

JUSTYN ROOK CONTRACTING

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# Maintenance

Keeping a finished renovation in good shape year to  
year

14 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

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## When should I replace my bathroom exhaust fan?

**You should replace your bathroom exhaust fan when it's over 10-15 years old, making excessive noise, not effectively removing moisture, or showing visible signs of wear like rust or damaged housing.** In Ottawa's humid climate, a properly functioning exhaust fan is crucial for preventing mold and moisture damage.

**Signs it's time for replacement** include the fan running loudly (grinding, rattling, or squealing sounds), taking much longer to clear steam from your bathroom, visible rust or corrosion on the housing, or the fan not turning on consistently. If you notice condensation building up on windows, mirrors, or walls despite running the fan, it's likely not moving enough air and needs upgrading.

**Performance standards** have improved significantly over the past decade. Older fans typically move 50-80 CFM (cubic feet per minute), while modern units can efficiently move 80-110 CFM with much less noise. For Ottawa bathrooms, you want at least 1 CFM per square foot of bathroom space, so a 100 square foot bathroom needs a minimum 100 CFM fan. Look for fans with a sone rating under 1.5 - anything above 2.5 sones is considered quite loud.

**Energy efficiency** is another compelling reason to upgrade. New Energy Star certified models use 50-70% less electricity than units from the early 2000s, and many include LED lighting and even humidity sensors that automatically turn the fan on when moisture levels rise. Given Ottawa's cold winters, some newer models also include small heaters - perfect for those chilly morning showers.

**Installation considerations** in Ottawa homes often involve working around older wiring and potentially upgrading ductwork. Many homes built before 1990 have undersized ducts (3-inch instead of 4-inch) or ducts that terminate in the attic rather than properly venting outside. This is particularly important here because improper venting can cause ice damming issues during our harsh winters.

**Professional installation** is recommended because the work involves electrical connections that require ESA permits in Ontario, plus proper ductwork routing to prevent moisture problems. A qualified contractor can also assess whether your current ductwork meets code and ensure the new fan is properly sealed to prevent air leaks - crucial for energy efficiency in our climate.

For a free assessment of your bathroom ventilation needs and to discuss upgrade options that work best for Ottawa homes, contact Justyn Rook Contracting. We can evaluate your current setup and recommend solutions that will keep your bathroom properly ventilated year-round.

## Q2

### When should I replace weatherstripping around windows?

You should replace weatherstripping around windows when you notice drafts, visible damage, or when it no longer compresses properly when the window is closed. Most weatherstripping lasts 5-10 years depending on the material and Ottawa's harsh freeze-thaw cycles.

**Signs it's time to replace** include visible cracks or tears in the material, gaps when the window is closed, increased heating bills, or if you can feel air movement around the window frame. In Ottawa's climate, weatherstripping takes a beating from temperature swings that can range from -30°C in winter to +35°C in summer, causing rubber and foam materials to become brittle and lose their seal.

The **best time for replacement** is late summer or early fall, before Ottawa's heating season begins. This gives you time to complete the work in comfortable weather and ensures your home is sealed before winter arrives. Spring is also good timing if you're doing a comprehensive home maintenance check after winter damage.

**Different materials have varying lifespans** in our climate. Foam tape weatherstripping is cheapest but typically lasts only 1-2 years. Rubber gaskets last 3-5 years, while quality vinyl or silicone weatherstripping can last 7-10 years. For older Ottawa homes with original windows, you might need to replace weatherstripping every 3-5 years due to settling and wear.

**Professional assessment** is recommended if you're experiencing significant drafts despite recent weatherstripping replacement, as this could indicate window frame issues, settling, or the need for window replacement. Poor weatherstripping can increase heating costs by 10-15% in Ottawa's climate, making replacement a worthwhile investment.

**Installation timing** should avoid extreme temperatures - the adhesive on self-stick weatherstripping doesn't bond well below 10°C or above 30°C. If you're planning other window work or exterior renovations, coordinate weatherstripping replacement to maximize efficiency and minimize disruption to your home's thermal envelope.

For comprehensive window assessments or if weatherstripping replacement reveals larger issues with your windows, contact Justyn Rook Contracting for a professional evaluation.

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## Q3

### How often should I check for water damage in my bathroom?

**You should inspect your bathroom for water damage monthly, with more thorough checks every 3-6 months.** Regular monitoring is crucial because water damage often starts small and hidden, but can quickly escalate into expensive structural problems and mold issues in Ottawa's humid climate.

**Monthly Quick Checks** should focus on the most vulnerable areas. Look around your toilet base for any soft flooring, discoloration, or musty odors. Check the caulking around your tub, shower, and sink for cracks or gaps where water can seep behind tiles. Run your hand along the bottom edge of your shower door or curtain area to feel for moisture that shouldn't be there. In Ottawa homes, particularly those built before 1980, pay special attention to areas where different materials meet - these joints are prone to failure as our freeze-thaw cycles cause materials to expand and contract.

**Deeper Quarterly Inspections** should include checking behind accessible panels, looking for water stains on ceilings below bathrooms, and testing the exhaust fan to ensure it's removing moisture effectively. Ottawa's cold winters mean we keep our homes sealed tight, making proper ventilation critical to prevent condensation buildup. Check that your exhaust fan moves a tissue held near it, and clean the cover if airflow seems reduced. Look for any loose tiles, especially around the tub surround, as these can indicate water infiltration behind the wall.

**Pay special attention during Ottawa's spring thaw and summer humidity seasons** when moisture problems are most likely to develop. Ice damming in winter can cause water to back up and find its way into bathroom walls, while summer's high humidity can overwhelm inadequate ventilation systems. If you notice any soft spots in flooring, persistent musty smells, or visible mold growth, address these immediately - Ontario's building code requires proper moisture barriers, and insurance claims for gradual water damage are often denied if proper maintenance wasn't performed.

**Professional guidance becomes necessary** when you find soft subflooring, see water stains spreading, or discover mold growth larger than a few square inches. Don't ignore small signs hoping they'll resolve themselves - in Ottawa's climate, moisture problems only get worse over time. Early detection and repair of caulking, ventilation issues, or minor leaks can save thousands compared to full bathroom reconstruction after extensive water damage.

For persistent moisture issues or if you're unsure about what you're seeing during your inspections, contact Justyn Rook Contracting for a professional assessment - we can identify potential problems before they become major renovation projects.

## How do I maintain tile grout in my shower?

**Proper grout maintenance is essential for preventing water damage and keeping your shower looking fresh - with Ottawa's hard water, regular cleaning every 1-2 weeks and annual sealing will extend your grout's lifespan significantly.**

The key to grout maintenance is consistency and using the right products. Start with weekly cleaning using a pH-neutral cleaner specifically designed for tile and grout - avoid harsh chemicals like bleach or vinegar that can break down grout over time. For Ottawa homeowners, the mineral-heavy water means soap scum and calcium buildup happen faster, so staying on top of regular cleaning prevents these deposits from becoming embedded in the grout lines.

**Deep cleaning** should happen monthly using a grout brush (an old toothbrush works well) and a paste made from baking soda and water. Work the paste into the grout lines, let it sit for 10-15 minutes, then scrub gently and rinse thoroughly. For stubborn stains or mildew, use an oxygen bleach product rather than chlorine bleach, which can weaken grout bonds over time.

**Sealing is critical** in Ottawa's climate where temperature fluctuations cause expansion and contraction. Grout should be sealed annually, or bi-annually in heavily used showers. Test if your grout needs sealing by dropping a small amount of water on it - if the water absorbs within 5-10 minutes, it's time to reseal. Use a penetrating sealer specifically designed for your grout type (sanded vs. unsanded).

**Prevention strategies** include running your bathroom exhaust fan during and for 30 minutes after showers, squeegeeing walls after use, and addressing any caulk failures immediately. In older Ottawa homes with poor ventilation, consider upgrading to a more powerful exhaust fan to prevent moisture buildup that leads to mold and grout deterioration.

Watch for signs that maintenance isn't enough: cracking grout, persistent discoloration despite cleaning, or water stains appearing on walls or ceilings below the shower. These indicate the grout has failed and needs professional replacement. Ignoring failed grout in Ottawa's freeze-thaw climate can lead to significant water damage behind walls.

For extensive grout problems or if you're planning a bathroom renovation, contact Justyn Rook Contracting for a free consultation - we can assess whether maintenance or replacement is the better investment for your specific situation.

## Q5

### How often should I reseal my grout?

**Grout should typically be resealed every 1-2 years in high-moisture areas like showers and tubs, while floor grout in dry areas can often go 2-3 years between applications.** However, the frequency depends heavily on the type of grout, sealant quality, and usage patterns in your Ottawa home.

**Sanded vs. Unsanded Grout Considerations** Sanded grout (used for joints wider than 1/8") is more porous and typically needs resealing annually in shower areas. Unsanded grout is denser but still requires regular maintenance. The key indicator isn't just time - it's performance. Test your grout by dropping a small amount of water on it. If the water absorbs quickly rather than beading up, it's time to reseal.

**Ottawa's Climate Impact** Our Ottawa climate creates unique challenges for grout maintenance. The extreme temperature swings from -30°C winters to +35°C summers cause expansion and contraction that can break down sealant faster than in more moderate climates. Additionally, our long heating season means bathrooms often have lower humidity, which can cause grout to dry out and become more porous. Conversely, summer humidity and frequent use of air conditioning can create condensation issues that stress grout joints.

**Signs It's Time to Reseal** Beyond the water test, watch for grout that's darkening, developing hairline cracks, or allowing water to penetrate behind tiles. In shower areas, if you notice any dampness on walls adjacent to the shower or musty odors, your grout seal has likely failed. Don't wait for visible mold - prevention is much easier than remediation.

**Professional vs. DIY Approach** While resealing grout is a manageable DIY project for most homeowners, proper surface preparation is crucial. The existing grout must be thoroughly cleaned and any damaged areas repaired before applying new sealant. For large areas or if you discover underlying moisture damage, this might indicate bigger issues that require professional assessment.

**Quality Products Matter** Invest in a high-quality penetrating sealer rather than topical sealers that can peel or discolor. In Ottawa's market, expect to pay \$15-25 for quality sealer that will cover about 100 square feet. Professional resealing typically runs \$3-6 per square foot including cleaning and prep work.

For extensive grout issues or if you're planning a bathroom renovation, contact Justyn Rook Contracting for a free assessment of your tile and grout condition.

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## Q6

### How do I care for granite countertops?

**Granite countertops are surprisingly low-maintenance and can last decades with proper care - daily cleaning with mild soap and water, plus annual sealing, will keep them looking pristine.**

**Daily Cleaning and Maintenance** For routine cleaning, simply use warm water and a few drops of dish soap with a soft cloth or microfiber towel. Avoid harsh cleaners like bleach, ammonia, or abrasive scrubbers that can damage the sealant. Granite is naturally resistant to heat, but it's still wise to use trivets under hot pots to prevent thermal shock. Wipe up spills immediately, especially acidic substances like wine, coffee, or citrus juices, as these can potentially stain or etch the surface if left sitting.

**Sealing Requirements** Most granite countertops need resealing every 12-18 months, though this varies based on the specific granite type and usage. To test if your granite needs sealing, place a few drops of water on the surface - if it absorbs within 15 minutes, it's time to reseal. In Ottawa's climate, where homes tend to be drier during winter months due to heating, granite may need sealing on the more frequent end of this range. Professional-grade sealers typically cost \$15-25 and are available at local suppliers like Home Depot or Rona.

**What to Avoid** Never use vinegar, lemon juice, or other acidic cleaners on granite, as these can dull the finish over time. Avoid placing raw meat directly on the surface, and always use cutting boards to prevent scratches. While granite is extremely durable, it can chip if subjected to heavy impact, so be careful with cast iron cookware or heavy appliances.

**Professional Restoration** If your granite develops stains, loses its shine, or gets damaged, professional restoration may be needed. In the Ottawa area, expect to pay \$3-8 per square foot for professional polishing and sealing services. For severe damage like deep scratches or chips, costs can range from \$200-600 depending on the extent of repair needed.

With proper care, granite countertops can maintain their beauty and functionality for 20+ years, making them an excellent long-term investment for Ottawa homeowners dealing with our temperature extremes and active kitchen use during long winters.

## How often should basement waterproofing be inspected?

**Basement waterproofing should be inspected annually, with more frequent checks during Ottawa's wet seasons (spring melt and heavy summer rains).** However, the inspection frequency depends on your home's age, existing waterproofing system, and any previous moisture issues.

For most Ottawa homes, a comprehensive annual inspection in late summer or early fall is ideal - this timing allows you to assess how your waterproofing performed during the wettest months and address any issues before winter freeze-thaw cycles can worsen problems. **Newer waterproofing systems** (less than 10 years old) may only need annual checks, while **older systems or homes with previous water issues** should be inspected twice yearly - once in spring after snowmelt and again in fall.

**Key inspection points** include checking for new cracks in foundation walls, examining sump pump operation, testing backup systems, and looking for signs of moisture intrusion like efflorescence (white chalky deposits), musty odors, or water stains. Pay special attention to areas around window wells, where utilities enter the foundation, and any previous repair sites. Ottawa's clay soil expands and contracts significantly with moisture changes, putting extra stress on foundation waterproofing systems.

**Professional vs. DIY inspection** considerations are important here. Homeowners can handle basic visual checks - looking for obvious water damage, testing sump pumps, and monitoring humidity levels. However, a professional inspection every 3-5 years is recommended to assess membrane integrity, drainage tile function, and overall system performance. Licensed contractors have specialized equipment to detect moisture behind finished walls and can identify potential failures before they become expensive problems.

In Ottawa's climate, **seasonal factors** significantly impact inspection timing. Spring inspections should focus on how well your system handled snowmelt and ice dam issues. Summer checks during heavy rainfall periods can reveal drainage problems. Fall inspections are crucial for preparing systems before ground freeze, when repairs become difficult and expensive.

**Red flags requiring immediate professional attention** include any standing water, new cracks wider than a credit card, sump pump failures, or sudden increases in basement humidity. Don't wait for your annual inspection if you notice these warning signs - Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycles can rapidly worsen foundation issues.

For specialized basement waterproofing expertise and comprehensive system evaluations, visit our dedicated team at [OttawaBasements.com](https://OttawaBasements.com). Want to discuss your specific basement's waterproofing needs? We offer free consultations to assess your current system and recommend appropriate inspection schedules based on your home's unique conditions.

## When should I replace the caulking around my windows?

**You should replace window caulking every 5-7 years as preventive maintenance, or immediately if you notice cracking, shrinking, or gaps.** In Ottawa's harsh climate with freeze-thaw cycles, window caulking deteriorates faster than in milder regions, so regular inspection is crucial for preventing water damage and energy loss.

**Signs it's time to replace your window caulking** include visible cracks or gaps, caulk that's pulling away from the window frame or siding, discoloration or mold growth, and noticeable drafts around windows. You might also notice higher heating bills during Ottawa winters, which often indicates air leaks around windows and doors. If you can see daylight around your window frames or feel cold air, the caulking has likely failed.

**Ottawa's climate is particularly hard on exterior caulking** due to our temperature swings from -30°C in winter to +35°C in summer. This constant expansion and contraction causes standard caulks to crack and fail prematurely. The best time to recaulk windows in Ottawa is during dry weather in late spring through early fall (May to September), when temperatures are consistently above 10°C and humidity is lower.

**For exterior window caulking in Ottawa**, use a high-quality polyurethane or hybrid polymer caulk rated for extreme weather conditions. These products remain flexible in cold temperatures and resist UV damage from our intense summer sun. Avoid basic acrylic caulks for exterior use - they'll crack within 2-3 years in our climate. Interior window caulking can use paintable acrylic latex, which is easier to work with and clean up.

**The replacement process** involves completely removing old caulk (never caulk over existing material), cleaning the surfaces thoroughly, and applying new caulk in temperatures between 10-30°C with low humidity. Poor surface preparation is the main reason caulking fails prematurely. If your windows are older or you're dealing with multiple windows, this is often part of larger maintenance that might include window repairs or replacements.

**Professional consideration:** While recaulking is a manageable DIY project, if you're uncomfortable on ladders or dealing with second-story windows, it's worth hiring a professional. We often include window recaulking as part of exterior renovation projects, ensuring proper materials and techniques for Ottawa's climate.

For a comprehensive assessment of your windows and caulking needs, Justyn Rook Contracting offers free consultations to help prioritize your home maintenance projects.

## How often should I clean my kitchen range hood filter?

**Kitchen range hood filters should be cleaned every 1-2 months for average cooking, or more frequently if you cook daily or do a lot of frying and high-heat cooking.** The exact frequency depends on your cooking habits, the type of filter, and how much grease and smoke your cooking generates.

Most range hoods use either aluminum mesh filters or baffle filters, both of which are designed to be cleaned regularly rather than replaced. If you notice grease buildup, reduced suction power, or cooking odors lingering longer than usual, it's definitely time for a cleaning. Heavy cooks who use their range daily, especially those who do a lot of sautéing, frying, or wok cooking, may need to clean filters every 2-3 weeks.

**Cleaning aluminum mesh filters** is straightforward - they can go right in your dishwasher on the top rack, or you can hand wash them with hot, soapy water and a degreasing dish soap. For stubborn grease buildup, soak them in hot water with baking soda for 10-15 minutes before scrubbing gently with a soft brush. **Baffle filters** (the stainless steel ones with angled slats) are even easier to maintain and can handle the dishwasher's high heat without warping.

In Ottawa's climate, where we tend to cook heartier meals during our long winters and keep windows closed for months, range hood maintenance becomes even more important for maintaining good indoor air quality. Many Ottawa homeowners also notice they cook more during winter months, which means filters may need attention more frequently from November through March.

**Professional maintenance** of the entire range hood system - including the fan motor, ductwork, and exterior vent - should be done annually, especially if you notice decreased performance even after cleaning filters. During kitchen renovations, we often find that homeowners have been diligent about filter cleaning but haven't considered that grease can build up in the ductwork over time, reducing overall efficiency.

If your range hood is over 10 years old and struggling to keep up even with clean filters, it might be time to consider an upgrade to a more powerful unit, especially if you've done any kitchen renovations that increased your cooking capacity or changed your cooking patterns.

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## How do I prevent mold in my bathroom?

**Preventing bathroom mold requires controlling moisture through proper ventilation, regular cleaning, and addressing any water leaks immediately.** In Ottawa's humid climate, bathrooms are particularly susceptible to mold growth, but with the right approach, you can keep your space healthy and mold-free.

**Ventilation is your first line of defense** against bathroom mold. Install an exhaust fan rated for your bathroom size (typically 1 CFM per square foot of floor space), and run it during showers and for at least 30 minutes afterward. Many Ottawa homeowners underestimate fan capacity - a 5x8 bathroom needs at least a 40 CFM fan. If your current fan is loud or ineffective, upgrading to a modern, quiet model with a humidity sensor can make a significant difference. The fan should vent directly outside, not into the attic space, which is required by the Ontario Building Code.

**Regular maintenance and cleaning habits** play a crucial role in mold prevention. Wipe down shower walls and doors after each use, especially around corners and caulk lines where moisture tends to accumulate. Clean your bathroom weekly with a mold-inhibiting cleaner, paying special attention to grout lines, caulking, and areas around fixtures. Replace caulking annually or when you notice it becoming discolored or cracked - old caulk is a prime breeding ground for mold spores.

**Address water issues immediately** to prevent mold from taking hold. Check for leaks around toilets, under sinks, and behind shower surrounds regularly. In Ottawa's freeze-thaw climate, small leaks can worsen quickly, especially around windows or exterior walls. If you notice water stains, musty odors, or soft spots in drywall, investigate immediately. These often indicate hidden moisture problems that require professional attention.

**Consider your bathroom's specific conditions** when implementing prevention strategies. Bathrooms with poor natural light or those in basements are at higher risk. Installing a timer switch for your exhaust fan ensures it runs long enough to clear moisture. For basement bathrooms, a small dehumidifier can help maintain optimal humidity levels (30-50%). Ensure your bathroom has adequate heat circulation - cold surfaces promote condensation.

**Professional intervention** may be necessary if you're dealing with recurring mold despite good ventilation and cleaning habits. This often indicates underlying issues like inadequate vapor barriers, poor ventilation design, or hidden leaks within walls. For bathroom renovations or persistent mold problems, contact Justyn Rook Contracting for a free consultation - we can assess your ventilation needs and identify any structural moisture issues that need addressing.

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## Q11

### What annual maintenance does a finished basement need?

**A finished basement requires consistent annual maintenance to prevent moisture issues, maintain air quality, and protect your investment.** Most problems in finished basements stem from humidity and water infiltration, making proactive maintenance essential in Ottawa's climate.

**Moisture and humidity control** should be your top priority each spring and fall. Check your dehumidifier's filter and drainage system, ensuring it's maintaining 30-50% relative humidity. Clean the unit thoroughly and test its operation before the humid summer months. Inspect all basement windows for proper sealing and drainage, as Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycles can compromise window wells. Clear debris from window wells and ensure proper grading directs water away from the foundation.

**HVAC system maintenance** is crucial for basement comfort and air quality. Replace furnace filters every 3 months, or monthly during peak heating season. Have your ductwork inspected annually for proper airflow to basement areas - many finished basements suffer from poor air circulation. If you have a separate basement heating/cooling zone, ensure dampers are functioning correctly. Clean dryer vents thoroughly, as lint buildup poses a significant fire risk in finished spaces.

**Plumbing and electrical inspections** should be conducted annually. Check exposed pipes for signs of condensation or minor leaks, particularly around the water heater and laundry connections. Test all GFCI outlets monthly - Ontario's Electrical Safety Authority requires GFCI protection in basement areas. Inspect sump pump operation before spring melt by pouring water into the pit to ensure proper cycling.

**Structural and finishing maintenance** includes checking for new cracks in foundation walls or floors, which are common in Ottawa due to soil movement and frost action. Inspect drywall and flooring for water stains, soft spots, or mold growth. Clean and seal any minor cracks promptly to prevent water infiltration. Check caulking around basement bathroom fixtures and re-seal as needed.

**Ottawa-specific considerations** include preparing for spring flooding season by testing your sump pump and checking weeping tile drainage. The City of Ottawa recommends annual backwater valve maintenance if you have one installed. Before winter, ensure basement windows are properly sealed and storm windows are in place to prevent ice damming issues.

**Professional guidance** suggests having a qualified contractor inspect your basement every 2-3 years for issues you might miss, particularly around moisture management and structural integrity. While homeowners can handle most routine maintenance, any signs of significant water infiltration, structural settling, or electrical issues require immediate professional attention.

For comprehensive basement maintenance or if you discover issues during your annual inspection, Justyn Rook Contracting can help assess and address problems before they become costly repairs.

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Q12

## How often should I clean my bathroom exhaust fan?

**You should clean your bathroom exhaust fan every 3-6 months to maintain proper ventilation and prevent moisture problems** - this is especially important in Ottawa's humid summers and cold winters when proper bathroom ventilation is critical for preventing mold and ice damming issues.

Regular cleaning of your exhaust fan is one of the most overlooked maintenance tasks that can have a big impact on your bathroom's health. A clogged fan can lose up to 50% of its efficiency, leading to excess moisture that promotes mold growth, peeling paint, and even structural damage over time. In Ottawa's climate, where we deal with significant temperature swings and humidity changes, a properly functioning exhaust fan is your first line of defense against moisture-related problems.

**The cleaning process is straightforward but requires attention to safety.** First, turn off the power at the circuit breaker - never just use the wall switch, as you'll be working with electrical components. Remove the fan cover (usually held by spring clips or screws) and vacuum out the accumulated dust, lint, and debris. The fan blades and housing should be wiped down with a damp cloth, and if the cover is particularly dirty, it can be washed in warm soapy water. While you're at it, check that the exterior vent hood isn't blocked by snow, ice, or debris - a common issue during Ottawa winters.

**Signs your fan needs immediate attention** include reduced airflow, unusual noise, or visible dust buildup on the cover. If your mirror still fogs up significantly after a shower with the fan running, or if you notice condensation on walls and windows, your fan may be undersized for the space or need professional attention. The Ontario Building Code requires bathroom fans to move at least 50 CFM (cubic feet per minute), but many older installations fall short of this standard.

**Professional considerations** come into play if you discover the fan motor is failing, if there are electrical issues, or if you're dealing with a roof-mounted unit that's difficult to access safely. Any electrical work requires proper permits through the Electrical Safety Authority (ESA), and working on roof-mounted units during Ottawa winters can be dangerous. If your fan is more than 10-15 years old and showing signs of wear, upgrading to a newer, more efficient model can significantly improve performance while reducing noise and energy consumption.

For a comprehensive bathroom renovation that includes proper ventilation planning, contact Justyn Rook Contracting for a free consultation - we ensure all ventilation meets current Ontario Building Code requirements.

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## How do I maintain quartz countertops?

**Quartz countertops are incredibly low-maintenance and durable, requiring only basic daily cleaning with soap and water to keep them looking pristine.** Unlike natural stone, quartz is non-porous and doesn't require sealing, making it one of the most user-friendly countertop materials for busy Ottawa kitchens.

For **daily cleaning**, simply use warm water and a mild dish soap with a soft cloth or microfiber towel. This removes most spills, fingerprints, and everyday grime without damaging the surface. The engineered nature of quartz means it's naturally resistant to stains, bacteria, and moisture - a huge advantage in our humid Ottawa summers when kitchens can get steamy from cooking and entertaining.

**Avoid harsh chemicals** like bleach, ammonia-based cleaners, or abrasive scrubbers, as these can dull the surface over time. While quartz is extremely durable, it's not completely indestructible. Use trivets or hot pads for anything over 150°F - this includes hot pots, slow cookers, and even some small appliances. The resin binders in quartz can be damaged by excessive heat, potentially causing discoloration or cracking that's expensive to repair.

For **stubborn stains or dried spills**, create a paste with baking soda and water, let it sit for 10 minutes, then gently scrub with a soft cloth. This works particularly well for coffee rings, wine stains, or dried food residue. **Avoid acidic cleaners** like vinegar or lemon juice, which can etch the surface despite quartz being more acid-resistant than natural stone.

In Ottawa's climate, you might notice **water spots** during winter when indoor humidity drops significantly. Simply buff these away with a dry microfiber cloth. During renovation season (spring through fall), if you're doing other kitchen work, protect your quartz from construction dust and debris with plastic sheeting - fine particles can scratch the surface if ground in during cleaning.

**Professional maintenance** is rarely needed, but if you notice any chips, cracks, or persistent stains, contact a certified quartz fabricator rather than attempting repairs yourself. Most quality quartz installations in Ottawa come with warranties that require professional service to remain valid.

The beauty of choosing quartz during a kitchen renovation is its durability - with proper care, it should look as good in 20 years as it does today, making it an excellent investment for Ottawa homeowners planning to stay in their homes long-term.

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Q14

## How do I maintain vinyl plank flooring?

**Vinyl plank flooring is one of the lowest-maintenance flooring options available, requiring only regular cleaning and basic preventive care to keep it looking great for years.** With Ottawa's seasonal changes bringing in salt, snow, and mud, proper maintenance becomes even more important to protect your investment.

**Daily and weekly maintenance** is straightforward and requires minimal effort. Sweep or vacuum regularly to remove dirt and debris that can scratch the surface over time. Use a microfiber mop with warm water for weekly cleaning, or add a pH-neutral floor cleaner specifically designed for vinyl flooring. Avoid using harsh chemicals, abrasive cleaners, or traditional wax products, as these can damage the protective wear layer and leave residue that attracts more dirt.

**Managing Ottawa's seasonal challenges** requires some specific attention. During winter months, place quality entrance mats both inside and outside doorways to capture salt, sand, and moisture before it reaches your floors. Clean up salt residue promptly, as prolonged exposure can cause discoloration or damage. In spring and fall when Ottawa experiences heavy rainfall, ensure good ventilation to prevent moisture buildup, especially in basements where humidity can be higher.

**Preventive care** will extend your flooring's lifespan significantly. Use furniture pads under heavy items to prevent indentations and scratches when moving furniture. Trim pet nails regularly and clean up spills immediately to prevent staining. While vinyl plank is water-resistant, standing water should still be cleaned up promptly, particularly around areas like laundry rooms or basement bathrooms where moisture is common.

**Deep cleaning and long-term care** involves monthly attention to high-traffic areas and periodic inspection for any loose planks or damaged sections. For stubborn stains, use a paste of baking soda and water, let it sit for a few minutes, then gently scrub with a soft brush. Most quality vinyl plank flooring installed in Ottawa homes should maintain its appearance for 10-15 years with proper care.

**Professional maintenance** is rarely needed for vinyl plank flooring, making it an excellent choice for busy Ottawa homeowners. However, if you notice widespread dulling, deep scratches, or water damage, consult with flooring professionals to assess whether repair or replacement sections are needed. This DIY-friendly maintenance routine will keep your vinyl plank floors looking beautiful through all of Ottawa's seasons.

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