paintable caulk** or mesh tape and compound for recurring cracks
- **Nail pops** — driven back in and covered with joint compound. These happen because Ottawa's **extreme temperature cycling** causes framing lumber to expand and contract, pushing nails out of drywall
- **Drywall dings and holes** — patched with setting-type compound (not premixed — **setting compound is harder and sands smoother**)

- **Plaster cracks** in older Ottawa homes (pre-1960s) — stabilized with plaster adhesive if loose, then filled with setting compound

All patches get **sanded smooth** (150-220 grit) and wiped with a damp sponge or tack cloth. Budget **\$100-\$400** for typical wall repair on a standard Ottawa room, depending on condition.

### Step 5: Priming

Every patched or repaired area gets **spot primed** at minimum. This ensures uniform sheen and absorption across the wall — no "flashing" where patches are visible through the paint.

- **New drywall or large patches:** full coat of drywall primer (**\$30-\$40/gallon**)
- **Stains** (water, smoke, marker): shellac-based stain blocker like Zinsser BIN
- **Dramatic colour changes:** tinted primer to improve coverage
- **Glossy surfaces being repainted:** bonding primer or light sanding

### Step 6: Taping and Masking

**Blue painter's tape** (FrogTape or 3M ScotchBlue) goes on:

- Ceiling lines (unless the painter cuts in freehand — many experienced Ottawa painters do)
- Window and door trim if only walls are being painted
- Baseboards
- Any surface not being painted that adjoins one being painted

Professional tip: tape goes on **after priming**, not before. This ensures the tape seals against a clean, primed surface for the sharpest possible lines.

### Step 7: Caulking

**The secret to a professional-looking paint job is caulking.** Gaps between trim and wall, along ceiling lines, and around window casings get a thin bead of **paintable acrylic caulk** smoothed with a wet finger. This fills the inevitable gaps in Ottawa homes caused by seasonal wood movement and settling.

A tube of quality paintable caulk costs **\$5-\$8**, but it makes an enormous difference in the finished result.

### What This All Costs

Professional interior prep in Ottawa adds roughly **\$1 to \$3 per square foot** of wall surface to the paint job, or **\$200 to \$600 per average room**. Combined with painting, expect **\$400 to \$900 per room** for a professional job

(walls and ceiling, standard condition).

If you want this level of care for your home, the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** lists experienced interior painters. **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** covers more specific prep scenarios if you have unique wall conditions to deal with.

---

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

- Homeupgraders
- Above All Painting Inc.
- Eastern Residential Solution
- Grunt Work 4 Grunts
- Dreamwood Construction & Renovations

[View all contractors ?](#)

---

## Should I repair all drywall cracks before repainting my Ottawa home interior?

The short answer is **yes, you should repair drywall cracks before repainting** — but the repair method depends entirely on what's causing the crack. In Ottawa, we deal with cracks that most other Canadian cities don't because of our **extreme climate swings and the seasonal ground movement** that comes with them.

### Why Ottawa Homes Crack More

Ottawa sits on **Leda clay (also called Champlain Sea clay)**, one of the most problematic soil types in Canada. This clay expands when wet and shrinks when dry, causing subtle but persistent foundation movement that telegraphs into your drywall. Add to that:

- **Temperature cycling from -30C to +35C** that causes framing lumber to expand and contract
- **6-7 months of heating** that dries out interior wood framing, shrinking it
- **Spring moisture surges** when snowmelt raises the water table and re-expands clay soils

The result is that **almost every Ottawa home develops drywall cracks over time**. It doesn't necessarily mean something is structurally wrong — but you need to know the difference.

### Types of Cracks and How to Handle Each

#### Hairline Cracks Along Drywall Seams

**What they are:** Thin cracks that follow horizontal or vertical lines — these run along the joints where drywall sheets meet. They're the most common type in Ottawa homes, caused by seasonal framing movement and sometimes by original taping that wasn't done perfectly.

**Repair method:** For cracks that have been stable (not getting bigger), **apply a thin coat of setting-type joint compound** (like Durabond 45 or 90), feather it out 4-6 inches on each side, sand smooth when dry, and prime before painting. Cost: **under \$20 in materials** per room.

For **recurring cracks** that reappear every year, apply **fibreglass mesh tape over the crack** before mudding. The mesh adds flexibility and prevents the crack from telegraphing back through. This is extremely common in Ottawa — I'd estimate 60-70% of homes over 15 years old have at least one recurring seam crack.

#### Nail Pops

**What they are:** Small circular bumps or cracks where drywall nails have pushed outward through the surface. Ottawa homes are plagued by these because our **seasonal wood shrinkage** literally pushes nails out of the

studs.

**Repair method:** Drive the popped nail back in, then install a **drywall screw 2 inches above and below** the nail to hold the drywall firmly. Apply two thin coats of joint compound over each spot, sand, and prime. Budget **\$2-\$5 per pop** in materials.

### **Corner Cracks (Where Walls Meet Ceiling)**

**What they are:** Cracks along the ceiling-wall junction, often running the full length of the room. Caused by **truss uplift** or differential settling between ceiling joists and wall framing — both exacerbated by Ottawa's climate.

**Repair method:** For minor cracks, **flexible paintable caulk** is often the best solution because it accommodates ongoing movement. For larger cracks, re-tape with paper tape and compound, then finish with caulk along the very edge. This is one area where a professional's touch makes a real difference — sloppy ceiling-line repairs are very visible.

### **Diagonal Cracks From Window/Door Corners**

**What they are:** Cracks that radiate diagonally from the corners of windows and doors. These are **stress cracks** caused by the natural concentration of structural stress at opening corners, amplified by Ottawa's temperature-driven movement.

**Repair method:** Apply **setting compound** (not premixed — it's stronger), feathering well beyond the crack. For recurring ones, use a **stress-crack repair clip or fibreglass tape** before mudding.

### **Wide or Growing Cracks (Red Flag)**

**What they are:** Cracks wider than **1/4 inch**, cracks that are clearly getting larger over time, stair-step cracks, or cracks accompanied by doors/windows that stick or floors that slope.

**These may indicate a structural issue** — foundation settlement, bearing wall problems, or significant soil movement. In Ottawa, Leda clay subsidence is a real concern in certain areas. **Do not just patch and paint over these.** Have a **structural engineer** assess the situation before cosmetic repairs. An engineering assessment typically costs **\$300 to \$600** in Ottawa.

### **Repair Costs: DIY vs. Professional**

**DIY materials** for a typical Ottawa home interior (10-20 cracks across various rooms):

- Setting compound: **\$15-\$25**
- Fibreglass mesh tape: **\$8-\$12**

- Sandpaper (150-220 grit): **\$5-\$10**
- Primer for repaired areas: **\$30-\$40** per gallon
- Total: **\$60-\$90**

**Professional drywall repair** before painting:

- Most Ottawa painters include minor crack repair (10-15 small patches) in their painting estimate
- Extensive repair work adds **\$200 to \$600** to a whole-house interior paint job
- Major drywall repair or replacement: **\$3 to \$6 per square foot**

## The Ontario Building Code Connection

If crack repair reveals underlying moisture issues (common in Ottawa basements and exterior walls), the **Ontario Building Code** requires addressing the moisture source before refinishing. Simply patching wet or mould-affected drywall violates code and creates health hazards. **WSIB-covered contractors** should handle any work involving mould remediation.

## The Bottom Line

**Paint will not hide cracks.** Even high-build primers and thick paints will show underlying cracks within weeks as the coating settles into the depression. Spending an extra day on crack repair before painting saves you from looking at imperfections for years.

The **Ottawa Construction Network directory** is a good place to find painters who include thorough prep work in their process. And if you're unsure whether your cracks are cosmetic or structural, **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** can help you figure out the right next step.

---

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- JC Carpentry
- Pure Flow Water Solutions inc.
- Speedy Pete's Inc
- We Paint Ottawa

[View all contractors ?](#)

## How do Ottawa painters deal with mould on walls before applying new paint?

Mould on interior walls is a serious issue that Ottawa painters encounter regularly — and the **absolute worst thing you can do is paint over it**. Painting over mould doesn't kill it, doesn't seal it in, and creates a worse problem that will cost significantly more to fix later. Here's how professionals handle it properly.

### Why Mould Is So Common in Ottawa Homes

Ottawa's climate creates a perfect storm for interior mould growth:

- **Condensation on cold walls** — When outdoor temperatures drop to **-20C or -30C**, exterior walls and especially window frames become cold enough to cause indoor moisture to condense. This persistent dampness feeds mould growth from November through March
- **Ice damming** — Ottawa's heavy snowfall (**200+ cm annually**) combined with heat loss from roofs causes ice dams that force water into wall cavities and ceilings
- **Basement moisture** — High water tables in parts of Orleans, Barrhaven, Kanata, and riverside neighbourhoods push moisture through foundation walls
- **Summer humidity** — July and August humidity regularly exceeds **70%**, promoting mould growth on surfaces that got damp during winter
- **Poor ventilation** — Older Ottawa homes often lack adequate bathroom exhaust fans, and many homeowners seal up their homes tightly for winter, trapping moisture inside

### The Professional Mould Remediation Process

#### Step 1: Identify and Fix the Moisture Source

**This is non-negotiable.** No amount of cleaning or mould-resistant paint will matter if the moisture source isn't addressed. Common culprits in Ottawa homes:

- **Bathroom without proper exhaust fan** (or fan venting into attic instead of outside) — very common in pre-1990 Ottawa homes
- **Poor exterior caulking/flashing** allowing water infiltration
- **Foundation wall seepage** — especially during spring snowmelt
- **Condensation from insufficient insulation** on exterior walls
- **Leaking plumbing** hidden in wall cavities

A painter who jumps straight to cleaning without asking about the moisture source is a red flag. **The Ontario Building Code** requires that moisture problems be corrected before refinishing interior surfaces.

## Step 2: Assess the Extent of Mould

**Small areas (less than 10 square feet)** can generally be handled by a painter or homeowner with proper precautions. **Larger areas, or mould inside wall cavities**, should involve a **certified mould remediation specialist**. In Ottawa, professional mould assessment costs **\$300 to \$600**, and remediation ranges from **\$500 to \$5,000+** depending on extent.

The Ontario Ministry of Labour considers **mould a workplace hazard**. Professional painters with **WSIB coverage** are trained to protect themselves and your family during mould-related work.

## Step 3: Containment and Protection

For any visible mould treatment:

- **N95 respirator mask** — standard surgical masks are NOT adequate for mould spores
- **Plastic sheeting** over doorways to contain the work area and prevent spores from spreading to other rooms
- **Gloves and eye protection**
- **HEPA-filtered air scrubber** for larger areas

Professional Ottawa painters who deal with mould regularly keep this equipment on their trucks. Budget an extra **\$100-\$200** for containment setup on a typical mould remediation paint job.

## Step 4: Mould Removal

**The mould itself must be physically removed, not just killed.** Dead mould spores are still allergenic and can cause health reactions. The process:

- **Spray affected area** with a mould-killing solution. Professional options include **concrobium mould control** or a **diluted bleach solution** (1 part bleach to 10 parts water). Concrobium is preferred by most Ottawa painters because it doesn't damage paint, won't bleach surfaces, and is less toxic. It costs **\$12-\$18 per ready-to-use bottle**
- **Scrub the surface** with a stiff brush to physically remove mould growth
- **Wipe clean** and allow to dry completely — **24-48 hours minimum**. In Ottawa's winter, when indoor air is dry from forced-air heating, this can go faster. In summer humidity, use a dehumidifier to speed drying
- **Repeat treatment** if any mould remains visible

**If mould has penetrated drywall** (common when moisture exposure has been prolonged), the affected drywall must be **cut out and replaced**. You cannot clean mould out of drywall paper facing once it's infiltrated — the paper is literally mould food. Drywall replacement adds **\$3 to \$6 per square foot** including taping and mudding.

### Step 5: Priming With Mould-Blocking Primer

After the surface is clean and completely dry:

- **Zinsser Mold Killing Primer** is the industry standard — it's EPA-registered as a mould-killing agent and costs **\$35-\$50 per gallon** in Ottawa. It bonds to both previously mould-affected surfaces and new drywall patches
- **Kilz Mould & Mildew Primer** is another solid option at **\$30-\$45 per gallon**
- Apply a **full coat** over the entire affected wall, not just the mould spot — spores spread beyond the visible growth area

### Step 6: Finish Paint With Mould-Resistant Properties

For rooms prone to moisture (bathrooms, kitchens, basements), use a **paint specifically formulated with mould and mildew inhibitors**:

- **Benjamin Moore Aura Bath & Spa** — excellent mould resistance, designed for high-humidity rooms. **\$75-\$85 per gallon** in Ottawa
- **Sherwin-Williams Emerald** — contains antimicrobial agents that prevent mould growth on the paint film. **\$70-\$80 per gallon**
- **Any premium paint with a mould-resistant additive** mixed in (available at most Ottawa paint stores for **\$5-\$10 per gallon** of additive)

### Prevention Going Forward

After dealing with mould, Ottawa homeowners should:

- **Maintain indoor humidity between 30-50%** year-round (use a hygrometer — **\$15-\$25** at any hardware store)
- **Run bathroom exhaust fans for 20 minutes** after every shower
- **Ensure dryer vents exhaust outside** the home
- **Check for condensation** on windows during cold snaps — persistent condensation means excess indoor humidity
- **Address any new water stains immediately** — they don't fix themselves

## Cost Summary for Mould-Related Paint Prep

| Service | Typical Ottawa Cost | |-----|-----| | Mould assessment | \$300-\$600 | | Small area treatment + paint prep | \$200-\$500 | | Drywall replacement (if needed) | \$3-\$6/sq ft | | Mould-killing primer | \$35-\$50/gallon | | Mould-resistant finish paint | \$70-\$85/gallon | | Professional remediation (large area) | \$500-\$5,000+ |

Find experienced Ottawa painters through the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** — look for those who specifically mention mould remediation experience. **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** has more guidance on moisture-related painting challenges specific to our climate.

---

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- Above All Painting Inc.
- Leeds Property Maintenance
- Oliver Painting Inc
- Don Sincennes Painting

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q9

## What sanding is needed between coats of paint on Ottawa interior walls?

Great question -- and one that separates a paint job that looks good on day one from one that still looks flawless five years later. **Sanding between coats** is a step many homeowners skip, but Ottawa painters treat it as non-negotiable for a professional-grade finish.

### Why Sanding Between Coats Matters

Paint doesn't bond to a perfectly smooth, sealed surface nearly as well as it does to one with a slight **mechanical tooth**. When your first coat dries, tiny imperfections -- dust nibs, roller stipple, dried drips -- get locked in. If you simply roll the next coat over top, those flaws compound and the final surface looks bumpy under raking light. Ottawa's dry winter heating creates static that pulls dust onto wet walls, making this even more of an issue from

November through March.

## The Right Grit and Technique

For **between-coat sanding on drywall**, you want **220-grit sandpaper** or a fine sanding sponge (3M makes excellent ones in the \$6-\$9 range at any Ottawa hardware store). The goal is a light scuff, not aggressive material removal:

- **Wait for full cure** -- latex interior paint needs at least 2-4 hours in a well-ventilated room at 18-22 degrees Celsius. In Ottawa's humid summer months, give it closer to 4 hours. In winter with forced-air heat running, 2 hours is usually sufficient.
- **Use light, even pressure** in long strokes. You're knocking down nibs and creating micro-scratches for adhesion, not sanding through the coat.
- **A sanding pole** (about \$15-\$25 at Home Depot Innes Road or the Hunt Club RONA) saves your shoulders on large walls and gives more even pressure than hand-sanding.
- **Wipe down with a tack cloth** or damp microfibre after sanding. Every particle of dust you leave behind becomes a visible bump under the next coat.

## When to Sand More Aggressively

If your first coat reveals **raised drywall texture, visible joint compound ridges, or screw pops**, you'll need to address those with **150-grit** before moving to 220. Many older Ottawa homes -- particularly in neighbourhoods like **the Glebe, Centretown, and Old Ottawa South** -- have plaster walls with imperfections that only become visible after the first coat of paint goes on. This is normal and fixable with a skim coat of lightweight compound (\$12-\$18 per box), a 120-grit sand, then re-prime before continuing.

## Primer Coat Sanding

The sand between **primer and first topcoat** is actually the most important one. Primer is designed to be slightly porous and rough, and a light 220-grit pass smooths it without removing its adhesion properties. If you're using a **high-build primer** (common for covering texture or old wallpaper residue), you can go to 180-grit on the primer coat since it's thicker.

## What Ottawa Pros Typically Charge for This

When you hire a professional painter, between-coat sanding is generally **included in the per-room price**. For a standard 12x12 room in Ottawa, expect **\$350-\$550** for two coats of quality paint on walls and ceiling, sanding included. That's roughly 10-15% below what you'd pay in the GTA for equivalent work. If a painter quotes you a

price and then says sanding is extra, that's a red flag -- it's a fundamental part of the process.

## Final Tips

- **Never use steel wool** between latex paint coats -- fragments can embed and rust, leaving brown spots.
  - **Don't sand if humidity is above 70%** -- the paint may not be fully cured even if it feels dry to the touch. Ottawa's July and August humidity can push indoor levels past this threshold without a dehumidifier running.
  - For **ceilings**, a pole sander is essential. Hand-sanding overhead is exhausting and produces uneven results.
  - Between the **final two coats**, use **320-grit** if you want an ultra-smooth finish, particularly on trim and doors.
- If you're looking for painters in Ottawa who take sanding and prep seriously, browse the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** to connect with experienced local painting contractors. And if you've got questions about a specific wall condition in your home, feel free to ask here on **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** -- we're happy to walk you through it.

---

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

- Homeupgraders
- Above All Painting Inc.
- 613PAINTING INC
- The Granite shop
- CONSTRUST BK INC

[View all contractors ?](#)

## How do I prepare wood trim for repainting in an older Ottawa home?

Wood trim prep in older Ottawa homes is a whole different ball game compared to newer builds. Many houses in **Sandy Hill, the Glebe, Westboro, and Rockcliffe Park** have original wood trim from the early 1900s -- thick baseboards, ornate door casings, crown mouldings with beautiful profiles. The good news is that old-growth wood trim is almost always worth saving. The prep just needs to be thorough.

### Step 1: Test for Lead Paint

This is **non-negotiable** in any Ottawa home built before 1978. Lead-based paint was common and layers of it are almost certainly present under existing coatings on pre-1960s trim. Pick up a **3M LeadCheck swab kit** (\$15-\$25 for a 2-pack) at any Ottawa hardware store. If the swab turns red or pink, you have lead paint.

For lead-positive trim:

- **Do not dry sand.** Lead dust is a serious health hazard, particularly for children.
- Use **chemical strippers** (Citristrip is widely available in Ottawa for about \$25-\$35 per quart) or wet-sanding methods.
- Contain the work area with plastic sheeting and use a **HEPA vacuum** for cleanup.
- Ontario has guidelines under the **Occupational Health and Safety Act** for lead paint handling. Professional painters in Ottawa should carry WSIB coverage and follow safe work practices for lead abatement.

### Step 2: Clean the Trim Thoroughly

Decades of built-up grime, cooking grease, and cleaning product residue sit on that trim. **TSP (trisodium phosphate)** mixed at about 30 grams per litre of warm water is the standard. Wipe down all surfaces with a sponge, then rinse with clean water. A box of TSP runs about **\$8-\$12** at Canadian Tire or Home Hardware. Let the trim dry completely -- at least 24 hours in Ottawa's cooler months when indoor humidity can linger.

### Step 3: Scrape and Sand

Using a **quality carbide scraper** (a Bahco or Hyde scraper, \$15-\$30), remove any loose, peeling, or alligatored paint. Don't try to take it all off -- just remove what's failing. Focus on:

- **Window casings** -- these take the most abuse from condensation cycles in Ottawa winters. The freeze-thaw at -25 to -30 degrees Celsius creates moisture behind the paint film.
- **Baseboards near exterior walls** -- moisture migration causes peeling here more than anywhere else.

- **Door casings in high-traffic areas** -- scuff marks and chips need to be feathered smooth.

After scraping, sand the entire trim surface with **150-grit** sandpaper to create tooth. For detailed profiles and mouldings, use **sanding sponges** that conform to curves. Finish with **220-grit** for a smooth base.

#### Step 4: Fill and Repair

Older trim almost always has:

- **Nail holes** from decades of re-nailing
- **Gaps between trim and wall** from the house settling over 80-120 years
- **Dents and gouges** from furniture, pets, and daily life

Use **DAP Plastic Wood-X** or similar wood filler (\$8-\$12) for holes and dents. For gaps, use **paintable acrylic caulk** (about \$5-\$7 per tube). Apply caulk with a caulking gun and smooth with a damp finger. Let filler dry fully and sand smooth with 220-grit.

#### Step 5: Prime

This is where the longevity of your repaint is determined. On old wood trim with multiple paint layers, use a **high-adhesion bonding primer** like Zinsser BIN (shellac-based, about \$28-\$35 per quart in Ottawa) or STIX by Insl-X. These primers:

- Lock down any remaining old coatings
- Block tannin bleed from old wood (common in oak and fir trim)
- Provide a uniform base for your topcoat

Apply with a **high-quality angled brush** (a Wooster Shortcut or Purdy XL are favourites among Ottawa painters, \$12-\$18 each). Don't cheap out here -- brush quality directly affects the smoothness of trim work.

#### Step 6: Final Sand and Topcoat

After primer dries (1 hour for shellac-based in good conditions), sand lightly with **220-grit**, tack off, and apply your **first topcoat**. For trim, most Ottawa painters prefer a **semi-gloss or satin alkyd-modified latex** like Benjamin Moore Advance (\$65-\$75 per gallon). It self-levels beautifully and cures to a hard, washable surface -- important in a city where road salt and slush get tracked indoors six months of the year.

Two topcoats with a light 320-grit sand between them gives you a factory-smooth finish.

#### Professional Cost Expectations

Professional trim repainting in an older Ottawa home typically runs **\$3.50-\$6.50 per linear foot** depending on the condition and detail of the mouldings. A full house of trim (baseboards, casings, crown) in a typical Glebe or Alta Vista home might run **\$2,500-\$5,000**. Heritage homes with extensive ornamental woodwork can go higher.

For experienced painters who specialize in older Ottawa homes, check the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** -- they list local contractors by specialty. And for more prep and painting guidance, **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** is here to help.

---

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- Above All Painting Inc.
- Capital City Drywall
- Stef's Quality Painting
- Powell Painting

[View all contractors ?](#)

---

Q11

## Should peeling exterior paint be fully stripped or just spot-repaired in Ottawa?

This is one of the most common debates in exterior painting, and in Ottawa specifically, the answer depends on **how extensive the peeling is, what's causing it, and what the substrate looks like underneath**. Let me break down both approaches so you can make the right call for your home.

### When Spot Repair Is Sufficient

If the peeling is **isolated to a few areas** -- typically less than 15-20% of the total surface -- spot repair is usually the smart, cost-effective choice. This is common on Ottawa homes where:

- **South and west-facing walls** get the most UV exposure and peel first while other sides remain solid
- **Window sills and horizontal surfaces** collect moisture from rain and snowmelt but the rest of the siding is intact
- **One specific section** was poorly prepped during the last paint job but the majority was done correctly

Spot repair involves **scraping the peeling area back to a solid edge**, feathering the transition with 80-grit sandpaper, priming the bare substrate with an exterior bonding primer like Zinsser 123 (\$30-\$40 per gallon), and then recoating. The key is feathering -- you want a gradual transition so the paint thickness difference isn't visible.

**Cost for spot exterior repair in Ottawa:** roughly **\$500-\$1,500** depending on how many areas and accessibility (ladders vs. scaffolding). That's well below the **\$4,000-\$10,000+** range for a full exterior strip and repaint.

## When Full Stripping Is Necessary

Full stripping becomes the better investment when:

- **More than 30-40% of the surface is peeling.** At this point, patching creates a patchwork of paint thickness that will fail unevenly within 2-3 years. You end up spending more on repeated spot repairs than one proper strip job.
- **Multiple layers of incompatible paint** are present. Many Ottawa homes have been painted 8-15 times over their lifespan. When you have latex over oil over latex, the inter-coat adhesion is weak and peeling becomes systemic.
- **Moisture is coming from behind the paint film.** This is extremely common in Ottawa due to our **extreme temperature swings** -- from -30 degrees Celsius in January to +35 in July. Warm interior air hits cold exterior walls, condensation forms behind the paint, and it pushes the film off from behind. No amount of spot repair fixes a moisture-driven problem.
- **You're dealing with a heritage home** in neighbourhoods like **New Edinburgh, the Glebe, or Rockcliffe.** Heritage Conservation District guidelines may require specific finishes and thorough prep. Peeling on a heritage home often indicates decades of deferred maintenance that only a full strip addresses properly.

## How Ottawa's Climate Affects This Decision

Ottawa's climate is unusually punishing on exterior paint:

- **200+ cm of annual snowfall** means constant freeze-thaw at the foundation and lower siding
  - **Ice damming** pushes moisture behind fascia and soffit paint
  - **UV intensity in summer** (Ottawa gets strong sun at our latitude) degrades paint films faster than many homeowners expect
  - **Road salt spray** on homes near busy streets (think Bronson, Bank, Rideau) chemically attacks paint adhesion
- If you're in your home long-term and the paint is peeling in multiple areas, **a full strip and proper repaint with modern high-adhesion products will last 8-12 years** versus 3-5 years for spot-patched surfaces.

## Stripping Methods Used in Ottawa

**Chemical stripping** (Peel Away, Citristrip) is safest for older homes -- no heat risk, no lead dust. Professional cost: **\$2-\$4 per square foot**.

**Infrared paint removers** (like the Speedheater) soften paint with gentle heat and are increasingly popular with Ottawa painters. They work well even in cooler temperatures, which extends the exterior prep season into early spring and late fall.

**Pressure washing alone does NOT strip paint** -- it removes loose material but won't take off adhered failing paint. Maximum **1,500-2,000 PSI** on wood siding, and always with a fan tip, never a zero-degree nozzle.

## The Hybrid Approach

Many Ottawa painters recommend a middle ground: **aggressive spot repair combined with full-surface scuff sanding and a bonding primer over the entire wall**. This works when peeling is in the 20-35% range. You strip the bad areas, sand everything else to 100-grit, apply a full coat of bonding primer, then two topcoats. Cost: roughly **\$2,500-\$6,000** for a typical two-storey Ottawa home, landing between the spot-repair and full-strip prices.

## Professional Assessment

Before committing to either approach, it's worth having a painter do an **adhesion test** -- they'll score the existing paint with a crosshatch pattern and apply tape. If more than 10% lifts off, full stripping or the hybrid approach is warranted.

You can find experienced exterior painters through the **Ottawa Construction Network directory**, where local contractors list their specialties. And for any follow-up questions on your specific situation, **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** is always here to help.

---

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- Above All Painting Inc.
- Custom By Arie
- Rrenovatio
- Leeds Property Maintenance

Q12

## How do Ottawa painters mask off areas to protect floors and fixtures during painting?

Proper masking is one of the most time-intensive parts of a professional paint job -- and honestly, it's where the difference between a weekend DIY project and a pro result becomes most obvious. Ottawa painters take masking seriously because **Ottawa homes have specific challenges** that affect how protection is set up.

### Floor Protection

This is the first thing that goes down and the last thing that comes up.

**For hardwood floors** (extremely common in Ottawa homes, especially in **Westboro, the Glebe, Alta Vista, and Manor Park**):

- **Heavy-duty canvas drop cloths** are the standard. A good 9x12 canvas drop runs **\$25-\$45** and lasts for years. Canvas absorbs paint drips instead of letting them pool and get tracked around like plastic does.
- **Ram Board or builder's paper** (\$30-\$50 per roll) gets taped down with painter's tape along baseboards for high-traffic paths. This prevents the drop cloth from shifting and exposing the floor.
- **Never use thin plastic sheeting on floors** -- it's slippery and dangerous, and paint sits on top of it wet, waiting to be stepped in.

**For carpet:** Painters use **self-adhesive carpet film** (\$20-\$30 per roll). It sticks lightly to carpet fibres without leaving residue. Along the baseboard edge, they'll use a **paint shield or masking tape** to create a clean line where the baseboard meets the carpet.

**For tile and vinyl:** Canvas drops work fine, but many Ottawa painters also use **rosin paper** (\$15-\$20 per roll) taped at the seams. It provides a clean, non-slip surface and protects grout lines from paint splatter.

### Fixture and Hardware Protection

**Light fixtures:** The fastest approach is to **remove them entirely**. Ceiling fixtures take 2-3 minutes to disconnect (power off at the breaker first -- **Ontario Electrical Safety Authority** code compliance matters). Wall sconces and vanity lights come down easily. If removal isn't practical, painters wrap them with **plastic bags and painter's tape**.

**Door hardware:** Professional Ottawa painters will remove door knobs, hinges, and strike plates rather than tape around them. This takes about 5 minutes per door and produces a dramatically cleaner result. Keep all hardware in labelled bags -- older Ottawa homes often have non-standard hardware that's difficult to replace.

**Electrical outlets and switches:** Cover plates come off (30 seconds each with a screwdriver). The exposed box gets covered with a strip of **blue painter's tape**. This is far cleaner than trying to cut in around a cover plate.

**Windows:** Low-tack painter's tape (FrogTape or 3M 2090, about **\$8-\$14 per roll**) goes on the glass where it meets the frame. For large windows, **masking paper or plastic film dispensers** (3M Hand-Masker is the industry standard, about \$25 for the dispenser plus \$10-\$15 per roll of film) cover the glass quickly.

## Taping Techniques

**The edge seal is everything.** The number one masking failure is paint bleeding under the tape edge. Ottawa pros prevent this by:

- **Burnishing the tape edge** -- pressing it firmly with a putty knife or plastic card. This creates a mechanical seal against the surface.
- **Sealing with a thin line of caulk** along the tape edge on textured surfaces. When the caulk dries, it fills the micro-gaps in the texture. This technique is critical on Ottawa's older plaster walls where texture is uneven.
- **Using the right tape for the surface.** Blue tape (3M 2090) for most surfaces. Green FrogTape for **ultra-sharp lines** on smooth trim. Yellow/gold delicate surface tape for **freshly painted surfaces** or wallpaper (14-day removal window).

## Masking for Specific Ottawa Challenges

**Heritage mouldings and ornate trim:** In homes in **Sandy Hill, Lowertown, and New Edinburgh**, complex trim profiles need careful masking. Painters use **flexible masking tape** that conforms to curves, often combined with freehand **cutting in** by brush for areas tape can't reach.

**Radiators and baseboard heaters:** Many Ottawa homes still have hot water radiators or baseboard heat. These get masked with plastic and tape, or ideally removed from the wall temporarily. Painting behind a radiator is nearly impossible without removal.

**Stone fireplaces and exposed brick:** Common in **Canal-area condos and renovated Hintonburg homes**. Painters tape along the edge and use cardboard or masking paper to cover the stone face. Stone is porous and absorbs paint readily -- one splatter can be permanent.

## Time and Cost of Proper Masking

Professional masking for a standard Ottawa room takes **45 minutes to 1.5 hours**, depending on complexity. For a full house, masking can represent **15-25% of the total labour time**. When you see an Ottawa painter quote a room at **\$350-\$550**, a good chunk of that covers prep and masking.

If a quote seems unusually low, ask about their masking and prep process. Cutting corners here is the fastest way to end up with paint on your hardwood or uneven lines on your trim.

## DIY Tips

- **Remove tape at a 45-degree angle while the paint is still slightly tacky** -- not fully wet, not fully dry. This gives the cleanest line.
- **Never leave tape on for more than the manufacturer's recommended time** (usually 7-14 days). Ottawa's dry winter heat can bake adhesive onto surfaces quickly.
- **Invest in quality tape.** Dollar-store masking tape bleeds, tears, and leaves residue. The \$12 roll of FrogTape pays for itself in saved cleanup time.

For painters in Ottawa who take prep and protection seriously, the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** lists experienced local professionals. And if you have specific questions about protecting a tricky surface in your home, ask here on **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ**.

---

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

- Homeupgraders
- JC Carpentry
- We Paint Ottawa
- Dreamwood Construction & Renovations
- The Fixer

[View all contractors ?](#)

## What is the proper way to clean exterior siding before painting in Ottawa?

Cleaning is the most underrated step in exterior painting, and in Ottawa's climate it might be the most important one. Our homes collect a unique combination of **road salt residue, winter grime, mildew from spring humidity, and pollen** that all needs to come off before a single drop of paint goes on.

### Why Cleaning Matters So Much in Ottawa

Paint bonds to a surface at the molecular level. Any barrier between the paint and the substrate -- dirt, mildew, chalking from old paint, salt deposits -- weakens that bond. Ottawa exteriors are hit with:

- **Road salt spray** from October through April. Homes near arterial roads like **Carling, Merivale, Baseline, and Hunt Club** accumulate heavy salt deposits on lower siding.
- **Mildew and algae** growth on north-facing walls and under eaves where shade and moisture persist. Ottawa's spring thaw creates weeks of damp conditions that feed mildew.
- **Chalking** from UV-degraded paint -- that white powdery residue that rubs off on your hand. Ottawa's bright summer sun breaks down exterior paint films over time.
- **Pollen accumulation** in May and June, particularly from Ottawa's massive tree canopy in neighbourhoods like **Rockcliffe, the Experimental Farm area, and Britannia**.

If any of this is left on the surface, your new paint job can peel within **1-3 seasons** instead of lasting the expected 8-12 years.

### Method 1: Pressure Washing (Most Common)

This is the go-to method for most Ottawa exterior cleaning.

**Equipment:** A pressure washer rated at **1,500-2,500 PSI** with a **25-degree fan tip**. Never use a zero-degree tip on any residential siding -- it'll gouge wood, crack vinyl, and damage fibre cement. You can rent a quality unit from **Home Depot on Innes Road or the Hunt Club Home Hardware** for about **\$75-\$100 per day**.

#### Process:

- **Pre-wet all landscaping** near the house to dilute any cleaning solution runoff
- **Apply a cleaning solution** from bottom to top (prevents streaking). More on solutions below.
- **Let the solution dwell for 10-15 minutes** -- don't let it dry on the surface
- **Rinse from top to bottom** at a 45-degree downward angle, maintaining **12-18 inches** from the surface
- **Work in sections** no larger than 10x10 feet to prevent the solution from drying

**For wood siding:** Keep pressure under **1,500 PSI**. Wood fibres raise easily and high pressure creates a fuzzy surface that drinks paint. Many Ottawa painters prefer **soft washing** (see below) for wood.

**For vinyl siding:** 1,500-2,000 PSI works well. Always spray downward to avoid forcing water behind the lap joints.

**For fibre cement (Hardie board):** Up to 2,500 PSI is safe. This material is tough but still benefits from a cleaning solution rather than pressure alone.

## **Method 2: Soft Washing (Preferred for Wood and Older Homes)**

Soft washing uses **low pressure (under 500 PSI) combined with a stronger cleaning solution** to do the work chemically rather than mechanically. This is increasingly the method of choice for Ottawa painters working on:

- **Heritage homes** in protected districts
- **Cedar and pine siding** that's soft and easily damaged
- **Stucco exteriors** common in **Alta Vista and Riverside South**
- **Older homes with fragile caulking** that high pressure would blast out

## **Cleaning Solutions**

### **For general dirt and grime:**

- Mix **1 cup TSP (trisodium phosphate)** per 4 litres of warm water. TSP costs about **\$8-\$12** per box and is available at any Ottawa hardware store.

### **For mildew and algae (extremely common in Ottawa):**

- Mix **1 part household bleach to 4 parts water**, plus a small squirt of dish soap as a surfactant. Apply, let dwell 10 minutes, rinse thoroughly.
- Or use a commercial **mildewcide wash** like Zinsser Jomax (\$15-\$20 per concentrate bottle) mixed per label directions.

### **For heavy chalking:**

- TSP solution applied with a stiff bristle brush, working in small sections. Rinse and repeat until the surface no longer leaves powder on a dark cloth rubbed across it.

### **For salt residue:**

- Warm water and TSP are effective. The key is **thorough rinsing** -- salt dissolves but re-deposits if you don't flush it completely. Ottawa painters doing spring exterior prep often do **two full rinse passes** on salt-heavy

surfaces.

## Timing and Drying

After cleaning, the siding needs to **dry completely before priming or painting**. In Ottawa, this means:

- **Summer (June-August):** 24-48 hours is usually sufficient
- **Spring or fall:** 48-72 hours minimum. Morning dew and cooler nighttime temperatures slow evaporation.
- **Moisture meter check:** Professional painters use a pin-type moisture meter (\$30-\$50). Wood siding should read **below 15% moisture content** before paint goes on. Above that, adhesion will fail during Ottawa's winter freeze cycles.

## Cost for Professional Exterior Cleaning

Most Ottawa painters include exterior washing in their full repaint quote. As a standalone service:

- **Pressure/soft wash of a typical two-storey home:** \$300-\$600
- **With mildew treatment:** \$400-\$750
- **Full prep wash as part of an exterior repaint contract:** often included or discounted to \$150-\$300  
This is 10-15% less than what you'd pay for the same service in the GTA.

## Common Mistakes to Avoid

- **Don't paint over chalking paint.** The new coat will peel. Clean it off completely.
- **Don't skip the mildew treatment.** Painting over mildew traps it under the film -- it grows through the new paint within a season.
- **Don't pressure wash in freezing temperatures.** Water in cracks and joints freezes and causes damage. Ottawa's exterior painting season for prep work starts in **late April** at the earliest.

For professional exterior painters who follow proper cleaning protocols, browse the **Ottawa Construction Network directory**. And for more questions about prepping your home's exterior, **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** has you covered.

---

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting

- JC Carpentry
- Elie The Carpet Guy Inc.
- L.L. Renovation
- BeyondPrime Building Solutions

[View all contractors ?](#)

---

Q14

## How do I fill nail holes and gaps before painting walls in my Ottawa home?

Filling nail holes and gaps is one of the most satisfying prep tasks because the results are immediately visible -- and it's something every Ottawa homeowner can handle with basic tools and about **\$20-\$40 in materials**. Let me walk you through the process the way local pros do it.

### Filling Nail Holes in Drywall

Most Ottawa homes built after the 1960s have **drywall (gypsum board) walls**, and nail holes from picture hangers, shelving, and previous owners' decorating are everywhere.

#### For small nail holes (under 6mm / 1/4 inch):

- **Lightweight spackling paste** is your best friend. DAP DryDex (the pink stuff that turns white when dry) is the most popular choice in Ottawa -- about **\$8-\$12 for a tub** at Canadian Tire, Home Hardware, or Home Depot.
- **Apply with a flexible putty knife** (a 2-inch blade works perfectly, \$5-\$8). Press the compound firmly into the hole, then scrape flat across the surface in one smooth pass.
- **Let it dry completely** -- DryDex turns from pink to white, which takes 15-30 minutes for small holes. In Ottawa's dry winter months with heating running, it dries even faster.
- **Sand lightly with 220-grit** sandpaper or a fine sanding sponge. One or two passes is all you need.
- **Wipe with a damp cloth** to remove dust.

#### For medium holes (6mm-25mm / 1/4 to 1 inch):

- Use **setting-type compound** (like Sheetrock 45 or 90, about \$12-\$15 per box). It's mixed from powder, sets chemically rather than by drying, and doesn't shrink as much as lightweight spackle.
- Apply in **two thin coats** rather than one thick one. A thick fill will crack as it dries, especially in Ottawa homes with forced-air heating where humidity drops below 20% in winter.

- Sand between coats with 150-grit, then finish with 220-grit.

#### **For larger holes (25mm+ / 1 inch+):**

- Use a **self-adhesive mesh patch** (\$5-\$8 for a multi-pack). Stick it over the hole, then apply two to three thin layers of joint compound, letting each dry and sanding between layers.
- For holes larger than about 10cm (4 inches), you may need a **California patch** (a piece of drywall slightly larger than the hole, scored and snapped to size). This is where many homeowners call a pro -- a drywall repair in Ottawa typically runs **\$75-\$150 per patch** installed, sanded, and primed.

### **Filling Holes in Plaster Walls**

If your Ottawa home was built before 1960 -- common in **Centretown, the Glebe, Sandy Hill, Old Ottawa South, and New Edinburgh** -- you likely have **lath-and-plaster walls**. These require a slightly different approach:

- **Durabond 90** (setting-type compound) is preferred over lightweight spackle because it bonds better to old plaster and cures hard.
- **Dampen the hole area** with a spray bottle before applying compound. Dry plaster wicks moisture out of the filler too quickly, causing poor adhesion.
- For crumbly plaster edges, apply **PVA bonding agent** (\$12-\$18 per bottle) around the hole perimeter before filling. This creates a strong bond between old plaster and new compound.

### **Filling Gaps Between Walls and Trim**

This is the other major category, and it's everywhere in Ottawa homes. Houses settle over time, and Ottawa's **extreme temperature cycling** (from -30 to +35 degrees Celsius annually) causes significant expansion and contraction. Gaps appear between:

- **Baseboards and walls**
- **Door and window casings and walls**
- **Crown moulding and ceiling**
- **Where two pieces of trim meet at corners**

**The solution: paintable acrylic latex caulk.**

**Product:** DAP Alex Plus or Mono caulk, about **\$5-\$7 per tube**. You'll need a caulking gun (\$8-\$15 if you don't have one).

### Technique:

- **Cut the caulk tube tip at a 45-degree angle**, leaving a small opening (about 3mm). Smaller is better -- you can always go back for a second pass.
- **Run a steady bead** along the gap at a consistent speed and pressure.
- **Smooth immediately with a damp finger or a caulk finishing tool** (\$5-\$8). Work in 3-4 foot sections before the caulk skins over.
- **Wipe excess with a damp cloth** right away. Dried caulk is much harder to clean up.
- **Let dry 2-4 hours** before painting. Some products claim 30-minute paintability, but in Ottawa's varying humidity conditions, giving it extra time prevents bubbling.

**Critical tip:** Do NOT use silicone caulk. Silicone cannot be painted over and will repel any coating applied on top. Always use **paintable acrylic or acrylic latex** caulk.

### Priming Filled Areas

This step is often missed by DIYers and it shows. Spackle and joint compound are **more porous than the surrounding painted wall**. If you paint directly over patches without priming, those spots absorb paint differently and create visible "**flashing**" -- dull spots on an otherwise uniform wall.

**Spot-prime every filled area** with a coat of your wall primer or a quick-dry primer like Zinsser BIN (\$10-\$15 for a spray can for spot priming). Let it dry, then apply your topcoat normally.

### What Pros Charge in Ottawa

When professional painters include wall prep in a room repaint, filling and caulking typically adds **\$50-\$150 per room** to the labour depending on condition. For a well-maintained home with just a few nail holes, it's minimal. For a rental turnover or older home with extensive patching needs, it's a larger portion of the job.

Overall room painting in Ottawa runs **\$350-\$550 per standard room** including all prep -- that's roughly 10-15% below GTA pricing.

Browse the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** for local painting contractors who handle complete prep work. And if you've got a wall situation that has you stumped, ask on **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** -- happy to help.

---

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Hannah's Colour Wave
- Dreamwood Construction & Renovations
- The Fixer

[View all contractors ?](#)

---

Q15

## Should I caulk around windows and trim before exterior painting in Ottawa?

**Absolutely yes** -- and in Ottawa, this might be the single most important prep step for any exterior paint job. Our climate makes caulking failure one of the leading causes of premature paint failure, wood rot, and moisture intrusion. Let me explain why it matters here more than in milder climates and how to do it right.

### Why Caulking Is Critical in Ottawa

Ottawa's climate subjects every exterior joint to **extreme stress**:

- **Temperature range of over 60 degrees Celsius** annually (-30 in January to +35 in July). This causes wood trim, siding, and window frames to expand and contract significantly.
- **200+ cm of snowfall** means moisture sits against lower window trim and siding for months.
- **Freeze-thaw cycles** -- Ottawa typically sees 40-60 freeze-thaw cycles per season. Water enters gaps, freezes, expands, widens the gap, and the cycle accelerates.
- **Ice damming** pushes meltwater into upper window joints that are normally protected from direct rain.

Every one of these forces exploits **failed caulk joints**. If you paint over cracked or missing caulk, the new paint looks great for one season -- then moisture gets behind the film, the paint peels, and you're right back where you started.

### Where to Caulk Before Exterior Painting

**Caulk these joints (flexible, paintable caulk):**

- **Where window casing meets siding** -- all four sides of every window. This is the highest-priority joint on any Ottawa home.

- **Where door casing meets siding** -- including the threshold area.
- **Where trim boards meet each other** at corners and joints.
- **Where siding meets corner boards.**
- **Along the bottom edge of bottom trim boards** where they meet the foundation or sill plate.
- **Where any penetration exits the wall** -- light fixtures, hose bibs, electrical outlets, dryer vents.
- **Along soffit-to-fascia joints** if accessible.

**Do NOT caulk these:**

- **The bottom edge of individual lap siding boards.** These need to breathe and drain. Caulking them traps moisture inside the wall cavity.
- **Weep holes** in brick or masonry. These are intentional drainage paths required by the **Ontario Building Code**.
- **Between siding courses** on any overlap-style siding (lap, clapboard, shingle).

### **Choosing the Right Caulk for Ottawa**

Not all caulk survives Ottawa's conditions. Here's what works:

**Best overall: Polyurethane caulk**

- **Dymonic FC or Sikaflex** (\$10-\$15 per tube)
- **Rated for -40 to +80 degrees Celsius** -- comfortably handles Ottawa's full range
- **50-year lifespan claims** with 25-50% elongation capacity
- Paintable after 7 days. This is the trade-off -- it cures slowly. Plan your schedule accordingly.
- This is what most professional Ottawa painters use on exterior work.

**Good alternative: Hybrid polymer sealant**

- **DAP Dynaflex Ultra or Big Stretch** (\$8-\$12 per tube)
- Excellent elasticity (up to 500% stretch for Big Stretch)
- Paintable in 1-2 hours
- 30-year lifespan in normal conditions
- More forgiving for DIYers -- easier to tool and clean up with water

**Avoid for exterior use:**

- **Basic acrylic latex caulk** -- it hardens and cracks after 2-3 Ottawa winters. Fine for interior work, inadequate for exterior.

- **100% silicone** -- cannot be painted. Period. Even "paintable silicone" products often cause adhesion issues with exterior paints.

## Application Process

### Before caulking:

- **Remove all old failed caulk.** Use an oscillating tool with a scraper blade or a utility knife. A caulk removal tool (\$5-\$8) helps pull old material from joints.
- **Clean the joint.** Wire brush, TSP wash, and let dry completely.
- **Make sure the gap is appropriate for caulk.** Joints wider than 12mm (1/2 inch) need **backer rod** (\$5-\$10 for a roll) pushed into the gap first. Caulk needs to bond to two surfaces (not three) and shouldn't fill a deep cavity.

### Applying:

- **Cut the tube tip small** -- 3-5mm opening at a 45-degree angle.
- **Apply steady pressure** and move at a consistent speed.
- **Tool the joint** within 2-5 minutes using a damp finger, caulk finishing tool, or a spoon (yes, a plastic spoon works surprisingly well).
- **Ensure contact with both surfaces** -- the caulk needs to bond to the trim AND the siding for the joint to flex properly.

### After caulking:

- Let the caulk cure per manufacturer's directions before painting. For polyurethane: **5-7 days**. For acrylic/hybrid: **24-48 hours**.
- **Prime the caulked areas** with your exterior primer before topcoating.

## Cost and Quantities

A typical Ottawa two-storey home needs **8-15 tubes of exterior caulk** for a full seal. At \$10-\$15 per tube for quality product, you're looking at **\$80-\$225 in material**.

Professional caulking as part of an exterior repaint is usually **included in the prep cost**. As a standalone service, full-house exterior caulking runs about **\$400-\$900** in Ottawa depending on house size and condition -- that's below GTA rates by a good margin.

## The Bottom Line

In Ottawa, painting over failed caulk joints is like putting a new coat of finish on a boat with holes in it. **The moisture will find a way in**, and when it does, you'll see peeling paint, rotting trim, and potentially mould inside wall cavities -- all of which cost far more to fix than proper caulking.

Every reputable exterior painter in Ottawa will include caulking as part of their prep. If someone gives you a quote that skips it, keep looking. The **Ottawa Construction Network directory** can connect you with painters who do complete exterior prep. Questions about your specific home? **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** is here to help.

---

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Home Front Services
- Denys Builds Designs Renovations
- Somar Contracting Inc.

[View all contractors ?](#)

## How do Ottawa painters prepare a previously stained deck for a fresh coat?

Deck refinishing is one of those jobs that Ottawa homeowners face every **2-4 years** thanks to our punishing climate. A previously stained deck needs careful prep before re-coating -- skip the prep and your new stain will peel, flake, or wear through in a single season. Here's how Ottawa's experienced deck painters handle it.

### Assessing the Current Stain Condition

Before doing anything, you need to figure out what you're working with:

**Semi-transparent or transparent stain** (you can see wood grain): These wear away gradually through foot traffic and UV exposure. Ottawa decks typically show **gray, faded areas in high-traffic zones** and better colour retention under furniture and along edges. If the stain is simply faded but not peeling, prep is relatively straightforward.

**Solid stain or paint** (opaque, no wood grain visible): These form a film on the surface that **cracks and peels** as the wood expands and contracts through Ottawa's -30 to +35 degree temperature range. Solid coatings on horizontal deck surfaces are the most failure-prone finish in our climate.

**The water test:** Sprinkle water on the deck surface. If it **beads up**, the existing stain is still repelling moisture and a new coat won't absorb. If it **soaks in within 30 seconds**, the surface is ready to accept stain (after cleaning).

### Step 1: Clear and Inspect

Remove all furniture, planters, and grills. Then do a thorough inspection:

- **Check for soft, punky wood** by probing with a screwdriver. Ottawa decks take serious abuse from snow load and standing water -- deck boards over 15 years old often have **rot at the joists and near the ledger board**.
- **Check for popped screws or nails.** Freeze-thaw cycles push fasteners out of the wood. Reset or replace them.
- **Look for mildew** -- black or green spots, particularly common on north-facing decks and shaded areas. Ottawa's spring moisture creates ideal conditions for mildew growth starting in April.

### Step 2: Strip or Sand the Old Stain

**For peeling or flaking solid stain:** A **deck stain stripper** is the most effective approach. Products like Flood StripPeel, Defy Stain Stripper, or Ready Seal Stain Stripper (\$25-\$40 per gallon at Ottawa paint stores including **Dulux on Gladstone** or **Cloverdale on Industrial**) are applied, allowed to dwell, and then pressure washed off.

Apply the stripper with a pump sprayer, let it work for **15-30 minutes** (follow the product label), and rinse with a pressure washer at **1,200-1,500 PSI** with a fan tip. Work with the grain direction, keeping the nozzle **12-18 inches** from the surface.

**For worn semi-transparent stain:** Often you can skip stripping entirely. A good **power wash with a deck cleaner** removes surface grime and faded stain residue. Follow up with an **orbital sander using 80-grit** on any stubborn areas.

**For severely failed coatings:** A belt sander or floor sander (rentable at Home Depot Innes Road for about **\$60-\$85 per day**) is sometimes necessary. Start with 60-grit and finish with 80-grit. This is labour-intensive but gives you a fresh wood surface.

### Step 3: Clean with a Deck Wash

After stripping or sanding, the deck needs a **dedicated deck cleaning solution**:

- **Oxygen bleach-based cleaner** (like OxiClean or a purpose-made deck wash, \$15-\$25) removes mildew, algae, and oxidized wood fibres without damaging the wood or killing your landscaping.
- **Avoid chlorine bleach** on wood -- it breaks down lignin (the natural binder in wood fibres) and leaves the surface fuzzy and prone to premature failure.

Apply the cleaner, scrub with a **stiff-bristle push broom**, let it sit for 10-15 minutes, then rinse thoroughly with the pressure washer at 1,200-1,500 PSI.

### Step 4: Brighten (Often Missed)

After cleaning, the wood often looks dull or gray. A **wood brightener** (\$12-\$20) containing oxalic acid restores the wood's natural colour and **opens the pores** for better stain absorption. Apply with a pump sprayer, let it work for 10-15 minutes, and rinse. This step makes a visible difference in the final result.

### Step 5: Dry Thoroughly

This is where Ottawa's climate requires patience:

- **Allow a minimum of 48-72 hours of dry weather** before applying stain.
- The wood moisture content should be **below 15%** -- check with a pin-type moisture meter (\$30-\$50).
- **May and June in Ottawa** are ideal for deck staining: warm enough for proper stain cure, long enough days for drying, and before the peak summer humidity arrives.

- **Avoid staining in direct hot sun** -- the stain dries too fast and doesn't penetrate. Ottawa painters prefer **morning applications on south-facing decks** and **afternoon on north-facing ones**.

## Step 6: Apply the New Stain

Once properly prepped, stain application is straightforward:

- **Semi-transparent penetrating stain** is the recommended choice for Ottawa decks. It absorbs into the wood, moves with seasonal expansion, and wears gradually rather than peeling. Products like **Ready Seal, TWP, or Sansin** (\$50-\$75 per gallon) are well-suited to Ottawa conditions.
- **Apply with a stain pad, roller, or pump sprayer** followed by back-brushing. Back-brushing works the stain into the wood grain.
- **One to two coats** depending on the product. More is NOT better -- excess stain that doesn't absorb will peel.
- **Don't forget the end grain** of deck boards -- these absorb the most moisture and benefit most from stain protection.

## Professional Cost in Ottawa

Deck staining prep and refinishing in Ottawa typically runs:

- **Small deck (under 200 sq ft):** \$600-\$1,200
- **Medium deck (200-400 sq ft):** \$1,200-\$2,500
- **Large deck (400+ sq ft):** \$2,500-\$4,500

These prices include stripping, cleaning, brightening, and two coats of quality stain. Ottawa pricing runs about 10-15% below comparable services in the GTA.

For experienced deck painters and staining specialists in Ottawa, check the **Ottawa Construction Network directory**. And for questions about your specific deck situation, **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** is always here.

---

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovation
- JC Carpentry
- The Next Reno

- Capital Paint
- JMY Renovations

[View all contractors ?](#)

---

Q17

## What primer is best for blocking nicotine stains on Ottawa home walls?

Nicotine stains are among the most stubborn issues you'll face on interior walls, and they're surprisingly common in Ottawa's housing stock -- whether it's an older home in **Vanier, Centretown, or the South End** that had decades of indoor smoking, a rental unit turnover, or a home you've just purchased. The yellow-brown staining isn't just cosmetic: **nicotine is an oily, water-soluble residue** that bleeds through standard paint within days to weeks.

### Why Regular Primer Fails

Standard latex primer (like basic PVA drywall primer) is water-based. Nicotine is water-soluble. When you apply water-based primer over nicotine stains, the moisture in the primer **dissolves the nicotine and pulls it into the wet film**. As the primer dries, the nicotine migrates to the surface. You'll see the yellow-brown staining bleed through within hours to days, even through multiple coats.

This is the number one mistake homeowners make -- they roll on two or three coats of regular primer, thinking more coats will bury the problem, and the stain keeps coming back.

### The Best Primer: Shellac-Based (BIN)

**Zinsser BIN Shellac-Based Primer** is the gold standard for nicotine blocking. It's been the go-to product for Ottawa painters dealing with smoke damage for decades.

#### Why BIN works:

- Shellac is **not water-based** -- it uses denatured alcohol as its solvent, so it doesn't dissolve or activate nicotine
- It creates an **impermeable barrier** that physically seals the stain beneath the surface
- It dries in **15-30 minutes** and can be topcoated in 45 minutes
- It blocks virtually **100% of nicotine bleed-through** in a single coat

**Cost in Ottawa:** About **\$28-\$38 per quart** or **\$55-\$70 per gallon** at Dulux (Gladstone or Cyrville locations), Home Depot, or Benjamin Moore dealers. The quart is sufficient for a single room; heavy smoker homes will need gallons.

## Application:

- **Clean walls first** with TSP solution (30g per litre of warm water). This removes the surface layer of nicotine residue. Without cleaning, even BIN can struggle with extremely heavy deposits.
- **Apply BIN with a roller** (use a 10mm nap for smooth walls). It goes on milky white and dries clear-ish with a slight amber tone.
- **Ventilate well** -- the alcohol fumes are strong. Open windows and run fans. Ottawa's winter painting means you may need to work room by room to manage ventilation without freezing the house.
- **One coat is usually sufficient.** For extremely heavy staining (walls that are visibly brown-yellow), apply a second coat after 45 minutes.
- **Topcoat with your chosen latex paint** once BIN is dry -- it accepts any latex or oil-based topcoat.

## Second Choice: Oil-Based Primer

**Zinsser Cover Stain** (oil-based) or **KILZ Original** (oil-based) are solid alternatives if BIN is unavailable.

- **Cover Stain:** About **\$25-\$35 per quart** in Ottawa. Good stain blocking, slightly slower dry time (1 hour vs 15 minutes for BIN). Blocks about 90-95% of nicotine in one coat.
- **KILZ Original:** About **\$20-\$30 per quart**. Adequate for moderate nicotine, but not as effective as BIN or Cover Stain on heavy deposits.

Oil-based primers produce **stronger odours and longer dry times** than shellac. They also require mineral spirits for cleanup versus BIN's denatured alcohol.

## What About Water-Based Stain Blockers?

**Zinsser 123 Plus** and **KILZ 2** are water-based primers that claim stain-blocking properties. They work for **mild smoke exposure** -- a home where someone occasionally smoked near a window, for example. For moderate to heavy nicotine, they'll likely fail and you'll see bleed-through within a week.

If you're unsure about severity, do a **test patch**: prime a 2x2 foot area with the water-based product. If yellow bleeding appears within 24-48 hours, switch to BIN.

## The Full Process for a Smoker's Home in Ottawa

For a home with heavy nicotine staining (common in rental turnovers and estate sales), here's the complete protocol:

- **TSP wash all walls and ceilings** -- yes, ceilings too. Smoke rises, and ceiling staining is often the worst. Budget **\$8-\$12 for TSP** and a full day of washing for a 3-bedroom home.
- **Let walls dry 24-48 hours** after washing. In Ottawa's dry winter climate, 24 hours is usually sufficient. In spring/fall humidity, give it 48.
- **Apply one full coat of BIN primer** to every surface that was exposed to smoke -- walls, ceilings, trim, doors, even inside closets.
- **Sand lightly with 220-grit** after BIN dries. Shellac dries hard and smooth, but a light scuff ensures good adhesion for the topcoat.
- **Apply two coats of quality latex paint** as your finish.

### Cost for a Professional Nicotine Blocking Job in Ottawa

For a standard 3-bedroom Ottawa home with moderate nicotine:

- **Cleaning + BIN primer + two topcoats of quality paint:** \$4,000-\$7,500
- **Single room (e.g., converting a smoking room):** \$600-\$1,100

This includes materials and labour at Ottawa rates, which run about **10-15% below GTA pricing** for the same work.

### Important Health Note

Third-hand smoke residue (the nicotine and tar compounds on surfaces) is a recognized health concern, especially for children. The **Ontario Building Code** doesn't specifically address smoke remediation, but many Ottawa property managers and real estate professionals now recommend full BIN priming as standard practice for any unit that had a smoker.

### Don't Forget HVAC

After priming and painting, have your **furnace ducts cleaned** (\$300-\$500 in Ottawa). Nicotine residue in the HVAC system will re-deposit on your fresh walls every time the furnace runs -- particularly relevant from October through April when Ottawa heating systems run constantly.

For painters in Ottawa who specialize in smoke damage and restoration painting, the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** lists experienced local pros. More questions? **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** is here to help.

---

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- JC Carpentry
- BR Wood Finishing
- BFI Renovations
- Stef's Quality Painting

[View all contractors ?](#)

---

Q18

## How should I prep kitchen cabinets for painting to ensure the finish lasts in Ottawa?

Cabinet painting is one of the most popular renovation projects in Ottawa right now -- and for good reason. A full kitchen cabinet replacement runs **\$15,000-\$40,000+** depending on the kitchen size, while professional cabinet painting typically costs **\$3,000-\$7,000** for a standard Ottawa kitchen. But cabinet painting is also one of the most **prep-intensive paint jobs** you'll ever encounter. Cut corners on prep and you'll have sticky doors, chipping edges, and fingerprint marks within months.

### Why Cabinets Are Different from Walls

Cabinet surfaces face conditions that walls never do:

- **Constant handling** -- door and drawer faces are touched dozens of times daily
- **Heat and steam** from cooking -- Ottawa kitchens with gas ranges produce significant heat cycles
- **Grease and food splatter** -- even with a range hood, airborne grease settles on cabinet surfaces
- **Humidity swings** -- Ottawa kitchens cycle between bone-dry winter air (15-20% humidity with forced-air heating) and steamy summer cooking conditions

The paint film on cabinets needs to be **harder, smoother, and better bonded** than any wall paint, and that starts entirely with prep.

### Step 1: Remove Everything

**Remove all doors, drawers, and hardware.** This is non-negotiable. Painting cabinets in place produces an inferior result every time.

- **Label every door and drawer** with numbered tape (painter's tape + Sharpie). Take a photo of the layout before removing anything. Ottawa homes, especially those in **Kanata, Barrhaven, and Orleans**, often have kitchens with 20-30 doors that look similar but aren't interchangeable.
- **Remove all hinges, pulls, and knobs.** Store hardware in labelled bags. If you're upgrading hardware, now is the time -- new hinges and pulls run **\$3-\$8 each** at Ottawa hardware stores.
- **Remove drawers and label the boxes** (the cabinet frames). Drawer fronts are sometimes separate from the drawer box -- note which is which.

## Step 2: Clean Aggressively

Kitchen cabinets have **years of grease buildup** that's invisible but absolutely lethal to paint adhesion.

**TSP (trisodium phosphate)** is the standard degreaser:

- Mix **60g per litre** of warm water (double the wall-cleaning strength)
  - Scrub every surface with a Scotch-Brite pad -- **fronts, backs, edges, inside the frame openings**
  - Pay special attention to **areas near the stove and above the dishwasher** where grease and steam concentrate
  - Rinse with clean water and let dry completely (24 hours in Ottawa's dry winter, 48 in humid seasons)
- For extremely greasy cabinets, a first pass with **Krud Kutter** (\$10-\$15 per spray bottle) before TSP is effective.

## Step 3: Sand for Adhesion

**This is the step that separates lasting cabinet paint from paint that chips off at the edges within 6 months.**

The goal is to create a **uniform mechanical tooth** on every surface:

- **For existing painted or clear-coated cabinets:** Sand with **150-grit** sandpaper or sanding sponge. Cover every square inch -- flat areas, edges, profiles, inside panel details.
- **For thermofoil/melamine (very common in Ottawa 1990s-2000s homes in Kanata, Orleans, and Barrhaven):** These are plastic-coated and extremely slick. Sand with **120-grit** to create real tooth, then use a **bonding primer** specifically designed for slick surfaces (more on this below).

- **For oak grain (the classic 1980s-90s Ottawa kitchen):** Sand with 120-grit to knock down the open grain. If you want a smooth, modern finish, you'll need to **fill the grain** with a grain filler product like Aqua Coat (\$20-\$25 per can) applied with a putty knife, dried, and sanded smooth with 220-grit. This adds 2-3 hours of work but transforms the final appearance.

After sanding, **vacuum all surfaces** with a brush attachment, then wipe with a tack cloth. Dust is the enemy of a smooth cabinet finish.

#### **Step 4: Fill and Repair**

- **Fill any dents, dings, or holes** with auto body filler (Bondo, about \$12-\$15) for hard surfaces, or wood filler for solid wood cabinets. Sand smooth with 220-grit.
- **Caulk any gaps** between frame pieces with paintable acrylic caulk.
- **Check for delamination** on thermofoil doors -- if the plastic film is pulling away from the MDF substrate, glue it down with contact cement or replace the door entirely. Painting over delaminating thermofoil is a waste of money.

#### **Step 5: Prime with the Right Primer**

This is **the most critical product decision** in the entire project.

##### **Best choice: Shellac-based primer (Zinsser BIN)**

- **\$55-\$70 per gallon** in Ottawa
- Bonds to virtually anything -- wood, thermofoil, melamine, previously painted surfaces
- Blocks tannin bleed from oak and cherry (prevents yellow/pink discolouration through white paint)
- Dries in 15 minutes, sandable in 45
- The overwhelming favourite among Ottawa cabinet painters

##### **Alternative: Bonding primer (STIX by Insl-X or Zinsser 123 Plus)**

- Better for thermofoil/melamine-specific adhesion
- Water-based, lower odour
- Allow 2-4 hours dry time before sanding

**Apply primer with a foam roller** (4-inch for flat areas) and a quality **2-inch angled brush** (Purdy or Wooster) for detailed areas. Aim for a thin, even coat -- thick primer drips and obscures panel details.

After primer dries, **sand with 220-grit** and tack off. This sanding is essential for a smooth topcoat.

## Step 6: Topcoat Selection

The topcoat must be **hard, durable, and smooth**:

- **Benjamin Moore Advance** (\$65-\$75/gal in Ottawa) -- alkyd-modified waterborne. Self-levels beautifully, cures to a rock-hard finish over 30 days. The top choice for brush-and-roller application.
- **Benjamin Moore Scuff-X** or **Emerald Urethane by Sherwin-Williams** (\$70-\$85/gal) -- waterborne with urethane hardener. More scuff-resistant than standard latex.
- **For spray application:** Fine Paints of Europe Hollandlac or **lacquer** through an HVLP sprayer produces the smoothest, most factory-like finish.

Apply **two thin coats** with 220-grit sanding between them. Let the final coat cure for **5-7 days minimum** (ideally 14-30 days) before rehanging doors and loading the cabinets. In Ottawa's dry winter, curing happens faster than in summer humidity.

## What Pros Charge in Ottawa

- **Standard kitchen (15-25 doors):** \$3,500-\$6,000 sprayed, \$3,000-\$5,000 brushed/rolled
- **Large kitchen (25-35+ doors):** \$5,500-\$8,500
- **Per door (painted both sides, 2 coats):** \$75-\$125

Ottawa pricing is typically **10-15% below GTA rates** for equivalent quality. The savings come from lower overhead, not lower skill.

For cabinet painting specialists in Ottawa, check the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** for experienced contractors. And for any questions about your specific cabinet material or condition, **Ottawa Paint Contractors' Paint IQ** has the answers.

---

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- JC Carpentry
- Stef's Quality Painting
- Powell Painting
- Somar Contracting Inc.

[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](http://ottawapaintcontractors.com) for the latest answers.