OTTAWA FIREPLACES

Fireplace Insert Types & Installation

Gas, wood, pellet, and electric inserts for converting existing Ottawa fireplaces

24 Expert Answers from Fireplace IQ

ottawafireplaces.com/construction-brain

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Q1

My fireplace insert fan runs but barely pushes any warm air — how much does a blower motor replacement cost in Ottawa?

A fireplace insert blower motor replacement in Ottawa typically costs $300 to $800 including parts and labour, with most jobs falling in the $400 to $600 range. The motor itself runs $150 to $400 depending on the insert manufacturer and motor specifications, while labour adds another $150 to $400 for diagnosis, removal, installation, and testing.

Before assuming you need a new motor, check a few common causes of weak airflow that are much cheaper to fix. Remove the blower assembly and clean accumulated dust and debris from the fan blades and housing — years of operation in Ottawa's dusty conditions can significantly reduce airflow. Check that the variable speed control isn't set too low, and verify that intake and exhaust vents aren't blocked by furniture, curtains, or debris. Sometimes what feels like a weak blower is actually restricted airflow from dirty or blocked vents.

If cleaning doesn't restore proper airflow, the motor bearings may be worn or the motor windings damaged. Blower motors in fireplace inserts work hard during Ottawa's long heating season, often running 4 to 6 hours daily from October through March. Motors typically last 8 to 15 years depending on usage and maintenance. A qualified technician can test motor amperage and airflow to confirm whether replacement is needed.

Important safety note: If you have a gas insert, any blower work should be performed by a TSSA-licensed gas fitter who can safely disconnect gas lines and electrical connections. For wood inserts, ensure the unit is completely cool before any work begins, and have the system inspected if the blower failure coincided with overheating.

When you're ready to have the blower diagnosed or replaced, you can browse fireplace contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to find experienced professionals who service fireplace inserts in your area.

Q2

Can an Ottawa contractor remove my current fireplace insert and install a different type in the same opening?

Yes, absolutely — swapping one fireplace insert for another in the same masonry opening is one of the most practical renovation projects in Ottawa, and it's far more affordable than removing the entire fireplace structure or building a new chimney. The existing masonry firebox, chimney, and hearth can typically accommodate a different insert type as long as the new unit fits the opening dimensions and the chimney is properly sized and lined for the new appliance's venting requirements.

The key to a successful insert swap is understanding what you're replacing and what you want to install. If you currently have a wood-burning insert and want to convert to gas, the process is relatively straightforward — your existing chimney can be relined with aluminum or stainless steel to accommodate the gas vent pipe, and a gas line can be run to the fireplace location. A direct-vent gas insert draws its combustion air from outside and exhausts through sealed piping, so it requires a clean, properly sized flue. The cost for this conversion in Ottawa typically runs **$3,000 to $7,000** installed, including the gas insert itself ($2,500 to $5,500), chimney relining if needed ($1,500 to $3,000 for aluminum lining suitable for gas), and a gas line run from your meter to the fireplace ($500 to $1,500 depending on distance).

Conversely, if you're swapping a gas insert for a wood-burning insert, you'll need to ensure the chimney is properly lined with stainless steel (aluminum is only acceptable for gas) and can handle the increased creosote deposits that come with wood burning. A wood insert produces more draft demand than gas, and your chimney must have adequate height and clearance from nearby roof structures. A wood insert swap typically costs **$3,500 to $7,000** installed — the insert itself ($2,500 to $4,500), chimney inspection and possible relining ($2,000 to $5,000 if the flue needs upgrading), and installation labour.

Before any swap happens, a WETT-certified chimney professional must inspect the existing chimney system. This inspection ($250 to $450 for a Level 1 visual inspection) examines the flue dimensions, liner condition, chimney height relative to roof line and nearby obstructions, clearances to combustible framing, the chimney cap and crown condition, and any evidence of previous chimney fires or deterioration. Ottawa's brutal freeze-thaw cycle means older masonry chimneys often have cracked or spalling mortar, and the chimney liner — if present — may be cracked clay tile that cannot safely handle a new high-efficiency insert's draft or heat output. If the chimney needs relining (common in Ottawa homes with chimneys over 15 to 20 years old), that cost is added to the project budget.

If your insert opening has a significant size mismatch with your desired new insert, a professional can modify the surround with additional masonry, tile, stone, or a fireplace surround frame — this adds $1,500 to $6,000 depending on the extent of the work and finish materials chosen. Most modern inserts come in standard widths (24, 28, 30, and 36 inches are common), and many Ottawa masonry openings were built with these dimensions in mind, so a perfect fit is more common than you might expect.

Here's the critical detail for Ottawa: professional insert removal and installation must involve the appropriate licensing. If you're installing a gas insert, the contractor must be TSSA-licensed (Technical Standards and Safety Authority) to handle the gas line connection and ensure the appliance is properly tagged with a compliance label — this is mandatory under Ontario law, and unlicensed gas work voids your home insurance. For wood-burning inserts, you need a WETT-certified installer to ensure the system meets national wood energy standards and will satisfy your homeowner's insurance requirements. Many Ottawa contractors hold both TSSA and WETT certifications, which makes coordinating the project simpler.

One common pitfall is assuming an old hearth pad is adequate for a new insert. Hearth protection requirements vary by appliance type and flue exit design — a gas insert may require less hearth extension than a wood insert burning at higher temperatures. The contractor should verify that your existing hearth meets the Ontario Building Code requirements for your specific new insert, and if it doesn't, the hearth pad will need to be extended (typically $300 to $800 in materials and labour).

The best timing for this project in Ottawa is spring (April to June) or early fall (August to September), before the heating season when contractors are less swamped and weather is suitable for any exterior chimney work or flashing repairs that might be needed.

If you're ready to move forward, you can browse fireplace contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory to find installers in your area who handle both removal and new insert installation. Get at least three written quotes that specify the existing insert removal, chimney inspection cost, new insert model and price, any chimney relining required, gas line work (if applicable), hearth modification if needed, and the full installation timeline.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- The Egress Group Inc
- Floor-2-Wall Inc
- Grunt Work 4 Grunts
- Speedy Pete's Inc

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Q3

How much should I budget for a pellet insert installed with a new liner in Ottawa including WETT inspection?

For a pellet insert with a new chimney liner and WETT inspection in Ottawa, budget **$5,500 to $8,500 total** — roughly $3,000 to $6,000 for the pellet insert installation itself, $2,000 to $3,500 for the stainless steel chimney liner (the most common relining material), and $250 to $450 for a Level 1 WETT inspection after completion.

Why This Matters in Ottawa's Climate

Pellet inserts are an excellent choice for Ottawa homeowners because they convert an existing masonry fireplace into an efficient, controllable heating appliance without requiring the annual creosote buildup concerns of traditional wood burning. Pellet inserts operate at 80 to 90 percent efficiency — far better than an open fireplace — and their automated fuel feeding means you are not constantly feeding the fire or dealing with the ash and mess of cord wood. However, Ottawa's extreme freeze-thaw cycles make a proper, intact chimney liner essential. Many older masonry chimneys in Ottawa have deteriorated clay tile liners that are cracked or missing sections entirely, which means any new appliance — gas, wood, or pellet — needs a dedicated liner to function safely and to meet Ontario Building Code requirements. A cracked or absent liner allows combustion gases to escape into wall cavities, creating carbon monoxide and fire risks that no homeowner wants to discover the hard way.

The stainless steel liner is the standard choice because it is durable, handles the temperature fluctuations of pellet stove exhaust reliably, and costs less than cast-in-place cement relining. Installation typically takes one to two days depending on chimney height and accessibility. Your chimney will need to be swept and inspected before the new liner is installed to confirm there are no obstructions or structural problems that would prevent proper installation.

Breaking Down the Full Cost Picture

A quality pellet stove insert itself runs **$1,500 to $3,500** depending on whether you choose a basic model or a premium unit with advanced controls, wireless thermostats, or larger hopper capacity. The installation labour, including hearth pad preparation, venting connections, and electrical work for the fan and controls, adds **$1,500 to $2,500**. That brings the insert installation portion to roughly **$3,000 to $6,000 total**.

The stainless steel chimney liner cost depends on your chimney height and diameter. Most residential chimneys in Ottawa are 6 to 8 inches in diameter and 25 to 35 feet tall. For a standard chimney, expect **$2,000 to $3,500 installed**, which includes the liner material, installation labour, cap removal and replacement, and proper sealing at the top. If your chimney is exceptionally tall (say, a three-storey Victorian in the Glebe or Sandy Hill), or if there are structural complications like multiple flue sections or tight access, the cost could reach **$4,000 to $4,500**. Some contractors include the chimney cap in the liner installation price; others charge separately ($200 to $600 for cap installation or replacement).

The WETT Level 1 inspection after installation is your confirmation that everything is properly installed and safe. This typically costs **$250 to $450** in Ottawa. Many insurance companies now require a WETT inspection before they will insure a home with any wood-burning or pellet appliance, so this is not an optional add-on — it is an insurance requirement that protects both you and your home's insurable value.

Important Considerations for Ottawa Homeowners

Electricity is essential. Pellet inserts require electricity to run the auger that feeds pellets, the exhaust fan, and the control system. If your fireplace location does not have a nearby outlet, you will need to run a dedicated circuit from your electrical panel, which adds $500 to $1,500 in electrical work (performed by an ESA-licensed electrician). This is critical to understand before committing to a pellet insert — a power outage during an Ottawa ice storm means your insert will not operate, and you will need to have your fireplace damper open so the fire can breathe and vent safely.

Pellets and storage space. A typical Ottawa home burning a pellet stove as a primary or supplemental heat source through winter uses 4 to 8 tons of pellets per season — that is roughly 40 to 80 bags if you buy 40-pound bags. Pellets must be stored in a dry location protected from moisture and pests. Factor in whether you have adequate storage space in a basement, garage, or shed before committing to a pellet insert.

Seasonal scheduling. Because the chimney liner installation requires exterior work at the roofline, aim to schedule this project in spring (April through May) or early fall (September through October). Masonry sealing and exterior work perform best when outdoor temperatures are consistently above 5 degrees Celsius and the weather is dry. Do not wait until November when every chimney contractor in Ottawa is booked solid with homeowners panicking about the coming winter.

Three quotes minimum. Get written quotes from at least three contractors that clearly itemize the insert cost, liner cost, labour, chimney cap, WETT inspection, and any additional work (electrical, hearth preparation, etc.). Ask whether the quote includes chimney sweeping and inspection before the liner is installed, and confirm who is responsible for pulling permits and ESA electrical compliance for any wiring work.

When you are ready to connect with experienced fireplace professionals who specialize in pellet inserts and chimney relining in Ottawa and surrounding areas, you can browse contractors through the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** to compare options and reach out directly.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Homeupgraders
- The Egress Group Inc
- Valcor Construction
- Capitalstoneworks
- M.O.T. CONSTRUCTION INC.

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Q4

What's the best way to clean the glass door on a fireplace insert without scratching or cracking it?

The best way to clean fireplace glass is to wait until the insert is completely cool, then use a soft cloth with a manufacturer-approved glass cleaner or a specialized fireplace glass cleaner — never use household glass cleaners like Windex, which can leave streaks and potentially damage the glass when heated.

Fireplace glass on inserts operates under extreme temperature stress. During operation, the glass reaches 300 to 400 degrees Celsius, and when you close the doors or damper, rapid cooling begins. Any residue or cleaning product left on the glass can bake into a permanent coating that is far harder to remove than the original soot and creosote. Household glass cleaners contain ammonia and alcohols that can leave chemical residues that become problematic when reheated. The glass itself is tempered to withstand thermal shock, but aggressive scrubbing or certain chemicals can compromise its integrity over time.

Here is the right process. First, let the insert cool completely — ideally wait at least 4 to 6 hours after the fire goes out, or better yet, clean the glass the next morning. Use a soft, lint-free cloth or microfiber cloth (avoid paper towels, which are abrasive). If the glass has light soot or dust, a dry cloth alone may be enough. For stubborn buildup, dampen the cloth with a fireplace-specific glass cleaner — brands like Rutland or Meeco's Red Hott are formulated specifically for fireplace glass and will not leave harmful residues. Apply the cleaner sparingly, wipe gently in circular motions, and finish with a clean, dry cloth to remove any moisture. Some experienced Ottawa fireplace owners swear by a small amount of white vinegar on a damp cloth for light cleaning, followed by immediate drying — vinegar evaporates cleanly and leaves no chemical residue.

Never use scouring pads, abrasive powders, steel wool, or anything that could scratch the glass surface. Scratches compromise the structural integrity of tempered glass and can lead to cracks when the glass is reheated. Do not attempt to scrape off stubborn creosote with a blade or scraper — if buildup is that severe, the real issue is your burn conditions (likely wet or unseasoned wood, which produces excessive creosote) or inadequate draft. Severe glass blackening is a sign that your wood moisture content is too high or your insert is being starved of combustion air. Focus on burning properly seasoned hardwood (15 to 20 percent moisture content) and ensuring adequate air supply to the insert, and future glass cleaning will be far easier.

The glass door itself is a critical component — it creates the seal that allows your insert to heat efficiently by directing combustion air and exhaust through the chimney rather than losing heated air up the flue. Cracks in the glass reduce efficiency and can allow smoke or carbon monoxide into the living space, so handle it with care. If you notice cracks developing, stop using the insert and contact a technician — glass replacement is far more affordable than dealing with carbon monoxide or fire hazards.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Apple HVAC and mechanical
- The Egress Group Inc
- Treka Construction Group
- Leeds Property Maintenance
- Renovo Construction

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Q5

Do I need to remove or seal my existing damper before installing a fireplace insert in Ontario?

Yes, you almost always need to remove or permanently seal your existing damper before installing a fireplace insert — this is a critical safety requirement under the Ontario Building Code and WETT standards, and it's one of the most commonly overlooked steps in fireplace insert installation.

Here's why this matters so much in Ottawa's climate: when you install an insert into an existing masonry fireplace, the insert becomes the primary heating appliance and has its own chimney pipe that vents through the existing chimney flue. The original damper — which was designed to seal the open fireplace when it wasn't in use — now sits above the insert pipe. If the damper is left in place and accidentally closed, combustion gases (including deadly carbon monoxide) from the insert get trapped inside your home instead of venting up the chimney. This creates an immediate and serious carbon monoxide poisoning hazard. Even if the damper is left in the open position, a loose, deteriorating, or corroded damper can drop metal debris or soot into the insert pipe, clogging the vent and creating dangerous back-drafting conditions. The damper also becomes a barrier to proper chimney draft — the insert pipe needs direct, unobstructed access to the full chimney flue above it.

The correct approach is to permanently remove the damper assembly entirely or seal it shut with mortar so it cannot be operated. Most fireplace professionals remove the damper completely — this involves unbolting the cast iron damper frame from the fireplace throat, removing the damper blade, and extracting the hardware. If the damper is structurally integrated or difficult to remove, it should be sealed solid with refractory mortar or concrete to prevent it from ever being closed again. Some installers place a permanent warning label or mark on the fireplace to

indicate the damper is sealed. This prevents future homeowners or contractors from accidentally closing it and creating a carbon monoxide trap.

A few critical considerations: first, if you're having a professional install your insert (which you should be — insert installation requires WETT certification and typically involves structural work at height inside the fireplace), the contractor will handle damper removal as part of the scope of work. Ask the installer explicitly to confirm in the written quote that damper removal or sealing is included and that they will dispose of the damper properly. Second, do not attempt to operate or close your fireplace's damper after an insert is installed — if you are unsure whether your damper has been removed or sealed, contact your WETT inspector or the original installer immediately. Third, after damper removal or sealing, you'll need a WETT Level 2 inspection to confirm the entire system is safe and compliant before you use the insert. This inspection typically costs $350 to $600 in Ottawa and is non-negotiable if you want insurance coverage for your new appliance.

The bottom line: damper removal is not an optional step or a cost-saving measure you can skip. It's a fundamental safety requirement that protects you from carbon monoxide poisoning. If a contractor quotes you an insert installation without explicitly including damper removal, that's a red flag — ask why, and get clarification in writing.

When you're ready to move forward with an insert installation, you can browse WETT-certified fireplace installers and chimney professionals through the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory to find experienced contractors in your area who understand Ontario's safety requirements.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- 613Bins
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Joe Imerti Contracting
- Valcor Construction
- Capital City Drywall

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Q6

What BTU output do I need from a fireplace insert to actually heat my Ottawa home when it hits minus thirty?

A fireplace insert alone will not heat your entire home when it hits -30 degrees Celsius — and that is the honest answer you need before considering any specific BTU number. What a fireplace insert or wood stove will do, when properly sized and used strategically, is reduce your reliance on your primary heating system and add genuine comfort-level warmth to the rooms where you spend the most time during Ottawa's brutal cold snaps.

Here is the practical reality: heating an entire home during Ottawa's extreme winters requires a heating system sized for the full load — furnace, heat pump, baseboard heating, or a combination. A typical Ottawa bungalow (1,500 to 2,000 square feet) loses roughly 40,000 to 60,000 BTU per hour at -30 degrees, depending on insulation, air sealing, and window quality. Even the largest residential fireplace insert maxes out around 40,000 to 50,000 BTU of heat output, and that assumes optimal conditions: a perfectly seasoned wood stove running constantly at full capacity, or a premium high-efficiency gas insert running continuously. In reality, most inserts operate at partial capacity much of the time, and their actual heat delivery to living spaces averages 15,000 to 25,000 BTU per hour of usable warmth in the rooms where you are present.

For supplemental heating in Ottawa, you are looking at roughly 20,000 to 35,000 BTU for a wood stove insert or 25,000 to 40,000 BTU for a gas insert. A wood insert in the 20,000 to 30,000 BTU range (actual heat output, not gross BTU) can meaningfully reduce your furnace runtime when you are actively using the fireplace, especially if you close off other rooms, keep doors closed, and concentrate warmth in the main living area. A gas insert in the 30,000 to 40,000 BTU range (heat output) provides similar or better performance because gas burns consistently and requires no seasoned wood supply.

The critical variable in Ottawa is the *type* of insert and how it is used. A wood insert running on properly seasoned hardwood at 70 to 80 percent efficiency will deliver more usable warmth per pound of fuel than almost any other heating method — but it demands that you split, stack, and season your own wood 12 to 18 months in advance, or buy expensive pre-seasoned wood. A gas insert is more convenient, cleaner-burning, and more consistent in output, but it costs more to operate per BTU than natural gas to your furnace because the efficiency is slightly lower and the appliance cost is higher. Neither option heats your entire home; both options significantly reduce furnace cycling when actively used.

A key Ottawa consideration is the freeze-thaw cycle impact on your heating strategy. On a -30 degree morning, your furnace is already working hard to maintain setpoint. If your home is well-insulated and air-sealed, a 25,000 to 35,000 BTU insert running in the living room lets you lower the furnace setpoint by 2 to 4 degrees, saving furnace energy in the rooms you are not using and concentrating warmth where you actually sit. Over an Ottawa winter with 50 to 60 days below -20 degrees, that adds up to real energy savings and a noticeably warmer experience in your primary living space.

If you want to actually heat your entire home during -30 weather without a furnace or heat pump, you need a **whole-home wood stove** (not an insert) rated for 40,000 to 60,000+ BTU in a central location like a basement or main-floor hallway, with proper ducting or thermal mass to distribute heat throughout the house. These are rare in modern Ottawa homes and require significant installation work, structural modifications, and round-the-clock wood management. They are also not recommended as a sole heat source because they create uneven temperature distribution and generate maintenance and creosote challenges that most homeowners are not prepared to manage.

Size your insert based on the room or zone you want to heat — typically 20,000 to 35,000 BTU for a wood insert or 30,000 to 40,000 BTU for a gas insert. Over-sizing creates problems: an oversized stove will overheat the immediate room, forcing you to dampen it down, which produces dangerous creosote accumulation and defeats the efficiency advantage. An oversized gas insert will short-cycle (turning on and off frequently), reducing efficiency and wearing out components faster.

Talk with a WETT-certified wood stove installer or a licensed gas fitter about your home's square footage, ceiling height, insulation level, and primary living zone. They can size an insert appropriately and discuss realistic expectations for how much heating load it will actually carry during Ottawa's extreme weather. When you are ready to get specific recommendations from professionals in the Ottawa area, you can browse fireplace contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- JC Carpentry
- Renovo Construction
- ComfortWay Plumbing Heating and Cooling
- McLaren Masonry

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Q7

Regency vs Napoleon fireplace inserts — which brand do Ottawa installers recommend more and why?

Both Regency and Napoleon are well-established, quality fireplace insert manufacturers, and Ottawa installers work with both regularly — the choice between them typically comes down to your specific needs, budget, and what your existing fireplace can accommodate rather than one brand being universally "better."

Why Ottawa installers work with both brands:

Regency inserts are known for robust construction, straightforward controls, and strong heat output. Their gas inserts are efficient and reliable, and they have a solid reputation for parts availability and customer service across Canada. Napoleon is similarly well-regarded for design flexibility, flame appearance options, and a wider range of aesthetics — they tend to offer more choices in terms of fireplace surround trim, control systems, and glass styles. Both companies manufacture products that meet Ontario Building Code requirements and can be properly vented through existing masonry chimneys when a stainless steel liner is installed.

The practical Ottawa difference:

In Ottawa's freeze-thaw climate, the real consideration isn't which brand performs better in a lab — it's which insert works best for your specific fireplace opening size, whether your existing chimney is structurally sound enough to receive a liner, and which contractor is local and experienced with that particular model. A Regency insert in a poorly maintained chimney with a cracked crown will underperform just as badly as a Napoleon insert would. Conversely, the right insert paired with proper chimney relining, a quality cap, and regular maintenance will heat your home effectively regardless of brand.

Practical questions to ask:

When comparing quotes from Ottawa installers, focus on: Does the insert's dimensions fit your existing fireplace opening without requiring expensive masonry modification? Will your chimney need relining, and if so, what diameter stainless steel liner does the manufacturer require? Does the insert come with a factory warranty, and is there local service availability if something fails? What is the installed cost including the liner, hearth pad, and labour? Does the installer recommend additional waterproofing or chimney cap upgrades for your specific situation?

Both brands typically cost between **$2,500 to $5,500 installed** for a gas insert in an existing masonry fireplace, though premium models can run higher. Wood inserts from either brand run **$3,500 to $7,000 installed**. The difference in price between Regency and Napoleon models at your local supplier is usually modest — often just a few hundred dollars — so the brand choice should not be your primary cost driver.

A note on installer preference:

Rather than asking which brand Ottawa installers "recommend more," ask your potential contractors which brand they have the most field experience with, which they can service easily if something goes wrong, and which they think is the best fit for your specific chimney and heating needs. An experienced installer who knows your home's quirks and has successfully installed dozens of one brand will likely deliver better results than a contractor pushing a different brand just because it has a slightly higher margin. Personal experience and local knowledge matter more than brand loyalty in fireplace work.

If you're ready to get quotes from experienced fireplace professionals in Ottawa, you can browse contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory and reach out directly to compare their recommendations on Regency versus Napoleon for your particular project.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- The Egress Group Inc
- Somar Contracting Inc.
- Capital City Drywall
- Joe Imerti Contracting

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Q8

Can I install a gas insert in a heritage home fireplace in Ottawa without damaging the original masonry?

Yes, you can install a gas insert into a heritage masonry fireplace while preserving the original masonry, but it requires careful planning, the right contractor, and advance approval from Ottawa's heritage authorities — and the masonry must be structurally sound to begin with.

The good news is that a properly installed gas insert actually protects the original masonry from further deterioration. An insert is essentially a sealed metal box that fits inside the fireplace opening and vents through the existing chimney (or occasionally through a new direct-vent pipe if the chimney is unusable). The insert does not permanently alter the original brick, stone, or mortar — it sits inside the opening like a piece of furniture. When you remove the insert years later, the original fireplace is still there. This makes gas inserts ideal for heritage properties

where preserving the authentic appearance is critical.

Heritage Considerations in Ottawa

Heritage-designated homes in Ottawa — including properties in the Glebe, Sandy Hill, New Edinburgh, Rockcliffe Park, and other NCC-regulated areas — are subject to heritage planning review before exterior changes. The key word here is *exterior*. Installing an insert *inside* an existing fireplace opening is typically interior work and does not require heritage approval. However, if your project involves replacing the chimney cap, rebuilding the chimney above the roofline, installing an external vent pipe, or making any visible changes to the exterior chimney, you must contact the City of Ottawa's heritage planning office or the National Capital Commission (if your property is in NCC jurisdiction) before proceeding. Approval is usually straightforward for internal work, but skipping this step can result in orders to remove work at your own expense.

The masonry itself deserves attention. Heritage fireplaces are often 80 to 150 years old, and Ottawa's brutal freeze-thaw cycle takes its toll. Before installing an insert, you need a thorough WETT Level 2 inspection to confirm the chimney is structurally sound — no serious spalling, no crumbling mortar joints, and no cracks that would allow combustion gases to escape into the wall cavities. If the chimney shows significant deterioration, you may need tuckpointing (repointing mortar joints) or even a full chimney liner before the insert can be safely installed. This can add $500 to $2,500 to your project, depending on the extent of damage.

Installation Reality

A gas insert installation in an existing heritage fireplace typically runs **$2,500 to $5,500 installed** in Ottawa — slightly lower than a new wall-mounted gas fireplace because you are reusing the existing chimney and fireplace opening. The insert itself (a quality direct-vent or B-vent unit) costs $1,500 to $3,500, and the balance covers labour, chimney inspection, any necessary tuckpointing, gas line installation, and TSSA compliance tagging.

During installation, the contractor will measure the fireplace opening, ensure the insert fits properly with correct clearances to combustible materials (brick and stone are non-combustible, but any wood framing in the surrounding wall must meet clearance requirements), connect the gas supply line, vent the insert either through the existing chimney or with a new external vent pipe, and ensure the hearth extension meets Ontario Building Code requirements. The insert is then sealed to the fireplace opening with a trim kit, which is often available in finishes that complement heritage aesthetics — matte black, oil-rubbed bronze, or stainless steel depending on the insert brand.

Why This Works in Heritage Homes

The beauty of a gas insert in a heritage fireplace is that you get the practical benefits of a modern heating appliance (efficiency of 70 to 85 percent compared to 30 to 40 percent for an open fireplace, plus no creosote concerns or wood stacking required) while the original masonry fireplace and chimney remain visually and structurally intact.

From the living room, the insert looks like a fireplace. From the exterior, the chimney is unchanged. Heritage authorities in Ottawa generally support this approach because it allows homeowners to modernize their heating without demolishing or dramatically altering a character element of the home.

Critical Cautions

Have a WETT-certified professional or a TSSA-licensed gas fitter do a pre-installation inspection — do not assume an old chimney can safely vent a new appliance. If the chimney has existing damage, water leaks, or interior obstructions, these must be addressed before the insert goes in. Never install a vent-free (ventless) gas fireplace in any home, heritage or otherwise — Ontario law restricts these, and they release all combustion byproducts into your living space. If your heritage home is on a corner lot, near the Ottawa River or Rideau Canal, or in a topographic low spot in the valley, discuss downdraft or wind resistance issues with your contractor — these can affect fireplace performance and may require a taller or specially designed vent pipe.

When you are ready to move forward, contact the City of Ottawa's heritage planning office at 3-1-1 or check ottawa.ca to confirm whether your property is designated and what approval, if any, is required for your specific project. Then you can connect with an experienced gas fitter and WETT-certified contractor through the Ottawa Construction Network directory who can handle both the technical installation and the heritage considerations. Getting these approvals and inspections right at the beginning saves you from costly mistakes later.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Homeupgraders
- JC Carpentry
- Steven Labelle - Your Complete Home Renovator
- The Granite shop
- The Fixer

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Q9

How loud is the blower fan on a fireplace insert and can you run it without the fan?

Fireplace insert blower fans typically produce **60 to 75 decibels of noise** — roughly equivalent to a normal conversation or a busy office environment. The exact sound level depends on the blower model, fan speed setting, and ductwork configuration. Many inserts have variable-speed blowers that allow you to reduce noise by running at lower speeds, though this also reduces heat output into the room. Some premium inserts use quieter EC (electronically commutated) motors that produce 55 to 65 decibels and are more efficient than traditional AC blowers.

Why this matters in Ottawa specifically: Ottawa winters are long and cold, meaning insert blowers often run continuously for extended periods — sometimes 6 to 8 hours per day during deep winter. Noise that seems tolerable for 30 minutes becomes annoying during an entire evening of fireplace use. Many Ottawa homeowners choose inserts specifically for supplemental heating on shoulder-season days (April, October, November) when the blower noise is less of an issue because it runs less frequently.

Most modern fireplace inserts — both gas and wood-burning — have **manual blower on/off controls**, either a wall switch or a remote control with fan speed options. Yes, you can absolutely run an insert without the blower running. In a wood-burning insert, the heat will still radiate into the room through the front glass and surround, but it will be substantially less efficient. Without the blower pushing warm air out through the ducting system, much of the heat generated inside the insert box simply rises up the chimney, wasting fuel and heating effectiveness. A wood insert without blower operation typically delivers only 40 to 50 percent of its potential heat output to the room.

Gas fireplace inserts have a similar dynamic. The insert generates heat, but without the blower fan actively circulating that warmth into the living space, a significant portion rises straight up the ductwork and is lost. Running a gas insert blower-off is possible and technically safe, but it defeats much of the purpose of installing an insert in the first place — you're paying for an efficient heating appliance and then choosing not to use its heating system.

The practical reality for Ottawa: Most insert owners use the blower during the main heating season (November through March) when the noise is worth tolerating for the warmth, and switch to blower-off mode during shoulder seasons (April and October) when you want ambiance and modest supplemental heat without the fan noise. Some families set a quiet-hours rule — blower off in bedrooms after 10 PM, for example. If noise is a significant concern for your space, ask your contractor about premium insert models with quieter EC blowers, or consider a direct-vent gas fireplace (which has no blower) or a wood stove insert placed in a lower-traffic area of the home where fan noise is less noticeable.

One important consideration: If you're running a wood-burning insert without the blower, ensure your chimney draft is strong enough to safely draw combustion gases up and out. A blower helps push heat out; it also slightly pressurizes the insert and ensures smoke flows upward. In rare cases — especially in tight, well-sealed modern homes where a wood insert is pulling air from inside — running the insert without the blower can create back-drafting issues. If you plan to run blower-off regularly, mention this during installation so the contractor can assess

your chimney draft and home ventilation.

If you're weighing insert options and noise is a primary concern, you can browse fireplace contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory who specialize in insert installations and can advise on quieter blower models for your specific space.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- 613Bins
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Ottawa Caulking
- B.A Gas Works
- East Coast Sheet Metal Inc

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Q10

Are pellet inserts more efficient than gas inserts for heating an Ottawa home through winter?

Pellet inserts are marginally more efficient than gas inserts in terms of raw heat output, but the answer for Ottawa heating depends on your priorities, fuel costs, and lifestyle — gas inserts win on convenience and reliability, while pellet inserts offer slightly better efficiency and lower fuel costs in most scenarios.

A modern pellet insert operates at 80 to 90 percent efficiency, meaning 80 to 90 percent of the fuel energy converts to usable heat. A gas insert typically runs at 75 to 85 percent efficiency. So on paper, pellets edge out gas by about 5 to 10 percentage points. However, this difference is meaningful but not transformative — you're talking about maybe 5 to 10 percent more heat per dollar spent on fuel in a typical Ottawa winter, assuming everything operates perfectly.

The bigger picture is fuel cost and availability. A cord of seasoned hardwood for a pellet insert costs roughly $350 to $450 delivered in Ottawa and produces approximately 16 to 18 million BTU per cord. A ton of premium pellets (2,000 pounds) costs $350 to $550 in Ottawa and produces roughly 16 to 17 million BTU per ton. Natural gas pricing in Ottawa runs about $0.12 to $0.18 per cubic foot, depending on your utility rate — a typical heating season might consume 5,000 to 8,000 cubic feet of gas in a home using a gas insert as supplemental heat, costing $600 to $1,400 for the season. So if you're heating an average Ottawa home with a pellet insert burning 2 to 3 tons of pellets per season, your fuel cost runs roughly $700 to $1,650, compared to $600 to $1,400 for gas. The cost difference is modest and fluctuates with commodity prices — some years pellets are cheaper, some years gas wins.

The real tradeoffs emerge in practical terms. Gas inserts require zero maintenance once installed — you flip a switch, adjust the flame with a remote or wall thermostat, and forget about it until spring. They produce no ash, no dust, no mess. A pellet insert demands regular attention: you must clean the burn pot and remove ash every few days during heavy use, unblock air passages, and check for clinker buildup. More importantly, pellet inserts are entirely dependent on electricity to operate the auger (the screw that feeds pellets into the firebox), the fan, and the ignition system. During Ottawa's frequent ice storms and power outages, your pellet insert becomes a beautiful but useless decoration. A gas insert will continue to produce heat during a power outage, though you'll lose the comfort of flame adjustment and may need to operate it manually.

For Ottawa's climate specifically, gas inserts offer another advantage: reliability during the very coldest stretches when you need supplemental heat most. Pellet inserts sometimes struggle to ignite or maintain steady burn in extreme cold, and the pellet delivery supply chain occasionally becomes stressed during brutal winter months. A gas insert paired with your existing furnace creates a dual-heating system that is nearly bulletproof — if one system

falters, the other keeps your home warm during -30 degree conditions.

Installation and operating costs favour pellet inserts slightly. A pellet insert installation runs $3,000 to $6,000 and requires no gas line work or venting modifications beyond ensuring the existing chimney is clear. A gas insert installation runs $2,500 to $5,500 installed, which is roughly comparable or slightly cheaper. Both require an existing functional chimney or a new vent installation. Annual servicing for a gas insert is $150 to $250, while a pellet insert typically requires $200 to $400 in annual maintenance due to the additional moving parts.

The decision ultimately hinges on your tolerance for maintenance and your heating philosophy. If you want set-it-and-forget-it supplemental heat with maximum reliability during Ottawa's harshest weather, a gas insert is the practical choice. If you actively enjoy tending a fire, don't mind regular ash removal, have reliable backup heating, and want to squeeze every last percentage point of efficiency from your fuel, a pellet insert makes sense. Both outperform an open fireplace (30 to 40 percent efficient) by a massive margin, and both will meaningfully reduce your heating bills compared to relying solely on your furnace during Ottawa's long winter.

When you're ready to explore specific insert options for your home, you can browse experienced fireplace installers through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to discuss which insert type fits your space, existing chimney configuration, and heating goals.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Canadian Masonry Services
- Valcor Construction
- Jaiko Cleaning Services

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Q11

How much does it cost to replace an old wood fireplace insert with a gas insert in Ottawa?

Replacing an old wood insert with a gas insert in Ottawa typically costs **$2,500 to $5,500 installed**, though that range can extend to $6,000 or more depending on your specific fireplace opening, existing venting, and whether your home already has a gas line nearby.

Here's what drives those costs: The gas insert itself runs $1,200 to $3,500 depending on size and features (standard units are more affordable; larger or decorative models cost more). Labour for removal of the old insert, preparation of the firebox, and installation of the new unit typically adds $800 to $1,500. If your existing masonry chimney can safely vent the gas insert through its original flue, you may only need a new chimney liner ($400 to $800 for a basic aluminum liner suited to gas) and a new cap. However, if the chimney needs rebuilding or structural repair — common in older Ottawa homes where masonry has deteriorated through decades of freeze-thaw cycling — costs can climb significantly. If you don't already have a gas line running to the fireplace location, adding one is an additional $500 to $1,500 depending on distance from your home's main gas meter.

Ottawa's extreme climate makes this conversion particularly sensible. A wood insert requires annual chimney cleaning and inspection by a WETT-certified sweep ($200 to $350 per year, sometimes twice yearly if you burn heavily), generates creosote buildup that poses chimney fire risk, and demands seasoned firewood storage and regular maintenance. A gas insert is cleaner, safer, and more convenient — no ash disposal, no creosote concerns, and minimal annual service ($150 to $250 for a professional inspection and tune-up). The operating cost difference is modest in Ottawa's climate; both heat similarly, though gas is slightly more economical if your insert runs frequently.

Before quoting, a TSSA-licensed gas fitter will inspect your chimney to confirm it's suitable for gas venting (or whether relining is necessary), and they'll assess your gas line situation. Don't skip this step — a chimney that worked beautifully for a wood insert may not meet code requirements for a gas appliance, and fixing that problem mid-project inflates costs. Similarly, confirm that your fireplace opening dimensions will accommodate the new insert; oversized or undersized openings occasionally require custom framing, adding $300 to $800 to the project.

Critical consideration: This project requires both a TSSA-licensed gas fitter to handle the gas line and insert installation (this is mandatory under Ontario law) and possibly an ESA-licensed electrician if the insert requires hardwired electrical for ignition or a blower fan. Confirm licensing and compliance documentation before work begins — unlicensed gas work voids your home insurance and creates serious safety risks.

The best time to schedule this conversion in Ottawa is April through June or late August through September, before the autumn rush when every homeowner suddenly wants their fireplace ready for winter. Spring scheduling also gives your installer flexibility to address any chimney issues they discover during inspection.

If you'd like to connect with TSSA-licensed gas fitters and WETT-certified professionals in Ottawa who specialize in insert conversions, you can browse fireplace contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory. Get at

least three written quotes that specify the exact scope (insert model, liner type, any chimney repairs, gas line work), materials, and timeline — costs vary significantly based on your chimney's current condition.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Homeupgraders
- The Egress Group Inc
- ZinoM Concrete & Landscaping
- Jaiko Cleaning Services
- East Coast Sheet Metal Inc

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Q12

Can a high-efficiency fireplace insert actually heat my entire 1800 square foot Ottawa bungalow during a power outage?

A high-efficiency wood-burning fireplace insert can absolutely provide meaningful heat for an 1800 square foot Ottawa bungalow during a power outage, though it likely won't maintain your normal comfort temperature throughout the entire home. A quality EPA-certified wood insert produces 40,000 to 80,000 BTU per hour at peak output — enough to heat 1,200 to 2,000 square feet under ideal conditions. However, Ottawa's extreme winter temperatures of -25 to -30 degrees Celsius mean your home loses heat much faster than in milder climates, and the insert's heat distribution depends heavily on your home's layout and insulation quality.

The key advantage of a wood insert during power outages is that it operates completely independently of electricity — no blower fans, no ignition systems, no thermostats. While the optional blower fan helps distribute heat more evenly when power is available, the insert will still radiate substantial heat through natural convection when the power is out. In an open-concept bungalow, this radiant heat can reach most living areas, though rooms farthest from the fireplace will be noticeably cooler. Expect the room with the insert to stay comfortably warm, adjacent rooms to be moderately heated, and distant bedrooms to drop 10 to 15 degrees below normal.

Your home's insulation and air sealing make an enormous difference in how effectively the insert heats the space. A well-insulated bungalow with modern windows and doors will retain the insert's heat much better than an older

home with poor insulation and air leaks. The insert's location also matters — a centrally located fireplace distributes heat more evenly than one tucked into a corner room.

Critical considerations for Ottawa power outages: Stock at least two cords of properly seasoned hardwood (maple, oak, ash) with 15-20% moisture content. Wet or green wood produces minimal heat and dangerous amounts of creosote. Have battery-powered carbon monoxide detectors as backup — your hardwired detectors won't function during outages. Never close the damper until the fire is completely extinguished, even if trying to conserve heat. Install the insert with WETT certification to ensure proper clearances and safe operation, and have your chimney cleaned annually since Ottawa's long heating season creates substantial creosote buildup.

While the insert won't replicate your furnace's even heating, it can keep your family safe and reasonably comfortable during Ottawa's inevitable winter power outages. When you're ready to explore insert options, you can browse experienced fireplace installers through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to find WETT-certified professionals who understand heating requirements in Ottawa's demanding climate.

Q13

Can a Napoleon gas insert fit inside a Regency-sized fireplace opening or do Ottawa installers need to modify the surround?

Napoleon gas inserts can typically fit into fireplace openings originally designed for Regency units, but the exact fit depends on the specific models and your existing opening dimensions rather than brand compatibility. Most standard masonry fireplace openings in Ottawa homes built from the 1980s onward follow similar sizing conventions, with common widths of 36, 42, or 48 inches and heights of 24 to 30 inches.

The critical measurements for insert compatibility are the fireplace opening width, height, and depth, plus the flue size and condition. Napoleon makes inserts in multiple size categories — their smaller units fit openings as narrow as 22 inches wide, while their largest models require 44-inch openings. The key is measuring your actual fireplace opening, not assuming it matches the original Regency specifications. Ottawa's older homes often have custom masonry work that varies from standard dimensions.

Your TSSA-licensed gas fitter will need to verify that your existing gas line can supply adequate BTU capacity for the new Napoleon insert, and they'll inspect your chimney or existing direct-vent termination to ensure it's compatible with the new unit's venting requirements. Some Napoleon inserts use different venting configurations than older Regency models, which could require modifications to the existing vent pipe or termination.

Minor surround modifications are sometimes necessary and typically involve adjusting the facing material around the insert rather than structural changes to the fireplace opening itself. This might include trimming tile, stone, or brick facing to accommodate the new insert's trim kit, or installing a larger surround plate to cover gaps between the insert and the existing opening.

Important consideration: Never assume an old gas line or venting system is adequate for a new appliance without professional inspection. Gas appliances have specific BTU requirements and venting needs that must be verified by a licensed professional. Carbon monoxide risks from improper venting make this a critical safety issue, not just a fit question.

When you're ready to move forward with the installation, you can browse TSSA-licensed gas fitters who specialize in fireplace inserts through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to get proper measurements and installation quotes for your specific situation.

Q14

How much does it cost to install a wood-burning fireplace insert in an Ottawa home with an oversized masonry opening?

A wood-burning fireplace insert installation in Ottawa typically costs $3,500 to $7,000 for a complete, professionally installed system. The oversized masonry opening actually works in your favor — most inserts are designed to fit standard fireplace openings, and having extra space makes installation easier and often less expensive than trying to squeeze an insert into an undersized opening.

Ottawa's extreme winter climate makes a wood insert an excellent investment for both supplemental heating and reducing your natural gas or electricity bills during the coldest months. A modern EPA-certified wood insert burns at 70 to 80 percent efficiency compared to just 10 to 20 percent for your existing open masonry fireplace, meaning you'll get dramatically more heat from the same amount of wood. With Ottawa households burning 4 to 8 cords per season when using wood as supplemental heat, this efficiency gain translates to real money saved on your heating bills.

The installation process involves several key components that affect your total cost. The insert itself runs $2,000 to $4,500 depending on size and features. A stainless steel chimney liner is essential — your existing clay tile liner was designed for an open fireplace and won't safely vent the concentrated heat and different draft characteristics of an insert. Liner costs run $800 to $2,000 depending on your chimney height and diameter. Professional installation by a WETT-certified technician adds $700 to $1,500 to ensure proper clearances, connections, and safety compliance. You'll also need a block-off plate above the insert to seal the damper area ($200 to $400) and potentially some masonry work to properly size the opening or add insulation around the liner.

The oversized opening gives you flexibility to choose a larger insert for more heat output, but don't automatically assume bigger is better. An oversized insert will overheat your room and force you to run it at low burn rates, which creates more creosote buildup in your chimney liner — a particular concern in Ottawa where long burning seasons already increase creosote accumulation. Your WETT-certified installer can help you select the right size insert for your room dimensions and heating goals.

Insurance companies in Ontario require a WETT inspection after wood insert installation, adding $250 to $450 to your project cost but ensuring your coverage remains valid. Schedule your installation for late spring through early fall — masonry work and chimney liner installation require temperatures above 5 degrees Celsius, and you'll want everything completed before Ottawa's heating season begins in earnest.

When you're ready to move forward, you can browse WETT-certified fireplace installers through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to compare local professionals who specialize in wood insert installations and understand Ottawa's specific climate challenges.

Q15

Will a high-efficiency fireplace insert actually help reduce my winter heating bills in an older Ottawa home?

Yes, a high-efficiency fireplace insert can meaningfully reduce your winter heating bills in an older Ottawa home — but the actual savings depend on how much you use it, how well your home is insulated, and whether you're replacing an open fireplace or adding supplemental heat to a space that currently has no fireplace.

Why Fireplace Inserts Work Well in Ottawa's Climate

Older Ottawa homes, especially those built before 1980, tend to have poor insulation, single-pane or early double-pane windows, and significant air leakage. These homes lose heat aggressively during Ottawa's brutal winters, and many homeowners heat spaces they don't actively use — a bedroom, den, or living room that sits at 16 degrees Celsius while the main furnace struggles to keep the rest of the house warm. A modern fireplace insert addresses this problem directly: it provides zone heating that allows you to warm the room you're occupying without heating the entire house, which is exactly where older homes waste the most energy.

A modern wood insert burns at 70 to 80 percent efficiency — meaning 70 to 80 percent of the wood's energy becomes usable heat in your home. A gas insert typically delivers 70 to 90 percent efficiency. An open masonry fireplace, by contrast, operates at only 30 to 40 percent efficiency: most of the heat goes straight up the chimney, and the fireplace actually pulls warm air from your house and exhausts it outside. If you have an old open fireplace that you occasionally use, converting it to an insert immediately stops this energy loss. Even if you never light it again, closing off the chimney flue prevents heated house air from escaping up the chimney during winter.

Real-World Heating Impact

The heating impact of an insert depends entirely on your usage pattern. If you run a wood insert or gas insert for 6 to 8 hours per day during Ottawa's shoulder seasons (October, November, March, April) and 4 to 6 hours per day during deep winter, you can realistically offset 20 to 40 percent of your heating bill for those months. A wood insert producing 40,000 to 60,000 BTU per hour of usable heat can meaningfully warm a 300 to 400 square-foot room — a typical living room or family room in an older home. During shoulder seasons when overnight temperatures are around -5 to -10 degrees Celsius, running a wood insert in the evening can allow you to set your main furnace thermostat 3 to 5 degrees lower, which translates to real savings.

However, if you run the insert only occasionally — burning wood a few times per month on weekends — your savings will be modest, perhaps $200 to $400 per heating season. The value proposition shifts if you're someone who genuinely enjoys a wood fire and will use the stove regularly. Many Ottawa homeowners with wood inserts in older homes report $1,200 to $2,000 in annual heating bill reductions if they maintain active use throughout the

winter.

Gas inserts deliver more consistent, controllable heat and require no wood sourcing, splitting, or storage, but the economic case is less compelling in Ottawa. Natural gas is relatively inexpensive in the Ottawa region, and a gas insert operating on delivered heat of around 75,000 to 100,000 BTU per hour costs more to run than using your existing furnace in many cases — unless you're using the insert to heat a zone while lowering the furnace setpoint in unoccupied areas of the house. The real advantage of a gas insert is convenience, reliability, and the psychological comfort of fire without the work of wood management.

The Hidden Benefit: Zone Heating Strategy

The deepest savings from a fireplace insert come from smart zone heating in older homes. Most older Ottawa houses have furnaces that heat the entire structure to a uniform temperature, even if you spend 80 percent of your time in two rooms. By installing a well-positioned fireplace insert and strategically closing off bedrooms and unused spaces, you can drop your furnace setpoint from 21 degrees Celsius to 18 degrees Celsius during the day and evening while keeping your primary living space at a comfortable temperature via the insert. This approach can reduce furnace runtime by 25 to 35 percent, which is where the real bill reduction happens.

Important Practical Considerations

Before committing to a wood insert, understand that burning wood is a multi-step process: you need to source seasoned firewood (12 to 18 months properly dried, ideally split in summer and stored covered for winter), stack it correctly at least 5 metres from the house, manage ash removal, and commit to annual (minimum) chimney cleaning and WETT inspections. A heavy user in Ottawa should consider a chimney sweep twice yearly — Ottawa's long heating season and frequent wood burning mean significant creosote accumulation. The cord of seasoned hardwood costs $350 to $450 delivered in Ottawa, and a household burning 4 to 8 cords per season spends $1,400 to $3,600 on fuel. When you factor this into your heating cost equation, the savings are real but not as dramatic as the raw BTU numbers suggest.

Your existing chimney condition also matters. If you're converting an old open fireplace, the chimney must be inspected and likely relined to safely vent a modern insert. An older masonry chimney with deteriorated clay tile liners cannot safely vent a new wood insert without relining, which adds $2,000 to $5,000 to your project cost in Ottawa.

Cost Breakdown

A complete wood insert installation in an Ottawa older home typically runs $4,500 to $9,500: the insert itself ($2,500 to $5,000), chimney relining if needed ($2,000 to $5,000), hearth protection and installation labour ($500 to $1,500), and a WETT inspection ($250 to $450). A gas insert is simpler — $2,500 to $5,500 total — but offers smaller

operational savings relative to natural gas pricing.

The payback period for a wood insert is typically 4 to 8 years if you use it actively, based on heating bill reductions of $1,200 to $1,600 per season. Gas inserts rarely pay for themselves through heating savings alone in Ottawa's market but provide value through convenience, reliability, and avoiding the hassle of wood management.

If you're seriously considering an insert and want to understand your home's specific heating profile and the realistic savings potential, a fireplace contractor can help assess your chimney condition, discuss zone heating strategy, and provide accurate cost estimates. You can browse fireplace installers experienced with older

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Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- JC Carpentry
- Ottawa Caulking
- McLaren Masonry
- Custom By Arie

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Q16

How much does a TSSA-certified technician charge to install a direct-vent gas insert in Ottawa?

A TSSA-licensed gas fitter typically charges **$2,500 to $5,500 installed** for a direct-vent gas fireplace insert in an existing masonry fireplace in Ottawa. This range covers the gas insert unit itself, labor for installation, venting materials, gas line connections, and the required TSSA compliance inspection and tagging. The final cost depends heavily on whether your existing chimney can be used for the new vent pipe or requires modification, the complexity of the gas line run from your meter to the fireplace location, and the specific insert model you choose.

The reason this range is fairly wide comes down to the condition of your existing fireplace and chimney. If your masonry fireplace is in good structural condition and your gas meter is relatively close to the fireplace location, you'll be closer to the lower end of that range. If your chimney needs tuckpointing or cap repair before the insert can be safely installed, or if your gas line needs to be run a considerable distance through walls or across your home, costs can climb toward $5,500 or beyond.

Here's what's typically included in a professional installation: the gas insert unit itself (ranging from $1,200 to $2,500 depending on model and features), direct-vent pipe and termination kit that runs outside ($400 to $800), gas line installation or extension from your meter ($500 to $1,500 depending on distance and routing), connection to your existing fireplace opening, hearth adjustments if needed, and crucially, the TSSA inspection and compliance tag by a licensed gas fitter ($150 to $300 as a separate line item, though many contractors roll this into their labor charge). Never accept an installation without TSSA tagging — that tag proves the work was done legally and safely, and your insurance company will ask for evidence of it.

One critical consideration: your existing chimney must be inspected and deemed suitable before a gas insert can be installed. Many older Ottawa masonry chimneys have deteriorated mortar joints, cracked clay tile liners, or structural issues from our brutal freeze-thaw cycles. If your chimney needs a stainless steel liner installed before the insert can be vented through it, add another **$2,000 to $5,000** to the total project cost. A TSSA gas fitter will typically require either a WETT inspection or chimney assessment before proceeding, so budget for that preliminary inspection if you haven't had one recently.

Direct-vent gas inserts are an excellent choice for Ottawa homeowners because they draw combustion air from outside through a sealed double-wall vent pipe and exhaust back outside, which means they don't consume household oxygen, don't create negative pressure problems in tight modern homes, and achieve efficiency rates of 70 to 85 percent. Unlike open masonry fireplaces, which lose 80 to 90 percent of their heat up the chimney, a gas insert converts most of the fuel's energy into actual heat for your home.

Important: Only hire a TSSA-licensed gas fitter (G2 or G3 certificate). Gas work is not a DIY project — natural gas is explosive, and improper installation can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning. Unlicensed gas work is illegal in Ontario and voids your home insurance. After installation, verify that your technician has placed the TSSA compliance label on the insert and provided you with documentation of the work.

If you're ready to move forward, you can browse experienced gas fitters and fireplace installers in Ottawa through the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory — get at least three quotes that specify the exact insert model, chimney condition assessment results, gas line scope, and whether chimney relining is included or quoted separately.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Gillani Heating & Appliance Care Inc.
- Renovo Construction
- Coliseum concrete & interlock

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Q17

Can I install a gas fireplace insert if my Ottawa home doesn't have an existing natural gas line run to the fireplace?

Yes, you can absolutely install a gas fireplace insert without an existing natural gas line — the contractor will run a new gas line from your home's main gas metre or existing gas supply to the fireplace location. This is a common scenario in Ottawa, especially for homes where the fireplace is in a room far from the kitchen or where the original chimney was built before natural gas was widely available in the city.

Why This Matters in Ottawa

Running a new gas line adds to the overall project cost, but it's a straightforward process that skilled gas fitters handle regularly. The final price of your gas insert installation will depend partly on how far the line needs to travel, what walls need to be opened or rerouted, and whether the run is on the same floor as your gas metre or requires

running pipe vertically through the house. In Ottawa homes, gas line runs of 10 to 20 feet are extremely common and won't significantly inflate your budget — but a line that needs to travel 50+ feet or requires substantial wall opening will cost more. You'll also need to decide between copper tubing (more flexible, easier to run through walls, slightly more expensive) and black iron pipe (traditional, less flexible, requires threaded fittings, slightly cheaper).

The gas line installation must be performed by a **TSSA-licensed gas fitter** (G2 or G3 certificate holder) — this is not optional in Ontario. After the line is installed and the insert is connected, the gas fitter must perform a pressure test, check for leaks using a soap solution, inspect the vent piping, and tag the appliance with a TSSA compliance label. You should receive documentation confirming the work was performed by a licensed technician. Any unlicensed gas work voids your home insurance and creates serious carbon monoxide and explosion hazards, so this is absolutely a hire-a-professional situation.

Practical Steps and Costs

When you get quotes for a gas fireplace insert, the contractor should provide separate line items for: (1) the insert unit itself and fireplace surround modifications, (2) the venting system (vent pipe, termination cap, and any roof or wall penetrations), and (3) the gas line installation, including labour and materials. A new gas line run typically costs **$500 to $1,500** depending on distance and complexity. Add this to the base insert cost of **$2,500 to $5,500** for a complete installed system, and your total will likely fall in the **$3,500 to $7,000 range** for a straightforward installation.

Before scheduling work, you'll want to confirm a few details: First, locate your home's gas metre and check the pressure and capacity of your existing gas supply — most residential metres in Ottawa can handle an additional fireplace insert, but the gas fitter should verify this. Second, determine which room will have the insert and whether that room's chimney is easily accessible from inside the walls (or if you'll need to open walls for the gas line run). Third, confirm that your existing chimney is suitable for venting — a direct-vent gas insert uses a sealed double-wall vent pipe that exhausts outside, so you need either an existing chimney opening or the ability to create a new vent penetration through the wall or roof.

Important Considerations

Direct-vent gas inserts are the standard choice for Ottawa and are the most efficient option — they draw combustion air from outside through a sealed pipe, so they don't consume household oxygen or affect your home's air quality. This is especially important in modern Ottawa homes, which tend to be tightly sealed for winter energy efficiency. The sealed design also means no risk of backdrafting or smoke blowback into your living space.

Before work begins, the gas fitter should locate and mark all existing utilities in the walls where the new line will run — water lines, electrical wiring, and anything else that might conflict with the new gas line. This protects you from

expensive accidents and is standard practice for any licensed contractor.

Budget for the entire project in the **$3,500 to $7,000 range** all-in, and schedule the work for spring or early fall so the contractor has good working conditions and the job won't interfere with your heating season. Gas line work can be done year-round, but it's wise to avoid the rush of October and November when every Ottawa homeowner suddenly remembers they want a fireplace before the cold arrives.

If you're ready to move forward, you can browse experienced gas fitters and fireplace installers through the Ottawa Construction Network directory, which includes contractors who regularly handle gas line runs and insert installations across Ottawa and the surrounding region.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- JC Carpentry
- B.A Gas Works
- Dump n Dash Hauling
- Humble Homes - property maintenance

View all contractors ?

Q18

How much more efficient is a modern EPA-certified wood insert compared to my open masonry fireplace in Ottawa?

A modern EPA-certified wood insert will burn at roughly **70 to 80 percent efficiency**, compared to just **30 to 40 percent for your open masonry fireplace** — meaning you'll get two to three times more usable heat from the same amount of wood. In practical terms, an open fireplace is actually a heat loss machine in Ottawa's climate: while you're enjoying the ambiance of flames, most of the warm air from your living space is being drawn up the chimney along with the combustion gases, leaving you cold and running your furnace harder to compensate.

This efficiency gap matters enormously in Ottawa because heating costs are substantial. A typical household burning four cords of seasoned hardwood per season in an open fireplace ($1,400 to $1,800 in fuel alone) might only recoup 30 to 40 percent of that energy as useful heat — the rest vanishes up the chimney. With a wood insert

burning the same four cords, you'd capture 70 to 80 percent of that energy, meaning you'd either need significantly less wood to achieve the same warmth or get dramatically more comfort from the same amount of fuel. Over a decade, that's the difference between spending $15,000 on firewood and getting modest supplemental heat versus spending $6,000 to $8,000 on firewood and genuinely reducing your home heating load.

The physics of efficiency: An open fireplace draws cold air from around it to feed the fire, and all of that air — now heated and mixed with combustion gases — exits through the chimney. This pulls conditioned air out of your house, creating negative pressure that forces your furnace to work harder to replace it. A wood insert essentially seals your fireplace opening and channels combustion air directly from outside (through a dedicated pipe) while the stove radiates heat into your living space. The firebox is smaller and insulated, so less heat escapes. Modern EPA-certified inserts use secondary combustion chambers or catalytic combustors to re-burn unburned gases and smoke at lower temperatures, extracting more heat before those gases exit the chimney.

The insert advantage in Ottawa's climate: Ottawa's long heating season — five to six months of regular fireplace use — makes the efficiency difference particularly worthwhile. Homeowners who use their fireplace or stove as genuine supplemental heating (not just occasional ambiance) can realistically displace 20 to 40 percent of their home heating load with an efficient wood insert, depending on how much they're willing to use it and how well their home is insulated. A modest insert burning five to eight cords per season can meaningfully reduce your gas heating costs from November through March.

Important considerations: To achieve that 70 to 80 percent efficiency rating, you must burn properly seasoned hardwood (15 to 20 percent moisture content) with an annual creosote buildup that demands regular chimney sweeping — Ottawa's long burning season and colder shoulder-season temperatures make creosote formation more likely than in milder climates. A WETT-certified chimney sweep should inspect and clean your chimney annually at minimum, and heavy users should consider twice-yearly sweeps. Your existing chimney will need inspection (a WETT Level 2 inspection costs $350 to $600) to confirm it's safe for an insert, and you'll likely need a chimney liner installed (stainless steel liners run $2,000 to $5,000) because many older Ottawa chimneys have deteriorated clay tile liners that won't safely contain the heat and condensation from a modern insert.

A wood insert conversion typically costs $3,500 to $7,000 installed, including the stove, chimney work, new hearth pad, and labour. That investment typically pays for itself within three to five years if you're genuinely using the insert for heat, not just ambiance.

When you're ready to explore wood insert options for your specific fireplace, you can browse experienced fireplace installers and WETT-certified technicians through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to compare what's available locally.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Homeupgraders
- The Egress Group Inc
- Steven Labelle - Your Complete Home Renovator
- Dump n Dash Hauling
- ZinoM Concrete & Landscaping

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Q19

What's the total cost difference between a wood-burning insert and a gas insert installed in Ottawa?

The installed cost difference between a wood-burning insert and a gas insert in Ottawa is roughly **$500 to $1,500**, with wood inserts typically running slightly higher, though the gap is narrower than many homeowners expect.

A gas insert in Ottawa costs **$2,500 to $5,500 installed**, while a wood-burning insert runs **$3,500 to $7,000 installed**. At first glance, this suggests wood is consistently more expensive, but the real picture is more nuanced because both prices include the insert unit itself, installation labour, chimney modifications, and hearth pad work. The overlap in these ranges means that a mid-range wood insert might actually cost less than a premium gas insert, depending on the specific models chosen and your chimney's condition.

What matters more than the upfront cost difference is the **total cost of ownership over time**. A gas insert requires a gas line installation if one doesn't already exist near your fireplace — add **$500 to $1,500** for that run. Gas inserts also need annual service inspections by a licensed technician at roughly **$150 to $250 per year**. A wood insert requires annual chimney cleaning and sweeping by a WETT-certified sweep at **$175 to $350 per year**, plus you'll need to purchase firewood at **$350 to $450 per cord** in Ottawa. If you burn 3 to 4 cords per season (typical for supplemental heating), that's an additional **$1,050 to $1,800 in fuel costs annually**.

The gas insert wins on convenience and operating cost — you pay nothing for fuel, simply flip a switch or press a remote, and the heat comes instantly without the mess of ash or the commitment to seasoning and stacking firewood. Gas inserts also produce significantly less creosote buildup because they burn cleaner, so your chimney cleaning intervals might stretch longer. However, a wood insert gives you the authentic experience of a real wood fire, provides substantial heat output (often 60,000 to 80,000 BTU), and creates a deeper sense of ritual and comfort that many Ottawa homeowners genuinely value on long winter nights.

One critical consideration: if you're converting from an open masonry fireplace, both insert types require chimney relining with a properly sized stainless steel or aluminum liner. A gas insert typically uses a smaller liner (5-inch or 6-inch), while a wood insert usually needs a larger liner (6-inch or 8-inch). If your existing chimney liner is deteriorated — common in Ottawa's freeze-thaw climate — you may face unexpected chimney relining costs of **$2,000 to $5,000**, which can dwarf the difference between insert types. Always get a chimney inspection before pricing an insert project; a WETT Level 1 inspection costs **$250 to $450** and will reveal whether relining is necessary.

Insurance is another hidden cost factor. Most Ottawa insurance companies require a WETT inspection before insuring a wood-burning insert, and some charge slightly higher premiums for wood-burning appliances due to fire risk. Gas inserts don't typically trigger premium increases, though insurers want documentation that installation was

performed by a TSSA-licensed gas fitter.

If you're leaning toward a wood insert, the real payoff comes from the warmth of burning wood and the heating contribution to your home during Ottawa's long winters — the economics work best if you value that experience and have space to properly season and store firewood. If convenience, lower operating costs, and instant heat are your priorities, a gas insert is the more practical choice and will likely cost you less over a decade of ownership.

When you're ready to get professional quotes on either option, you can browse fireplace contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to compare installation approaches and pricing from local professionals who understand Ottawa's chimney challenges.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- 613Bins
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Dtech Services and Solutions Inc
- ZinoM Concrete & Landscaping
- Home Front Services

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Q20

Do I need an Ontario building permit to install a fireplace insert in my existing Ottawa fireplace?

Whether you need a City of Ottawa building permit for a fireplace insert depends on the specific type of insert and the scope of work involved, but the short answer is: **most fireplace inserts require a permit, though the permit process is often simpler than for new fireplace construction.** Always check with the City of Ottawa Building Code Services before starting work.

The Ontario Building Code treats fireplace inserts as structural and safety modifications to an existing appliance, which triggers permit requirements in most cases. A gas fireplace insert going into an existing masonry fireplace usually requires a permit because it involves modifying the appliance, installing new venting (either direct-vent piping or B-vent), and potentially running a gas line. Similarly, a wood-burning or pellet insert requires a permit

because it modifies the chimney system, adds a new appliance, and involves clearance-to-combustible verification. An electric fireplace insert — which simply plugs into an existing outlet and requires no venting, gas line, or structural modification — typically does NOT require a permit, though you should confirm this with the City.

Here is why permits matter in Ottawa beyond just regulatory compliance. The permit process ensures that your installation meets current Ontario Building Code standards, which have evolved significantly. An older masonry fireplace built 30, 40, or even 50 years ago may not have the proper clearances, flashing, or structural integrity to safely accommodate a modern insert. The permit process involves a building inspector reviewing your plans and, critically, conducting an inspection once the work is complete. This inspection verifies that the chimney is properly sized for the new appliance, that the hearth extension meets current code requirements (typically 16 inches in front and 8 inches to each side for inserts), and that all gas or electrical connections are safe and compliant. For insurance purposes, having a permit and final inspection is valuable documentation that the work was done to code.

The permit application process in Ottawa is straightforward. Contact the City of Ottawa Building Code Services by calling 3-1-1 or visiting ottawa.ca. You will need to provide the manufacturer specifications for the insert you are installing, photos of your existing fireplace, and information about your contractor (if you are hiring one). Permit fees in Ottawa typically run $150 to $400 depending on the project scope. The application usually takes 5 to 10 business days to process. Once approved, the contractor performs the installation and then requests a final inspection — the inspector checks the work, signs off, and you receive your occupancy permit. The entire process usually takes 3 to 4 weeks, which is why smart Ottawa homeowners apply for permits in spring or early fall rather than waiting until October when everyone is scrambling to get fireplaces ready before winter.

One important caveat: if your existing chimney is deteriorated, undersized, or unsafe, installing an insert may require chimney relining or repairs before the insert can be safely vented — this can add $2,000 to $5,000 or more to the project cost. A WETT inspection (for wood inserts) or a professional assessment (for gas inserts) before you apply for a permit will identify these issues early and prevent costly surprises during construction. Insurance companies increasingly require permits and inspections as a condition of coverage, so skipping the permit process to save time or money often backfires when you file a claim years later and the insurance company discovers that major work was done without permits.

If you are ready to move forward with an insert installation, a professional fireplace contractor will typically handle the permit application as part of their service, though you should confirm this in the quote. You can browse fireplace installers in the Ottawa area through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to find experienced professionals who are familiar with local permit requirements and can guide you through the process smoothly.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- JC Carpentry
- ComfortWay Plumbing Heating and Cooling
- L.L. Renovation
- MAK Construction and Development Inc

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Q21

Are pellet fireplace inserts a good option for Ottawa homeowners who want lower heating costs than natural gas?

Pellet fireplace inserts can deliver excellent heating efficiency and lower operating costs than natural gas in some scenarios, but Ottawa's unique climate and seasonal heating patterns make them a more complex choice than the straightforward cost comparison suggests.

A quality pellet insert burns at 80 to 90 percent efficiency — significantly higher than a gas fireplace insert's 70 to 85 percent — and pellets typically cost $220 to $280 per ton in Ottawa, with most homes burning 3 to 5 tons per season depending on how often the insert runs. That works out to roughly $660 to $1,400 in annual pellet costs for moderate use. Natural gas, by contrast, costs around $12 to $15 per gigajoule in Ottawa (variable with seasonal pricing), and a gas insert consumes approximately 15 to 25 gigajoules per season with regular use, translating to $180 to $375 in heating costs. On raw fuel expense alone, gas is cheaper — but pellet inserts deliver more usable heat per dollar spent on fuel, which partially closes the gap.

The real advantage of pellet inserts emerges when you consider them as supplemental heating that reduces your primary heating system's workload. If a pellet insert in your family room allows you to lower your furnace thermostat by even 2 to 3 degrees Celsius during evening hours when the family gathers there, you can recoup the heating cost advantage of gas within a single season. A pellet insert producing 40,000 to 50,000 BTU can effectively heat a 400 to 600 square foot space to comfortable temperatures, which means your furnace doesn't have to condition that zone. Over a full winter season in Ottawa, that compounding effect on your overall heating bill can be substantial — potentially $800 to $1,500 in reduced natural gas consumption, which exceeds the cost of pellets burned in the insert.

However, there are critical Ottawa-specific considerations that make pellet inserts less straightforward than they initially appear. **Pellet inserts require electricity to operate** — the auger that feeds pellets into the combustion chamber, the blower fan that circulates heated air, and the control board all depend on continuous power. During Ottawa ice storms and the occasional extended winter power outage, your pellet insert becomes inert while a gas fireplace continues operating. If you live in an area prone to outages (parts of Orleans, the western suburbs, and areas along Hydro transmission corridors experience more frequent power loss), this is a genuine disadvantage. You can install a battery backup system or small generator, but that adds $1,500 to $3,000 to your total project cost.

Pellet storage also demands planning that many Ottawa homes aren't equipped for. You need a dry, climate-controlled space (ideally indoors or in a sealed structure) to store pellets — they absorb moisture readily, and wet pellets won't burn efficiently or at all. A typical season's supply of 3 to 5 tons requires roughly 150 to 250 cubic feet of storage, equivalent to a small bedroom or a quarter of a basement corner. Pellets are delivered in 40-pound bags, so you are coordinating multiple deliveries and stacking bags throughout the season. Bagged pellets also accumulate fine dust that can migrate into your home if not properly contained — some homeowners experience respiratory irritation from pellet dust during loading.

Installation costs in Ottawa for a quality pellet insert run $3,000 to $6,000 fully installed, which is comparable to or slightly higher than a gas insert ($2,500 to $5,500), but the total lifecycle cost calculation includes annual maintenance. Pellet inserts require more frequent attention than gas inserts — you need to empty ash from the combustion chamber every 10 to 20 tons of pellets burned (roughly every 3 to 6 weeks during heavy use), clean the glass regularly, and have the entire unit professionally inspected and serviced annually. Annual pellet insert service in Ottawa runs $150 to $300, compared to $150 to $250 for gas fireplace service — not dramatically different, but it represents ongoing hands-on engagement with the appliance.

The real decision hinges on your heating priorities. If you want maximum comfort with minimal maintenance and effort, **a gas insert is the better Ottawa choice** — it provides reliable supplemental heat with almost zero user intervention, operates during power outages, and costs less to run. If you are willing to actively manage a heating system, have reliable storage space, and value the tangible feeling of feeding a fire and the visual appeal of watching real flames (pellet flames are less dramatic than wood-burning), then a pellet insert can deliver both the heating efficiency and cost advantages you are looking for, with the bonus of lower operating costs than you would see from gas.

One more consideration: pellet quality varies significantly by supplier and brand. Inferior pellets with high moisture content or excessive fines (dust) will cause creosote and ash buildup in your chimney and insert, negating efficiency gains and potentially requiring more frequent chimney cleaning. Premium hardwood pellets from established suppliers like Energex or Pinnacle burn cleaner and hotter, but they cost 15 to 20 percent more. In

Ottawa, I recommend buying from a local dealer who can advise on seasonal supply reliability — shortages sometimes occur mid-winter if national supply chains are disrupted.

If you decide to move forward with a pellet insert, the installation will require a WETT-certified professional (insurance companies mandate this for wood-burning and pellet appliances), and you'll need to arrange electrical hardwiring from the nearest circuit panel to the insert location, which requires an ESA-licensed electrician — figure $300 to $800 for that electrical work depending on distance. When you are ready to get concrete quotes and see what's available in the Ottawa market, you can browse fireplace contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory, where you can find installers experienced with pellet inserts alongside gas and wood-burning options.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- JC Carpentry
- Humble Homes - property maintenance
- Galico Home Comfort Inc.
- Sam’s Brickworks

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Q22

What size gas insert do I need to heat a 1,200 square foot open-concept main floor in Ottawa winters?

For a 1,200 square foot open-concept space in Ottawa, you'll want a gas fireplace insert rated between **30,000 and 40,000 BTU**, with 35,000 BTU being a practical middle ground for most homeowners. The actual output you need depends on how well your home is insulated, whether you're using the insert as supplemental heat or primary heat, and your tolerance for room temperature variation.

Why Insert Sizing Matters in Ottawa's Climate

Ottawa's brutal winters — regularly hitting -25 to -30 degrees Celsius with wind chill — mean your heating system is working constantly from November through March. An undersized insert will struggle to noticeably warm a 1,200 square foot open-concept area, especially if you have older windows, poor attic insulation, or high ceilings (which trap heat away from living spaces). An oversized insert, conversely, will cycle on and off frequently, creating temperature swings and wasting fuel. The insert also needs to work efficiently with your home's existing furnace, not fight against it.

Here's the practical calculation: The general rule of thumb is 10 to 15 BTU per square foot of space for supplemental heat in a cold climate. For Ottawa, aim for the higher end of that range — roughly 12 to 15 BTU per square foot — because your winters are longer and more severe than average. A 1,200 square foot open-concept area requires 14,400 to 18,000 BTU minimum if the insert is truly your only heat source, but since most Ottawa homeowners use a gas insert as supplemental heat alongside their furnace, a 30,000 to 40,000 BTU unit is the practical sweet spot. This allows the insert to meaningfully warm the main floor on mild winter days (when you might only run the furnace for a few hours) without overwhelming the space.

Insulation and air leakage are critical variables. A well-insulated, newer home with triple-pane windows and tight construction will need less BTU output than an older home with single-pane windows and air leaks around windows and doors. If your home was built before 2000, the furnace was sized to cover the whole house, and your insulation is average or below average, you should lean toward the 35,000 to 40,000 BTU range. If your home is newer and well-insulated, 30,000 to 35,000 BTU should be adequate.

Open-concept layout affects heat distribution. A 1,200 square foot open-concept main floor is a single thermal zone — heat from the insert will flow throughout the space naturally, which is an advantage over a sectioned floor plan. However, if you have a vaulted ceiling or an upper landing that draws warm air upward, or if your kitchen is separated by an archway or partial wall, you may lose some heating efficiency. The fireplace should be positioned centrally (or at least not in a dead corner) to distribute warmth effectively across the space.

Ask your gas fitter about staging and modulation. Many modern gas inserts offer variable heat output — they can run at low fire, medium, or high BTU depending on thermostat settings. A 40,000 BTU insert with modulation gives you flexibility to run at 20,000 BTU on mild 0-degree days and ramp up to full output during -30 degree extremes. This flexibility is valuable in Ottawa because the heating season is long and temperatures vary dramatically from November through March.

A gas insert installation in Ottawa typically costs **$2,500 to $5,500 installed**, depending on whether your existing masonry fireplace needs cleaning, inspection, or minor repairs before the insert is placed. If your chimney flue is blocked, damaged, or needs relining, costs can climb toward $6,000 to $8,000 total.

Important considerations: All gas fireplace work must be performed by a **TSSA-licensed gas fitter** — this is Ontario law, and unlicensed gas work voids your home insurance. After installation, the unit must be tagged with a TSSA compliance label. The fitter should provide you with the exact BTU rating of the insert you choose and confirm that your chimney flue is properly sized and in good condition to vent the unit safely. You should also verify with your gas provider that your gas line can supply the appliance (most lines to residential fireplaces are adequate, but old or long runs may need upgrading).

Schedule your consultation in spring or early summer — Ottawa's short outdoor construction season means contractors are busiest in fall, and you want your insert installed, inspected, and tested before the first cold snap in October. If you're ready to move forward, you can browse experienced gas fireplace installers through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to compare options and get written quotes that specify the exact BTU rating, venting method, warranty, and timeline for your project.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- 613Bins
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Procore Foundation Repair
- Humble Homes - property maintenance
- Core Climate Ltd.

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Q23

Do I need a new stainless steel liner when putting a wood-burning insert into my old Ottawa brick chimney?

A stainless steel chimney liner is almost certainly necessary when installing a wood-burning fireplace insert into an old Ottawa brick chimney, and understanding why is important for both safety and heating performance.

The reason is straightforward: old masonry chimneys in Ottawa homes were typically built with clay tile liners that have almost certainly cracked, separated, or deteriorated after 50, 75, or even 100+ years of exposure to our brutal freeze-thaw cycles. Clay tile is porous and absorbs water. When that water freezes — which happens 50 or more times per Ottawa winter — it expands about 9 percent, cracking the tiles from the inside out. A chimney that might have functioned adequately for a traditional open fireplace (which is inefficient anyway) will not safely contain the heat and byproducts of a modern, high-output wood insert.

A wood-burning insert operates at much higher temperatures and produces faster flue gases than an open fireplace. It requires a properly sized, continuous flue liner with no gaps, cracks, or deterioration. If your old clay tile liner has failed sections, water is leaking around it into the brick and mortar (and potentially into your home). Installing a wood insert without relining is asking for three serious problems: first, creosote and combustion gases escaping through cracks in the clay tile into the chimney masonry, where they stain and damage your exterior brick; second, water infiltration accelerating deterioration of the entire chimney structure; and third, an insurance company denying a claim if there is a chimney fire because the installation does not meet WETT (Wood Energy Technology Transfer) standards.

Here is what you need to know about relining your chimney for a wood insert in Ottawa:

Stainless steel is the right choice. A continuous 6-inch or 8-inch diameter stainless steel liner (sized to match your insert manufacturer's specifications) costs $2,000 to $5,000 installed, depending on chimney height and accessibility. Stainless steel resists creosote corrosion, handles the high temperatures of a wood insert, and will last 20+ years with proper maintenance. It also allows for flexible or rigid liner installation depending on whether your chimney has bends or offsets — important in older Ottawa homes where chimneys don't always run perfectly straight.

You may need a full inspection first. Before ordering a liner, have a WETT-certified chimney sweep conduct a Level 1 or Level 2 inspection ($250 to $600 in Ottawa). They will determine the condition of your existing chimney, identify any structural issues, assess whether the flue is straight enough for a rigid liner or requires a flexible liner, and confirm that the chimney height meets the 3-2-10 rule (extends at least 3 feet above the roofline and 2 feet higher than surrounding structures within 10 feet). An old chimney with significant masonry deterioration might need rebuilding above the roofline before relining — that can add $2,000 to $5,000 to your total cost.

Installation timing matters. Schedule relining work for May through October when mortar can cure properly and roofing work is safe. Stainless steel liner installation involves dropping the liner down from the top of the chimney, which means roof access and potentially temporary opening of your roofline. Early spring or early fall is ideal because it gives you time to complete the work before Ottawa's first hard freeze in October.

Relining is separate from the insert installation. The stainless steel liner is usually installed first, then the wood insert is installed inside it with proper clearances and pipe connections. Total cost for a wood-burning insert plus new stainless steel liner typically runs $4,500 to $9,500 installed, depending on the complexity of relining and the quality of the insert you choose.

One important note: do not attempt to reuse an old clay tile liner or assume your chimney is fine without inspection. Old Ottawa chimneys routinely surprise homeowners — what looks solid from the outside often has significant damage inside. A WETT inspector will see conditions you cannot, and their assessment is also required for insurance purposes before you operate a wood-burning appliance.

If you are ready to move forward with a wood insert installation, you can browse fireplace installers and chimney professionals through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to find WETT-certified contractors who handle relining and insert installation in the region.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- The Egress Group Inc
- Grunt Work 4 Grunts
- Pure Flow Water Solutions inc.
- Elie The Carpet Guy Inc.

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Q24

How much does it cost to install a gas fireplace insert in an existing masonry fireplace in Ottawa?

A gas fireplace insert installed in an existing masonry fireplace in Ottawa typically costs **$2,500 to $5,500 installed**, depending on the unit's quality, size, heating capacity, and whether gas line work is required at your specific location.

Here's what drives the variation in cost. A basic direct-vent gas insert (the most common type) runs $1,200 to $2,500 for the unit itself, with installation labour and materials adding another $1,200 to $3,000. Premium inserts with larger viewing areas, higher BTU outputs, or advanced features like built-in blowers and remote controls can push the equipment cost to $3,000 to $4,000, bringing the total installed cost closer to $5,000 to $5,500. If your home already has a gas line running to the fireplace location, you're looking at the lower end of that range. If a new gas line needs to be run from your meter or furnace to the fireplace — a common scenario in older Ottawa homes where the fireplace was originally wood-burning — add another $500 to $1,500 depending on distance and routing through walls or crawlspaces.

Gas fireplace inserts make exceptional sense in Ottawa's climate. They convert a drafty, inefficient masonry fireplace (which typically wastes 60 to 70 percent of heat up the chimney) into a sealed, efficient heating appliance that operates at 70 to 85 percent efficiency. A 40,000 to 50,000 BTU gas insert can reliably heat 1,500 to 2,000 square feet of living space, making a real difference on Ottawa's coldest nights. Direct-vent inserts draw combustion air from outside and exhaust through a sealed pipe, so they don't consume household oxygen or create negative pressure in modern, well-sealed homes — a major advantage over traditional wood-burning fireplaces that pull heated air up the chimney. The fireplace becomes usable year-round without worrying about creosote or chimney fires, and operation is as simple as touching a button or adjusting a wall thermostat.

Before committing to an insert, have your existing masonry chimney inspected by a WETT-certified professional to confirm it can safely vent a gas appliance. Older chimneys sometimes have deteriorated clay tile liners, internal obstructions, or structural damage from freeze-thaw cycles that make them unsuitable for venting without relining. If your chimney needs relining — which runs $2,000 to $5,000 for a stainless steel liner — that cost comes on top of the insert installation. Also confirm that your existing chimney opening can accommodate the insert's dimensions; oversized openings may require a surround frame or filler panels (an additional $300 to $800). A TSSA-licensed gas fitter must handle all gas line connections and appliance commissioning, and you should receive a compliance tag confirming the work meets Ontario code.

The good news is that gas insert pricing in Ottawa runs approximately 10 to 15 percent below Greater Toronto Area rates due to lower labour overhead, and the timeline is typically fast — most installations complete in one to three days. Schedule the work for spring or fall to allow the gas fitter and chimney technician convenient access without rushing around seasonal demand peaks. If you're ready to move forward, you can browse experienced fireplace and gas installation contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to compare options and get detailed quotes based on your specific chimney and fireplace opening.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- The Egress Group Inc
- Capital City Drywall
- Somar Contracting Inc.
- L.L. Renovation

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