OTTAWA CONCRETE PROS

Stamped & Exposed Aggregate

Decorative concrete in Ottawa: stamped patterns, colour, exposed aggregate, sealing and winter care

4 Expert Answers from Concrete Pro IQ

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Q1

Faded stamped patio in Westboro: resurface, reseal or replace?

Whether a faded stamped patio needs resealing, resurfacing or replacing depends on what is underneath the surface. If the slab is structurally sound, flat, and the pattern is intact, resealing is worth considering. If the surface is scaling, spalling, or has cracks that run through the slab, a resurfacing overlay or full replacement becomes the conversation.

We found no published price for resealing or resurfacing alone, so get those scoped and itemized in writing. For a full replacement, plain broom-finish concrete runs about $9 to $15 per square foot installed, and stamped concrete roughly $15 to $45 or more per square foot depending on pattern and colours. Small jobs often hit a minimum charge of about $5,500, according to Ottawa price pages. Removal and demolition of the old slab runs about $1,000 to $5,000 or more for a project, and you should ask whether that is included.

What the decision depends on: the condition of the existing slab below the sealer, whether the pattern has worn or chipped into the concrete itself, whether there is any heaving or cracking from frost, and whether the base is still performing. A contractor looking at it in person can tell you whether the surface will hold an overlay or whether the slab needs to come out. The National Research Council's Canadian Building Digest 116 notes that scaling is most severe on horizontal surfaces subjected to both freeze-thaw cycling and de-icing salts, and that air entrainment has a "remarkable effect" in improving frost resistance, so the history of salt use and the original mix both matter to that assessment.

On the City side, the contractor doing any of this work needs a City of Ottawa Hardscaping Contractor Licence, which has been required since March 1, 2026. The licence costs $319 for 2026 and requires commercial general liability insurance of not less than $2,000,000 per occurrence and automobile liability of not less than $2,000,000. The City's March 2026 guidance says to ask the contractor to show you a copy of their business licence and to check the City's published list of licensed hardscaping contractors yourself. Ottawa Concrete Pros does not verify anyone's licence or insurance. The City also requires the contractor to provide a written contract and give you a copy of the City's Landscaping Education Guide.

For permits, the City's patio page says a patio is exempt from a building permit if it is supported directly on the ground, not raised, and meets the other conditions on that page. We found no City statement on resealing or resurfacing an existing patio; if the slab is being removed and replaced, confirm with the City's Building Code Services before work starts. If any digging is involved, whoever digs is the excavator under the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012, and a locate request must go through Ontario Dig Authority before the ground is broken.

Ask each contractor to walk you through the condition of the existing slab and base, and to put their assessment of why they are recommending resurface versus replace in the written quote.

Q2

Does the Code set different rules for coloured concrete in Ontario?

We found no separate rules for coloured concrete in the 2024 Ontario Building Code.

For exterior flatwork, the Code requires a minimum compressive strength of 32 MPa at 28 days and a maximum water-to-cementing-materials ratio of 0.45. Those numbers do not change because colour is added. The Code's appendix note to section 9.3.1.7 does say that adding water to concrete on site can reduce strength and increase porosity and the propensity to shrinkage cracking, and that note applies to any exterior concrete pour, coloured or not.

Skilled Trades Ontario lists the Cement (Concrete) Finisher trade's scope as including pigmented, stained and dyed concrete, so the trade recognises colour work as part of the finisher's craft. The certificate is non-compulsory, meaning no one is required to hold it, and individuals practising the trade do not appear on the Skilled Trades Ontario public register.

What does vary with coloured concrete is the contractor's written specification, not the Code. The mix design, the timing of finishing passes, the sealing product and the maintenance instructions are all things to ask for in writing before work begins. A quote for coloured exterior concrete should spell out the specified compressive strength, the base preparation, the finishing method and whether sealing is included. The City of Ottawa's Hardscaping Contractor Licence is required for a business installing concrete patios, walkways, steps and similar hard landscaping features on private property; ask to see the licence and check the City's published list yourself.

Ask each contractor whether they have poured coloured flatwork before, and to show you the colour on a sample.

Q3

How often should stamped concrete in Ottawa be resealed?

We found no published source that gives a resealing interval for stamped concrete in Ottawa, or for stamped concrete anywhere. The published intervals we found disagree with each other, and the right answer depends on the product used. Follow the sealer maker's instructions for the specific product applied to your surface.

What does affect how often a stamped concrete surface needs attention is worth understanding. The National Research Council's Canadian Building Digest 116 notes that horizontal concrete surfaces at or near ground level, subjected to both freeze-thaw cycling and de-icing salts, face the severest exposure conditions. The Ready Mixed Concrete Association of Ontario, an industry association, advises avoiding de-icing chemicals on concrete, especially in the first winter, and using sand instead where possible. They also note that concrete should be allowed a minimum of 30 days to air dry before sealing is done at all.

We found no source that turns the look of a sealed surface into a resealing schedule, so ask the contractor what the sealer maker says.

On the contractor and licence side: the City of Ottawa's Hardscaping Contractor Licence page lists patios and steps among the hard landscaping features requiring a licence for installation or alteration. We found no City statement on whether resealing alone, without any alteration to the surface, requires a hardscaping licence. The Licensing By-law excludes the sealing or re-sealing only of driveways or parking areas, and "minor repairs or minor alterations", which it does not define; we found no statement on resealing a patio, so ask the City. If you are hiring someone to reseal, ask them directly whether they hold a current City of Ottawa hardscaping contractor licence, and check the City's published list of licensed contractors yourself.

When you are comparing two written quotes for stamped concrete work, put these side by side: the base preparation depth and material specified in writing, the concrete compressive strength (the 2024 Ontario Building Code sets 32 MPa as the standard for exterior flatwork), the finish details including pattern and any colour, and whether removal and disposal of existing concrete is included or priced separately.

Q4

Why is my stamped patio flaking in Orleans?

Surface flaking on stamped concrete, called scaling, has a few possible sources worth having a contractor look at: the condition of the concrete at the time it was placed and finished, how it was cured, and what it has been exposed to since. The National Research Council's Canadian Building Digest 116 notes that surface scaling occurs mainly on horizontal surfaces and is most severe where de-icing salts have been used alongside freeze-thaw cycling, and that freezing concrete in the plastic state, before it has hardened, can cause permanent damage even from a single cycle.

A few things are worth checking on your patio specifically. The 2024 Ontario Building Code sets a minimum compressive strength of 32 MPa for exterior flatwork, and the appendix to the Code notes that adding water to concrete on site can reduce strength and increase porosity and the tendency to shrink and crack. Canadian Building Digest 116 also notes that over-vibration and excessive trowelling can affect entrained air adversely, which matters for frost resistance. None of this is a diagnosis; a contractor who can look at the surface in person can say what happened.

On the product side, the Ready Mixed Concrete Association of Ontario advises, as industry guidance, to avoid de-icing chemicals on concrete, especially in the first winter, and to use sand instead. The same industry guidance names ammonium sulfate, ammonium nitrate, calcium chloride and magnesium chloride as de-icers never to use. If any of those have been used on or near the patio, that is worth mentioning to the contractor.

Since March 1, 2026 the City of Ottawa has required a hardscaping contractor licence for businesses that install or alter hard landscaping features such as patios. The Licensing By-law also excludes "minor repairs or minor alterations", which it does not define, so ask the City whether your job counts. The licence requires the contractor to carry commercial general liability insurance of not less than $2,000,000 per occurrence and automobile liability insurance of not less than $2,000,000, to provide a written contract, and to give you a copy of the City's Landscaping Education Guide. The City publishes a list of licensed hardscaping contractors; ask to see the licence and check the list yourself. We found no provincial licence for concrete contractors, and the Cement (Concrete) Finisher trade through Skilled Trades Ontario is non-compulsory.

We found too few published prices for crack repair, resurfacing or partial replacement to give a reliable range, so get that itemized in any quote. Ask the contractor to put the proposed repair method, the concrete specification if new material is being placed, and what surface preparation is included, all in writing.

Before you agree to any repair scope, ask the contractor to explain in writing exactly what they believe caused the flaking and how the proposed repair addresses that cause.

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.