OTTAWA ABATEMENT

Lead Paint

Health Canada's lead guidance by construction year (before 1960, 1960 to 1990, after 1990), testing paint, dust containment and cleanup

4 Expert Answers from Abatement IQ

ottawaabatement.com/construction-brain

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Q1

Should I worry about lead paint with young kids in an Ottawa house?

If your house was built before 1960, Health Canada says it probably contains lead-based paint. If it was built between 1960 and 1990, the exterior may contain lead-based paint, and interior surfaces may also contain lead in smaller amounts that could still be harmful, especially to young children. Houses built after 1990 should not contain lead, because all consumer paints produced in Canada and the United States were virtually lead-free by then.

If you are planning any work that touches painted surfaces in an older home, testing before you start is the sensible first step. A certified inspector can measure paint lead levels in your home, or you can mail paint chip samples to a testing laboratory.

If lead is confirmed and removal is needed, the method used, the dust containment during the work and the cleanup afterward should all be written into the contractor's quote before any work begins. Ontario's guideline on lead in construction says project owners must determine whether lead is present and inform potential contractors, though how that duty applies to a house the owner lives in is not settled, and you should ask the contractor or the Ministry of Labour if you are unsure. The guideline is guidance, not a regulation, and it does not replace the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

A few things worth knowing before you hire:

- We found no Ontario company licence for lead abatement as such. What you can check is whether the contractor has current WSIB clearance, which you can search online.
- The method, containment and cleanup plan should be spelled out in the written quote, not left vague.
- Under Ontario's Consumer Protection Act, 2002, an agreement signed at your home is a direct agreement; if the total exceeds $50, it must be in writing and you have 10 days to cancel after receiving your copy. Check the current rules, as the Act is due to be replaced.
- The Construction Act generally requires a 10 per cent holdback; get advice for your situation.

We found no published Ottawa contractor prices for lead testing or removal with enough sources to give a reliable range.
The most useful question to put to a contractor before you sign is: exactly what containment and cleanup steps will you use, and how will you confirm the work area is clear when you are done?

Q2

Paint chips or an inspector, how is lead confirmed in Ottawa houses?

Both routes are valid in Ontario. Health Canada says a certified inspector can measure paint lead levels in your home, or you can mail paint chip samples to a testing laboratory. Health Canada names both and does not rank them.

One route sends paint chips to a laboratory; the other brings a certified inspector to measure lead levels in the home.

The result is most useful before work is planned. Ontario's guideline on lead on construction projects says a project owner must determine whether lead is present and inform potential contractors before work begins. For a house you live in, how that duty applies is not settled. The guideline also says employers on construction projects must still take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The practical point is that if you have a lab report or an inspector's findings in hand before you get quotes, contractors can price the work accurately and write the containment, the method and the cleanup into the contract.

A few things worth confirming before you hire anyone for lead work:

- Ask whether the quote specifies the method, the dust containment and the cleanup standard in writing, not just a price per room.
- Ask how the contractor handles waste, since we found no Ottawa-specific rule on lead-paint debris disposal, and you want that answered before work starts.
- Search the contractor's WSIB clearance online before signing; a clearance is valid for up to 90 days.
- The Consumer Protection Act, 2002 gives you 10 days to cancel a direct agreement signed at your home where the total exceeds $50; check the current rules, as that Act is due to be replaced.

If the home was built before 1960, Health Canada says it probably contains lead-based paint. If it was built between 1960 and 1990, the exterior may contain lead-based paint and interior surfaces may also contain lead in smaller amounts that could still be harmful, particularly to young children. Houses built after 1990 should not contain lead, because all consumer paints produced in Canada and the U.S. were virtually lead-free by then.
Once the work is done, keep the lab report or inspector's findings, the written contract showing the method and containment, and any post-work documentation the contractor provides. File them with your house papers.

Q3

Who can measure lead levels in paint in an Ottawa home?

Two options exist for measuring lead levels in paint in an Ottawa home: a certified inspector can test paint lead levels on site, or you can mail paint chip samples to a testing laboratory.

Health Canada notes that your home probably contains lead-based paint if it was built before 1960. If it was built between 1960 and 1990, the exterior may contain lead-based paint, and interior surfaces may also contain lead in smaller amounts that could still be harmful, especially to young children. Houses built after 1990 should not contain lead, because all consumer paints produced in Canada and the United States were virtually lead-free by then.

Health Canada describes both options but does not rank one above the other, and we found no published Ottawa prices for either service with enough sources to give a reliable range.

Ontario's lead guideline notes that under section 30 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, a project owner must determine whether lead is present and inform potential contractors before work begins. How section 30 applies when the owner also occupies the home is not settled, so if you are planning a renovation or hiring a contractor, it is worth raising the question with the contractor or the Ministry of Labour. Separately, ask for the removal method, the dust containment and the cleanup in writing before any work on painted surfaces starts.

We found no City of Ottawa permit specific to lead paint testing or removal. Ontario's lead guideline is a guideline, not a regulation, and it says it does not replace the Occupational Health and Safety Act and should not be used as legal advice.

If you have already disturbed a painted surface in a home built before 1990 and are concerned about lead, stop the work and have the paint tested using one of the two options above.

Q4

Is lead paint more likely outside than inside an Ottawa house?

Health Canada says your home probably contains lead-based paint if it was built before 1960. If it was built between 1960 and 1990, the exterior may contain lead-based paint, and interior surfaces may also contain lead in smaller amounts that could still be harmful, especially to young children. Houses built after 1990 should not contain lead, because all consumer paints produced in Canada and the United States were virtually lead-free by then.

So yes, Health Canada's guidance does point to the exterior as a particular concern for homes built between 1960 and 1990, while interior surfaces in that same age range may also have lead in smaller amounts. For a home built before 1960, Health Canada says it probably contains lead-based paint. The distinction matters less than the age of the home: if yours falls in either band, testing both inside and out is the practical approach.

What to do before any renovation work

Ontario's guideline on lead in construction says section 30 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act requires a project owner to determine whether lead is present and tell prospective contractors; how section 30 applies to a house the owner lives in is not settled, so ask your contractor or the Ministry of Labour if you are unsure. A certified inspector can measure paint lead levels in your home, or you can mail paint chip samples to a testing laboratory. We found too few published Ottawa prices for lead testing to give a reliable range here, so ask contractors what they charge for that step.

If lead is confirmed and work goes ahead, Ontario's guideline notes that employers on construction projects must take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, even though the specific lead regulation (O. Reg. 490/09) and its occupational exposure limit do not apply to construction projects. In plain terms, the method used to disturb or remove lead paint, the dust containment during the work, and the cleanup afterward should all be spelled out in the written quote before you agree to anything.

A few things worth asking any contractor you speak with:

- Which surfaces do they plan to test, and how will results be shared with you before work starts?
- How will they contain dust and debris during the work?
- What does cleanup and waste disposal look like when the job is done?

If you are already in the middle of a renovation and suspect the paint you have disturbed contains lead, stop the work and have it tested: Health Canada says a certified inspector can measure paint lead levels, or you can mail paint chip samples to a testing laboratory.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Abatement. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa or your own municipality) before starting any asbestos, mould or lead paint project. Asbestos work in Ontario is governed by O. Reg. 278/05. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawaabatement.com** for the latest answers.