OTTAWA CONCRETE PROS

Hiring & Quotes

Choosing a concrete contractor in Ottawa: the City hardscaping licence, the non-compulsory Concrete Finisher trade, WSIB, written contracts, holdback and comparing quotes

4 Expert Answers from Concrete Pro IQ

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Table of Contents

1. What should a written concrete contract in Ontario include?
2. Should the Ottawa contract cover cold-weather protection?
3. Paying for patio work in Stittsville: what should the contract say?
4. Red flags in a concrete quote from a Nepean contractor?

Q1

What should a written concrete contract in Ontario include?

A written contract for concrete work in Ontario should cover the scope, the materials, the price, and the legal protections the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 gives you. Here is what to look for before you sign.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2002 says that a direct agreement, meaning one negotiated or concluded somewhere other than the supplier's place of business, must be in writing, signed by both parties, and delivered to you if it is over $50. You then have 10 days after receiving your copy to cancel without giving a reason. The Act also says that if the agreement includes an estimate, the supplier cannot charge more than 10 per cent above it.

The City of Ottawa's hardscaping contractor licence, required for concrete pads, patios, walkways, steps and retaining walls on private property, comes with its own contract requirement: a March 2026 City news release said licensed contractors must provide written contracts and give you a copy of the City's Landscaping Education Guide. Ask to see the contractor's licence and check the City's published list of licensed hardscaping contractors yourself; Ottawa Concrete Pros does not verify anyone's licence or insurance.

Beyond those legal minimums, a contract worth signing should spell out:

- the exact scope of work, including dimensions, the finish (broom, exposed aggregate, stamped, colour), and any removal of existing concrete
- the concrete specification, including the compressive strength (the 2024 Ontario Building Code sets 32 MPa for exterior flatwork and garage floors), and the base preparation depth and material
- how cold-weather protection will be handled if the air temperature drops below 5 °C during or after the pour
- who will submit the locate request through Ontario Dig Authority before any digging starts, and when
- how removal and disposal of old concrete will be handled and whether it is included in the price
- the payment schedule and any deposit (we found no statutory cap on deposits)
- the Construction Act holdback: each payer retains 10 per cent of the price of services or materials as they are supplied; get advice for your situation
- the start date, the estimated completion date, and what happens if weather causes a delay
- the contractor's WSIB clearance certificate number, which you can request even though as a homeowner occupying a private residence you are not required to obtain one for home renovation work
- warranty terms, in plain language, for the finished surface

One question worth asking before you sign: if the final cost comes in above the estimate, how will the contractor notify you, and at what point, before that 10 per cent ceiling is reached?

Q2

Should the Ottawa contract cover cold-weather protection?

Yes, the contract should address cold-weather protection whenever there is a real chance the air temperature will drop below 5 °C during or after the pour. The 2024 Ontario Building Code sets out what that protection must achieve.

Under section 9.3.1.9 of the Code, when the air temperature is below 5 °C, concrete must be kept at not less than 10 °C and not more than 25 °C while it is being mixed and placed, and then maintained at not less than 10 °C for 72 hours after placing. No frozen material or ice may be used in the mix. Those are the Code's requirements; the contract should say how the contractor plans to meet them, not just that they will.

What that means in practice is that the written contract or specification should spell out at least these points:

- the temperature trigger the contractor uses to decide whether protection is needed
- what method will be used to maintain the required temperature range during and after the pour
- how long the protection will stay in place (at minimum, the 72-hour Code period)
- who monitors the temperature and what happens if conditions change overnight

The National Research Council's Canadian Building Digest 116 notes that freezing concrete in the plastic state usually results in permanent damage, even with a single freeze-thaw cycle. Have the contract confirm the 72-hour period explicitly.
If there is any chance of a pour with the air below 5 °C, ask the contractor to add a cold-weather clause before you sign.

The City's Hardscaping Contractor Licence, required since March 1, 2026 for businesses installing concrete patios, walkways, steps and pads on private property, requires contractors to provide written contracts. We did not find what the licence requires those contracts to contain, so ask for the cold-weather detail yourself.

Ask the contractor directly what their written cold-weather plan is and how it is documented, because that is the clearest way to know whether the 72-hour Code requirement will actually be met on your job.

Q3

Paying for patio work in Stittsville: what should the contract say?

A written contract protects you on both sides. Under the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, any direct agreement over $50 must be in writing, signed by both parties, and delivered to you, and you have 10 days after receiving that written copy to cancel without any reason. If the contract includes an estimate, the supplier cannot charge more than 10 per cent above it. Get the contract before any work starts.

The Construction Act requires each payer to retain a holdback equal to 10 per cent of the price of services or materials as they are supplied; get advice for your situation. A contractor's lien expires 60 days after the earlier of completion or abandonment where there is no certificate of substantial performance. Ask a lawyer before releasing any holdback on a large job.

Here is what a solid patio contract should cover, in plain terms:

- the full scope of work: area dimensions, excavation depth, base material and depth, concrete strength (32 MPa is the 2024 Ontario Building Code standard for exterior flatwork), finish type (broom, exposed aggregate, stamped), and any steps or edging
- the concrete specification in writing, including the strength and, for site-batched concrete, the air entrainment range the 2024 Ontario Building Code sets out
- removal and disposal of existing concrete, stated separately, with the Trail Waste Facility fill rate at $144 per tonne above 250 kg as a reference if you want to check the disposal line
- who submits the locate request through Ontario Dig Authority before any digging, and when
- cold-weather protection plan if work runs into periods when the air temperature is below 5 °C, since the 2024 Ontario Building Code requires concrete to be kept at not less than 10 °C for 72 hours after placing in those conditions
- the contractor's City of Ottawa Hardscaping Contractor Licence number, since the City requires a licence for concrete patios, walkways and steps on private property; the City's March 2026 guidance says to ask to see it and to check the City's published list of licensed contractors
- proof of commercial general liability insurance of not less than $2,000,000 inclusive per occurrence, which the City requires as a condition of the licence
- a payment schedule tied to stages of work, not to calendar dates alone
- a warranty statement, in writing, for what the contractor will cover and for how long

On zoning, for applications deemed complete on or after March 11, 2026, Zoning By-law 2008-250 and Zoning By-law 2026-50 both apply, with the most restrictive provisions from each governing. Soft landscaping minimums in the front yard depend on your yard's setback depth and lot width under 2026-50. Confirm the rules for your lot with the City before the contract is signed, so the patio footprint is within what zoning allows.

The City's patio page sets out the conditions under which a patio is exempt from a building permit. If your patio connects to or provides access to the house, or involves steps with more than two risers, ask the City's Building Code Services whether a permit is needed before the contract locks in a start date.

Ask the contractor to show you their City of Ottawa Hardscaping Contractor Licence before you sign, then check the name against the City's published list yourself, and ask for a copy of their current liability insurance certificate.

Q4

Red flags in a concrete quote from a Nepean contractor?

Start with the City of Ottawa hardscaping contractor licence. Since March 1, 2026, any business installing concrete patios, walkways, steps or pads in Nepean must hold that licence, carry commercial general liability insurance of not less than $2,000,000 per occurrence and automobile liability of not less than $2,000,000, provide a written contract, and give you a copy of the City's Landscaping Education Guide. If a quote arrives without any mention of those requirements, that is worth pausing on.

Beyond the licence, here are the things in a concrete quote that deserve a closer look:

- No written contract or scope of work. Under the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, a direct agreement over $50 must be in writing, signed by both parties, and delivered to you, and you have 10 days after receiving it to cancel without reason.
- No itemised breakdown for excavation, base preparation, concrete strength, finish, removal of old concrete, and disposal. The City's Trail Waste Facility charges $144 per tonne above 250 kg for clean concrete without rebar; if disposal is in the quote, ask what it covers.
- No concrete specification. The 2024 Ontario Building Code sets a minimum compressive strength of 32 MPa for all exterior flatwork and garage floors. Ask for that number in writing, along with the proposed slab thickness and base depth.
- A quote that is an estimate only. The Consumer Protection Act, 2002 says a supplier shall not charge more than 10 per cent above an estimate; if the quote is framed as an estimate rather than a fixed price, you should know that going in.
- No mention of locates. Under the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012, anyone who breaks ground must submit a locate request through Ontario Dig Authority and wait for all members to respond before digging. Ask who will submit the request before anyone digs.
- No cold-weather plan when the pour could happen with the air below 5 °C. The 2024 Ontario Building Code requires that when air temperature is below 5 °C, concrete be kept between 10 °C and 25 °C while being mixed and placed, and maintained at not less than 10 °C for 72 hours after placing.
- Pressure to pay a large deposit before any work begins. We found no statutory cap on deposits; that makes it worth asking what the payment schedule is tied to.
- No mention of the Construction Act holdback. Each payer retains 10 per cent of the price of services or materials as they are supplied; get advice for your situation on how that applies to your contract.

One thing the quote cannot tell you on its own: whether the work touches the City right of way. If the walkway or steps reach the boulevard, the Access By-law 2026-139 may require an access permit ($208) before work begins,

and the contractor must get a road cut permit for any work in the right of way. Ask whether the scope crosses the property line and who is pulling those permits.

Last check before signing: see the City of Ottawa hardscaping contractor licence and confirm it yourself against the City's published list of licensed contractors.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Concrete Pros. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa) before starting any concrete project, and request utility locates before anyone digs. Concrete work in Ontario must meet the 2024 Ontario Building Code (O. Reg. 163/24) where it applies. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawaconcretepros.ca** for the latest answers.