

JUSTYN ROOK CONTRACTING

Materials & Products

Questions about building materials, products,
brands, and selection

8 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

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Q1

What is the best paint finish for bathrooms?

For Ottawa bathrooms, semi-gloss or satin paint finishes are your best choices, with semi-gloss being ideal for high-moisture areas like shower surrounds and satin working well for general wall areas.

Semi-gloss paint is the gold standard for bathroom walls, especially in shower areas and around tubs. This finish creates a durable, moisture-resistant surface that can handle Ottawa's humidity swings and frequent cleaning. The slightly glossy surface allows water droplets to bead and roll off rather than soaking into the paint, and it wipes clean easily when soap scum or mildew tries to take hold. Most professional contractors in Ottawa default to semi-gloss for bathroom projects because it simply performs better over time.

Satin finish offers a good middle ground if you prefer less sheen but still need moisture resistance. It's particularly suitable for bathroom walls that don't get direct water exposure, like the wall opposite your shower or behind the toilet. Satin hides minor wall imperfections better than semi-gloss while still providing decent washability and moisture protection.

Avoid flat or eggshell finishes in bathrooms entirely - they're too porous for our climate. Ottawa's winter heating and summer humidity create challenging conditions, and these finishes will absorb moisture, leading to peeling, bubbling, and mold growth. Even in powder rooms with minimal moisture, the inability to properly clean these finishes makes them impractical.

Paint quality matters significantly in Ottawa bathrooms. Look for paints specifically labeled as "bathroom paint" or "moisture-resistant" from reputable brands like Benjamin Moore Aura Bath & Spa or Sherwin Williams ProClassic. These formulations include mildew inhibitors and enhanced moisture resistance that's crucial for our climate. Expect to pay \$60-80 per gallon for quality bathroom paint, but it's worth the investment for longevity.

Proper surface preparation is critical regardless of finish choice. In older Ottawa homes, check for existing moisture damage, prime any stained areas with a high-quality primer like Kilz or Zinsser, and ensure adequate ventilation during application. The paint will only perform as well as the prep work allows.

For a professional bathroom renovation that includes proper paint selection and application, contact Justyn Rook Contracting for a free consultation. We understand Ottawa's unique climate challenges and use proven paint systems that stand up to our demanding conditions.

Q2

What are the best practices for drywall and painting during a home renovation?

Proper drywall installation and painting technique can make or break your renovation's final appearance.

The key is taking time with preparation, using quality materials, and following the right sequence - rushing these finishing trades always shows in the final result.

Drywall Best Practices

Start with proper framing preparation before hanging any drywall. In Ottawa's older homes, you'll often find uneven studs or settling that requires shimming to create straight, plumb walls. Use a laser level or long straightedge to identify problem areas. For bathroom and basement renovations, always use moisture-resistant drywall (green board or purple board) in wet areas, and consider mold-resistant varieties given Ottawa's humidity swings.

When hanging drywall, **minimize joints wherever possible** by using the longest sheets that will fit through your doorways. Standard 4x8 sheets work for most residential work, but 4x10 or 4x12 sheets reduce seams significantly. Always hang horizontally on walls under 9 feet - this creates stronger joints and fewer seams. Leave a 1/4" gap at the floor for expansion and settlement, especially important in Ottawa's freeze-thaw climate.

Taping and mudding requires patience - this is where most DIY projects fail. Apply three coats minimum: tape coat, fill coat, and finish coat. Each coat must be completely dry before the next (24-48 hours in Ottawa's variable humidity). Use paper tape for corners and butt joints - it's stronger than mesh tape despite being harder to work with. Feather your mud coats progressively wider: 6" for tape coat, 10" for fill coat, 12-14" for finish coat.

Painting Preparation and Execution

Surface preparation determines paint longevity more than paint quality. Sand all drywall mud smooth with 120-grit paper, then prime with a high-quality drywall primer - never skip this step. In Ottawa homes, pay special attention to areas that may have been exposed to moisture or temperature fluctuations during construction.

Choose paint based on the room's function and Ottawa's climate conditions. For bathrooms and basements, use moisture-resistant paint with mold inhibitors. Semi-gloss or satin finishes work best in high-humidity areas and are easier to clean. For living areas, eggshell provides good durability while hiding minor imperfections.

Apply paint in the right environmental conditions - temperature between 50-85°F with low humidity. Ottawa's spring and fall weather can be ideal, but avoid painting during humid summer days or when heating systems create dry winter air that causes paint to dry too quickly.

Professional vs. DIY Considerations

While homeowners can handle basic drywall repairs and painting, **large renovations benefit from professional trades**. Experienced drywallers can hang and finish a typical room in 2-3 days versus 1-2 weeks for most DIYers. Professional painters achieve consistent coverage and finish quality that's difficult to match without experience.

For secondary suite conversions, **fire-rated drywall installation requires specific techniques** and inspection. The Ontario Building Code requires 45-minute fire separation between units, which involves specific screw patterns, sealants, and installation methods that affect insurance and safety.

Next Steps for Your Project

Plan your drywall and painting timeline carefully - these trades can't be rushed without compromising quality. Budget 7-10 days minimum for a typical room including drying time. For whole-home renovations, consider hiring professionals for consistent results and faster completion. Want to discuss the finishing details for your specific renovation? Contact Justyn Rook Contracting for a free consultation on achieving professional-quality results.

Q3

What's the difference between luxury vinyl plank and laminate?

Luxury vinyl plank (LVP) and laminate are both popular flooring choices, but they differ significantly in construction, durability, and performance - especially important considerations for Ottawa's climate with its temperature swings and humidity changes.

Construction and Materials make the biggest difference between these two options. Luxury vinyl plank is made from multiple layers of vinyl with a photographic layer that mimics wood, topped with a clear wear layer. It's 100% waterproof throughout. Laminate flooring, on the other hand, has a high-density fiberboard (HDF) core with a photographic layer and protective coating on top. The core is made from compressed wood fibers, making it susceptible to moisture damage if water seeps through seams or edges.

Water resistance is where LVP really shines in Ottawa homes. Since it's completely waterproof, LVP works excellently in basements, bathrooms, laundry rooms, and kitchens - areas where moisture is common. Laminate can handle light spills if cleaned up quickly, but prolonged moisture exposure will cause the HDF core to swell and warp. This is particularly important in Ottawa basements where humidity levels can fluctuate seasonally.

Durability and comfort vary between the two. Quality LVP typically feels softer underfoot and handles temperature changes better than laminate. In Ottawa's climate, where we see everything from -30°C winters to +30°C summers, LVP maintains its stability while some laminate products may expand and contract more noticeably. However, high-end laminate often has superior scratch resistance compared to vinyl.

Installation and cost considerations for Ottawa homeowners show laminate generally costs \$3-8 per square foot installed, while quality LVP runs \$4-10 per square foot. Both can be installed as floating floors over most existing surfaces, making them good options for basement renovations or quick updates. LVP installation is often slightly

easier since it's more forgiving of minor subfloor imperfections.

For Ottawa homes specifically, I typically recommend LVP for basements, bathrooms, and areas prone to moisture, while laminate works well for main floor living areas where you want the most realistic wood look at a lower price point. Consider your specific room's moisture exposure, foot traffic, and whether pets or children will be using the space heavily.

Want to discuss which option would work best for your specific renovation project? We offer free consultations to help you choose the right flooring solution for your Ottawa home.

Q4

Should I do my own drywall or hire a professional?

For most homeowners, hiring a professional drywaller is the better choice unless you have significant experience and the right tools. While drywall installation looks straightforward, achieving professional results requires specific skills, especially in the finishing stages.

DIY drywall can work for small projects like patching holes or finishing an unfinished basement room where perfection isn't critical. You'll need basic tools (drywall saw, screw gun, taping knives, mud pan) and can expect to spend \$1-2 per square foot on materials. However, the learning curve is steep - most first-timers struggle with taping, mudding, and sanding to achieve smooth, paint-ready walls. Common mistakes include visible seams, uneven joints, and over-sanding that damages the paper face.

Professional installation in the Ottawa market typically runs \$2-4 per square foot installed and finished, depending on ceiling height, room complexity, and finish level. This includes hanging, taping, mudding, sanding, and primer application. Professionals have specialized tools like automatic tapers and corner rollers that create consistently smooth results, plus they work much faster - what takes a homeowner a weekend might take a pro a few hours.

Ottawa-specific considerations include our climate's effect on drywall - the freeze-thaw cycles mean proper installation is crucial around windows and exterior walls to prevent cracking. If your project requires permits (like basement finishing or secondary suite conversion), the drywall work will be inspected, and poor DIY work can fail inspection, costing more to fix than hiring a pro initially.

When to hire a professional: Complex rooms with vaulted ceilings, multiple corners, or areas requiring fire-rated drywall (like secondary suites requiring 45-minute fire separation). Also consider your timeline - professionals complete the job faster, allowing other trades to proceed sooner.

Safety considerations include dust control (especially important if you have asbestos-containing materials in older Ottawa homes) and proper lifting techniques for heavy sheets. Always test for asbestos before disturbing walls in homes built before 1980.

For most renovation projects, the cost difference between DIY and professional installation is often worth it for the time savings, guaranteed results, and warranty coverage. Want to discuss your specific drywall project? We offer free consultations to help determine the best approach for your situation.

Q5

What is the cost difference between laminate and quartz countertops?

Laminate countertops typically cost \$15-40 per square foot installed in Ottawa, while quartz runs \$80-150 per square foot installed - making quartz roughly 3-4 times more expensive than laminate for most projects.

For a typical Ottawa kitchen with 30 square feet of countertop space, you're looking at **\$450-1,200 for laminate versus \$2,400-4,500 for quartz**. This price difference reflects not just materials, but also the complexity of installation and long-term durability expectations.

Laminate costs break down to \$8-15 per square foot for materials, with installation adding another \$7-25 per square foot. Modern laminate options like Formica 180fx or Wilsonart HD can mimic stone patterns quite convincingly, though they still show seams and edges that reveal the substrate. In Ottawa's market, you'll find the best selection at stores like Home Depot, Lowe's, or local suppliers like Richelieu.

Quartz pricing ranges from \$60-100 per square foot for the material itself, with fabrication and installation adding \$20-50 per square foot. Popular brands available in Ottawa include Caesarstone, Silestone, and Cambria. The higher cost reflects quartz's engineered composition (93% natural quartz, 7% polymer resins), which creates a non-porous surface that resists stains, scratches, and bacteria without sealing.

Ottawa-specific considerations include HST (13%) on both options, and the fact that quartz fabrication requires specialized equipment - there are fewer qualified installers locally, which can affect pricing and scheduling. Winter installation is fine for both materials since it's interior work, though quartz slabs need climate-controlled transport.

Long-term value perspective: While laminate needs replacement every 10-15 years and can chip or burn, quality quartz installations last 20+ years with minimal maintenance. For rental properties or budget-conscious renovations, laminate makes sense. For forever homes or higher-end rentals, quartz often pays for itself in durability and resale value.

Professional installation is recommended for both materials - laminate for proper templating and seamless edges, quartz because it requires diamond-blade cutting and precise measurement. DIY laminate is possible but risky given the cost of mistakes.

For a detailed estimate based on your specific kitchen layout and material preferences, contact Justyn Rook Contracting for a free consultation.

Q6

Are there companies in ottawa that specialize in granite installation?

Yes, Ottawa has several companies that specialize in granite countertop fabrication and installation, though this falls outside our renovation specialty at Justyn Rook Contracting.

When we're doing kitchen renovations for our clients, we typically coordinate with local granite fabricators as part of the overall project. The Ottawa market has both large suppliers and smaller specialty shops that focus specifically on natural stone work. **Granite installation requires specialized tools, templates, and experience** - particularly for precise measuring, cutting sink/cooktop openings, and handling the heavy slabs safely.

Local granite specialists typically offer the full service from template creation to final installation, which usually takes 2-3 weeks from measurement to completion. They'll handle the digital templating (done after cabinets are installed), fabrication at their shop, and professional installation with proper support and sealing. Most reputable shops in Ottawa carry both domestic and imported granite, with prices ranging from \$60-150 per square foot installed, depending on the stone grade and edge treatments.

For Ottawa homeowners, key considerations include ensuring the fabricator is properly insured and experienced with the specific granite type you've chosen. Some stones are more challenging to work with than others. The installer should also understand Ottawa's climate - proper sealing is crucial given our freeze-thaw cycles that can affect natural stone over time.

Professional installation is definitely recommended for granite countertops. The material is expensive, heavy (requiring 2-3 installers), and mistakes in cutting or installation can be costly. A good fabricator will also ensure proper support underneath, especially for overhangs and islands, which is important for both safety and longevity.

When we're managing a full kitchen renovation, we coordinate the granite installation timing with cabinet completion, plumbing rough-in, and final electrical work. This ensures everything integrates properly and the project stays on schedule.

For granite-only projects, I'd recommend checking HomeStars or getting referrals from local kitchen showrooms, as they often work with trusted fabricators regularly.

What is the cost to install hardwood floors throughout my home?

Hardwood flooring installation in Ottawa typically ranges from \$8-15 per square foot for materials and labor combined, meaning a 1,500 sq ft home would cost approximately \$12,000-22,500 total. However, this varies significantly based on wood species, grade, installation method, and your home's specific conditions.

Material costs make up roughly 60% of your total investment. Engineered hardwood (most popular choice) runs \$4-8 per square foot, while solid hardwood ranges \$6-12 per square foot. Premium species like Brazilian cherry or wide-plank oak can reach \$15+ per square foot just for materials. **Installation labor** typically adds \$4-7 per square foot, depending on complexity and the contractor's experience level.

Ottawa-specific factors significantly impact pricing. Older Ottawa homes often require subfloor preparation or leveling, adding \$2-4 per square foot. Our climate demands proper moisture barriers and acclimatization - quality installers will let hardwood acclimate in your home for 3-7 days before installation. Winter installations may take longer due to humidity control requirements, and spring is typically the busiest season for flooring contractors.

Additional costs often surprise homeowners. Removing existing flooring adds \$2-4 per square foot. Transitions, trim, and baseboards can add \$1,000-3,000 to your project. Don't forget about moving furniture - professional movers charge \$300-800 for a typical home. Stairs are particularly expensive, running \$40-80 per step for hardwood installation.

Professional installation is strongly recommended for hardwood flooring. Improper installation leads to gaps, buckling, and voided warranties. Licensed flooring contractors carry insurance and guarantee their work. DIY installation might save \$4-7 per square foot in labor, but mistakes are costly to fix and most manufacturers require professional installation to honor warranties.

While Justyn Rook Contracting specializes in bathroom, kitchen, and basement renovations rather than standalone flooring projects, we often coordinate hardwood installation as part of larger renovation projects. For dedicated flooring installation, I'd recommend getting quotes from specialized flooring contractors who can properly assess your subfloor conditions and provide detailed estimates.

Next steps: Measure your square footage accurately, research wood species that suit Ottawa's climate, and get at least three quotes from licensed flooring contractors. Spring and fall typically offer the best pricing and availability in our market.

Can I add insulation to the walls of an older home without removing the drywall?

Yes, you can add insulation to existing walls without removing drywall using blown-in or injection foam methods, though the effectiveness depends on your home's construction and current insulation levels.

The most common approach for Ottawa's older homes is **blown-in cellulose or fiberglass insulation**. A contractor drills small holes (about 2.5 inches) in the exterior wall from outside, then uses specialized equipment to blow insulation into each wall cavity. The holes are then patched and painted to match. This method works well for homes with standard 2x4 or 2x6 stud construction and can increase your wall's R-value from virtually nothing to R-12 to R-15.

Injection foam insulation is another option that's becoming more popular in Ottawa. This involves drilling smaller holes and injecting expanding foam that fills gaps and voids more completely than blown-in materials. It's particularly effective for older homes with irregular framing or existing settling. The foam creates both insulation and an air barrier, which is crucial for Ottawa's climate where air leakage can account for 25-40% of heating costs.

Ottawa-specific considerations make this upgrade particularly valuable. Many homes built before 1980 have little to no wall insulation, and with our -30°C winters, the energy savings can be substantial. You'll typically see a 15-25% reduction in heating costs. The work can be done year-round, unlike exterior renovations, making it perfect for fall and winter projects when HVAC contractors are less busy.

Professional installation is strongly recommended for this type of work. Improper installation can create moisture problems, especially in Ottawa's climate where vapor barriers and air sealing are critical. A qualified contractor will assess your wall construction, check for knob-and-tube wiring (common in pre-1950s homes), and ensure proper coverage without creating thermal bridging.

Before proceeding, have an energy audit done through Enbridge Gas's Home Efficiency Rebate program - you may qualify for rebates up to \$5,000 for insulation upgrades. The contractor should also check for asbestos in homes built before 1980, as disturbing insulation may require special handling.

For a comprehensive assessment of your home's insulation needs and a free estimate on wall insulation upgrades, contact Justyn Rook Contracting. We'll evaluate your specific situation and recommend the best approach for your Ottawa home.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Justyn Rook Contracting. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any construction or renovation project. Information is current as of February 23, 2026 and may change. Visit justynrookcontracting.com for the latest answers.