OTTAWA ABATEMENT

Renovation & Demolition

Designated substance surveys, what to do when asbestos turns up mid-job, and demolitions in older Ottawa neighbourhoods

4 Expert Answers from Abatement IQ

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Q1

Old ductwork removal in an Ottawa house, asbestos precautions?

Old ductwork in an Ottawa house built before 1990 may have asbestos-containing insulation on or around it. Ontario's guide to O. Reg. 278/05 lists HVAC duct insulation among the materials where asbestos was used, and Health Canada lists industrial furnaces and heating systems, and insulation around hot water pipes and tanks, among older building materials that may contain asbestos. Testing before removal is the right first step.

What the Type depends on

The Type the contractor assigns under O. Reg. 278/05 turns on two things: whether the insulation is friable, and how much of it will be disturbed. Those are assessed on site, not from a description or a photo.

If the insulation is friable and the total area disturbed in the room or enclosed space is one square metre or less, the work falls under Type 2. If it is more than one square metre of friable material, it is Type 3. Section 12(5) covers ceiling tiles, drywall or friable asbestos-containing material: for friable insulation, the total area worked consecutively in that room or enclosed area counts, even if the work is divided into smaller jobs. For non-friable material, different thresholds apply, and the contractor decides that on site as well.

Type 3 carries the heaviest requirements. Before work starts, the constructor or employer must notify, orally and in writing, a Ministry of Labour inspector at the nearest office. Every worker must have completed the Asbestos Abatement Worker Training Program and every supervisor the Asbestos Abatement Supervisor Training Program, both approved by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, and both before work begins. After Type 3 work, a clearance air test is required under section 18 of the regulation: every air sample must show no more than 0.01 fibres per cubic centimetre using the PCM method, or pass the TEM statistical comparison. Results are posted within 24 hours and the owner keeps a copy for at least one year. You can ask for a clearance test in the quote for Type 2 work as well, even though the regulation does not require one for that Type.

Once the material leaves the site, Ontario Regulation 347 applies. Asbestos waste must go only to a disposal site whose operator has agreed to accept it and has been told when to expect it. The contractor arranges this before the load moves.

A fair quote for this job should include:

- the Type the contractor has assigned, with the reasoning
- confirmation of the inspector notice if the work is Type 3
- the disposal site that has agreed to accept the waste
- the clearance air test, or a clear statement that it is not included and why

- WSIB clearance, which you can verify through the WSIB online search

Health Canada advises hiring a professional to test before renovating, and a qualified asbestos removal specialist if asbestos is found. We found no company-level abatement licence in Ontario; what exists is the Type 3 training requirement, the inspector notice and WSIB registration.
Start with testing; if you have a question about what the regulation requires, the Ministry of Labour receives the Type 3 notice.

Q2

Found vermiculite mid-renovation in Ottawa, do I stop the work?

Stop the work now, and do not disturb the material further.

If you have found what looks like vermiculite mid-renovation in Ottawa, Health Canada's advice is clear: do not disturb it or attempt to remove it yourself, and have it tested by a professional before any work resumes. Vermiculite-based insulation may contain asbestos, and a lab test tells you what yours contains.

What the rules say from here

Once you have a test result, the path forward depends on whether the material contains asbestos and how much of it needs to be disturbed. Under O. Reg. 278/05, asbestos operations are classified as Type 1, Type 2 or Type 3. Which Type applies to a vermiculite job depends on whether the material is friable and how much of it would be disturbed, and that is something a contractor assesses on site, not from a description. The thresholds matter: removal or disturbance of more than one square metre of friable asbestos-containing material is a Type 3 operation, which requires Ministry of Labour inspector notice before work begins, workers who have completed the Asbestos Abatement Worker Training Program, and a clearance air test once the enclosure is dry. Smaller amounts of friable material, one square metre or less, fall under Type 2. Ask the contractor to confirm the Type in writing before any removal starts.

The federal vermiculite page on canada.ca notes there is currently no evidence of risk to your health if the insulation is sealed behind wallboards and floorboards, isolated in an attic, or otherwise kept from exposure to the interior environment. Health Canada adds: keep children out of the attic, do not use it for storage, and apply caulking to seal openings around the attic hatch, baseboards, light fixtures, outlets, and window and door frames while you decide what to do.

On cost, published Ontario contractor prices read in September 2026 put vermiculite attic removal at roughly $5,000 to $25,000 per attic. A pre-removal inspection with asbestos testing runs roughly $250 to $1,300 depending

on the size of the building and the number of samples. A clearance air test after Type 3 work costs about $300 to $800. Asbestos waste from a removal must be transported to a disposal site whose operator has agreed to accept it, under Ontario Regulation 347; ask the contractor which facility they use and confirm it before signing anything.

For WSIB, anyone can search a contractor's current clearance online; a clearance is valid for up to 90 days. Under the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, if the contract is signed at your home it is a direct agreement, and you have 10 days to cancel it after receiving the written copy, though the rules are changing, so check the current version of the Act.

You can request a match with local abatement contractors through the form on this page; they are listed in the Ottawa Construction Network directory.

The most useful question to put to any contractor before you sign: which Type have you assessed this job as, and can you show me how you reached that conclusion based on the area and friability of the material?

Q3

Do I tell my Ottawa contractor about asbestos before they bid?

Yes. Section 30 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act puts a duty on a project owner, and telling bidders what you know is the safe course even where that duty's reach is unsettled.

Section 30 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act requires an owner to determine whether any designated substances are present at the project site and to prepare a list of all designated substances found there. Asbestos is one of the 11 designated substances listed in O. Reg. 490/09, along with lead, mercury, silica and seven others. If work is being tendered, you must include a copy of that list in the tendering information. You must also ensure that any prospective constructor has received a copy before a binding contract is entered into. Section 30(5) makes the stakes clear: an owner who fails to comply is liable to the constructor and every contractor and subcontractor who suffers loss from the later discovery of a designated substance the owner ought reasonably to have known of.

How section 30 applies to a house you live in yourself is not fully settled. O. Reg. 278/05 gives owner-occupiers an exemption from the owner duties in that regulation, including the examination and written report requirement in section 10. Section 30 itself contains no residence exemption, and Ontario's guide to the regulation says section 30 applies to owners of residential properties who undertake projects. The exemption covers a home the owner or their family lives in, and a building of up to four units where the registered owner or family lives in one of them. A landlord who doesn't live in the building, a building of more than four units, and commercial property are not covered. If you are unsure where you stand, ask the contractor or the Ministry of Labour before work begins.

In practice: if your home was built before 1990, Health Canada identifies older building materials, including insulation, surface treatments, floor and ceiling tiles, roofing products and pipe insulation, as materials that may contain asbestos. Having a professional test suspect materials before you invite bids gives you a list to hand to every contractor and lets them price the same work. A pre-renovation inspection with asbestos testing runs roughly $250 to $1,300 depending on the size of the building and the number of samples, based on published Ontario contractor prices read in September 2026.

What to ask each contractor when they arrive to bid:

- Which materials in the scope do they consider suspect, and will they confirm the Type in writing once they assess friability and area on site?
- If the work may reach Type 3, have they given the Ministry of Labour inspector notice, and has the supervisor completed the Asbestos Abatement Supervisor Training Program?
- Where will the asbestos waste go, and has that disposal site agreed to accept it, as required by Ontario Regulation 347?
- Can they provide a current WSIB clearance?

Before you sign anything with this contractor, ask them directly: if suspect material turns up during the work that was not in the owner's report, what is their process for notifying the Ministry of Labour inspector, as section 10(8) requires, and for getting you a revised scope and price?

Q4

Removing a wall in an old Ottawa house, where could asbestos be?

Where Asbestos Can Hide in an Ottawa Wall Removal

In a house built before 1990, several materials inside and around a wall can contain asbestos, and disturbing any of them without testing first is the point where costs and legal requirements change quickly.

The materials to check, drawn from Health Canada and Ontario's guide to O. Reg. 278/05, include:

- Joint compounds on drywall seams (Ontario's guide)
- Textured paints or coatings (Ontario's guide)
- Plaster (Health Canada lists cement and plaster)
- Construction mastics (Ontario's guide)
- Pipe insulation, including corrugated air-cell or block insulation (Ontario's guide), and insulation around hot water pipes (Health Canada)
- HVAC duct insulation (Ontario's guide)
- Vinyl floor tile or sheet flooring (Ontario's guide) where the wall meets the floor
- Caulking and sealants (Health Canada)

Health Canada advises hiring a professional to test before renovating and a qualified asbestos removal specialist if asbestos is found. A pre-renovation inspection with bulk sampling runs roughly $250 to $1,300 depending on the size of the building and the number of samples taken, based on published prices read in September 2026.
Once a material tests positive at 0.5 per cent or more asbestos by dry weight (the threshold in O. Reg. 278/05, section 3(4)), the removal work is classified as Type 1, Type 2 or Type 3 under that regulation. Which Type applies depends on whether the material is friable and how much of it is disturbed, assessed on site by the contractor. Ask the contractor to give you the Type in writing, because it determines what controls, training and notices the law requires. For Type 3 work, the employer must notify a Ministry of Labour inspector before starting, and clearance air testing is required after the enclosure is dry. O. Reg. Section 12(5) says work on ceiling tiles, drywall or friable asbestos-containing material is classified according to the total area on which work is done consecutively in a room or enclosed area, even if the work is divided into smaller jobs.

Ontario Regulation 347 lets asbestos waste leave the site only for a disposal site whose operator has agreed to accept it, packaged and labelled to the regulation's specifications, transported by a driver trained in asbestos waste management.

Before you agree to a price, ask the contractor to spell out in the quote which Type they are pricing for, whether a clearance air test is included or billed separately, and which disposal site they have arranged for the waste, because those three items are where two quotes for the same wall can differ.

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.