

OTTAWA FIREPLACES

Fireplace Maintenance & Inspection

Annual inspections, chimney sweeping, WETT inspections, and preventive maintenance in Ottawa

22 Expert Answers from Fireplace IQ

ottawafireplaces.com/construction-brain

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My gas fireplace igniter clicks but won't light — is that a thermocouple issue or something else?

A clicking igniter that fails to produce a spark is almost never a thermocouple problem — that's actually a common misdiagnosis. The thermocouple is a safety device that shuts off gas flow if the pilot flame goes out, so it wouldn't cause a clicking-but-no-spark symptom. You're most likely dealing with either a failed electronic igniter, a broken or corroded spark electrode, a disconnected or damaged ignition wire, or an obstruction in the pilot assembly itself.

Here's why this matters in Ottawa specifically: gas fireplace igniters see hard use during our long, cold winters — from November through March, many Ottawa homes run their gas fireplaces daily or continuously for weeks at a time. Moisture from freeze-thaw cycles can corrode spark electrodes, and dust accumulation in the pilot assembly is more pronounced in homes that run their fireplaces heavily. A clicking-but-no-spark igniter typically means you're looking at a \$150 to \$400 repair call, but identifying which component is actually failing requires diagnostic work that you should not attempt yourself.

What you can try before calling a technician: First, check that the fireplace's main power switch is on and that the circuit breaker hasn't tripped — this sounds basic, but clicking without spark sometimes means partial power loss. Look for visible debris, dust, or spider webs blocking the pilot assembly area (you can gently vacuum loose dust from the exterior pilot area, never blowing compressed air into gas components). Confirm you're using the correct ignition method for your fireplace — some units have both manual pilot ignition and electronic ignition buttons, and using the wrong one will produce clicking without ignition. If you have a wall remote or wall switch, check that batteries are fresh and the switch is making solid contact.

Beyond those basic checks, you've reached the limit of safe DIY troubleshooting. The actual diagnosis — whether the spark electrode is corroded, the ignition module has failed, the ignition wire is broken, or the thermocouple itself has actually become disconnected — requires opening the fireplace to the pilot assembly, and gas fireplace interiors contain pressurized gas lines and electrical components that can create serious safety hazards. Carbon monoxide from an improperly handled gas fireplace repair can be deadly, and Ontario law requires all gas work to be performed by a TSSA-licensed gas fitter.

What to expect from a professional repair: When you call a licensed gas fitter (which you should do as soon as reasonably possible — a fireplace that won't light is usually worth fixing before winter weather worsens), they'll perform a basic diagnostic: verify that gas pressure is reaching the pilot solenoid, check for visible spark at the electrode, test ignition circuit continuity, and inspect the thermocouple's physical condition and electrical connection. Most of these ignition failures resolve with either electrode cleaning or replacement (\$150 to \$250) or a new ignition module (\$250 to \$400). If the thermocouple actually has failed (which is less common but possible),

that's typically a \$200 to \$350 job. The diagnostic fee itself usually runs \$75 to \$125, though many licensed gas fitters will waive it if you proceed with their recommended repair.

This is definitely a "call a professional" situation rather than a DIY project. You can browse experienced gas fireplace technicians through the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory — they'll be able to diagnose and resolve your ignition issue quickly and safely with full TSSA compliance documentation.

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- 613Bins
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- The Fixer
- BFI Renovations
- Callandgone

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Q2

Is it worth paying for a fireplace maintenance contract or just booking service calls as needed in Ottawa?

A fireplace maintenance contract makes strong financial and safety sense for most Ottawa homeowners, particularly those with wood-burning appliances, but the math depends on your fireplace type, usage patterns, and how conscientious you are about preventive care.

Why Ottawa's climate makes maintenance contracts more valuable than in milder regions

Ottawa's extreme seasonal temperature swings — from +35°C in summer to -30°C in winter — create year-round stress on fireplace and chimney systems. The freeze-thaw cycle is relentless. Water infiltrates mortar joints and brick through microscopic pores, expands 9 percent as it freezes, and systematically destroys masonry from the inside out. A masonry chimney in Ottawa can deteriorate from sound condition to structurally compromised in a decade if it is not properly waterproofed, capped, and maintained. The chimney crown and cap — your system's first line of defence — take extraordinary punishment from ice and snow. Preventive maintenance catches these

failures early, when repair costs are \$300 to \$1,200 for crown work rather than \$3,000 to \$8,000 for a full chimney rebuild five years later.

For wood stove and wood-burning fireplace owners, Ottawa's long heating season compounds creosote risk. A typical Ottawa household burning 4 to 8 cords of wood per season generates significant creosote deposits, especially during shoulder season burns when temperatures favour Stage 3 glazed creosote formation — the hard, shiny black coating that triggers chimney fires. A maintenance contract that includes two annual chimney cleanings (spring and fall) costs roughly \$400 to \$700 per year and eliminates the risk of a chimney fire that could cost \$5,000 to \$15,000 in damage or worse. One chimney fire justifies years of maintenance contracts.

The financial case: service calls versus contracts

If you own a gas fireplace and use it casually for ambiance (10 to 20 times per year), you probably do not need a contract. A single annual service call — \$150 to \$250 — to check the thermocouple, pilot, ignition system, and venting is sufficient. You are unlikely to experience significant problems with a modern gas unit in light use. You can book service on an as-needed basis and stay ahead of trouble.

If you own a wood stove, wood insert, or wood-burning fireplace and actively heat with it during Ottawa winters, a maintenance contract is genuinely worth the money. Heavy wood-burning users should budget for two chimney cleanings per year (\$350 to \$700 combined) plus an annual WETT Level 1 inspection (\$250 to \$450). That is \$600 to \$1,150 annually. Many chimney sweep and fireplace service companies offer annual or seasonal contracts that bundle these services at a modest discount — typically 10 to 15 percent off per-call rates — bringing the annual cost to \$550 to \$1,000. Over five years, that is \$2,750 to \$5,000 invested in peace of mind and prevention. Compare that to the cost of dealing with a chimney fire, a cracked liner that requires full relining (\$2,000 to \$5,000), or a deteriorated chimney crown that has allowed water damage into the surrounding masonry (\$3,000 to \$8,000 or more). A single preventable problem pays for five years of maintenance contracts.

The real value: certainty and prioritization

Beyond the financial calculation, maintenance contracts offer psychological and practical benefits that matter in Ottawa's brutal winter. When you have a contract, you know exactly when your chimney will be cleaned and inspected — typically scheduled for April or May (before summer barbecue season and before you close the fireplace for the year) and September or October (before the first cold snap when everyone suddenly remembers their fireplaces). You are not scrambling to find a chimney sweep in November when it is -15°C outside and everyone else is calling with the same urgent need. You get priority scheduling, which in Ottawa's compressed construction and service season is genuinely valuable. You also receive gentle reminder calls and texts, which helps many busy homeowners stay on top of maintenance that is easy to procrastinate on until something goes wrong.

Service companies offering contracts also tend to provide other benefits: they know your system intimately, which means they catch small problems before they escalate; they often include minor adjustments or repairs at no extra cost; and they maintain detailed records of your chimney and fireplace condition year over year, which is invaluable if a problem emerges.

When to skip a contract

Electric fireplaces require virtually no maintenance — they plug in and run. Skip a contract. A gas fireplace used only occasionally for entertaining (fewer than a dozen times per year) in a modern, well-sealed home probably does not need a contract either; annual or bi-annual service calls are sufficient. A fireplace insert in a home with an existing, recently relined chimney that is in good condition might get away with annual cleaning and inspection rather than a full maintenance contract if you are disciplined about booking that service every year.

The seasonal scheduling factor

This is critical in Ottawa. If you book maintenance calls as-needed, you will almost certainly end up calling in October or early November when your fireplace stops working properly and the temperature is dropping. At that point, every chimney sweep and fireplace technician in Ottawa is booked solid for three to four weeks. You may wait until December for an appointment, heating your home less efficiently in the meantime, and paying a rush or emergency service surcharge. A maintenance contract gets you scheduled in the shoulder seasons when there is actual availability.

For wood-burning systems especially, spring and fall maintenance is not a luxury — it is the difference between a confident, reliable heating system and one that fails you at the worst possible moment during an Ottawa winter. The cost of a maintenance contract is genuinely low-cost insurance against the chaos of emergency service calls when temperatures are at their worst.

If you have a wood-burning appliance and actively heat with it, browse fireplace contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to find providers who offer maintenance contracts that fit your budget and usage pattern. A conversation with a local professional about whether a contract or annual per-call service makes sense for your specific system is time well spent.

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

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- JC Carpentry
- Diamond renovations

- ZinoM Concrete & Landscaping
- Ottawa Caulking

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Q3

What does a full fireplace inspection cost in Ottawa and what's included in a WETT-certified inspection?

A WETT-certified inspection in Ottawa typically costs **\$250 to \$450 for a Level 1 inspection**, **\$350 to \$600 for a Level 2 inspection**, and **\$500 to \$1,000 or more for a Level 3 inspection**. The specific cost depends on the inspector's experience level, your chimney's accessibility, and the complexity of your fireplace system. Most Ottawa homeowners need a Level 1 or Level 2 inspection — which one depends on your situation and the age of your system.

What's Included in Each Level

A **Level 1 (visual) inspection** is the annual maintenance standard that WETT recommends every wood-burning season. The inspector visually examines the accessible portions of your fireplace, stove, or insert and the interior of the chimney (typically using a camera or mirror). They check for obvious damage like creosote buildup, visible cracks in the flue liner, debris blockages, bird nests, or deterioration of the chimney crown and cap. A Level 1 takes 30 to 45 minutes and costs \$250 to \$450. This is the inspection you should have done every year before you start burning wood in Ottawa — non-negotiable for insurance compliance and essential for safety.

A **Level 2 inspection** is more thorough and involves a complete visual examination from top to bottom, including accessing the attic and crawlspace to inspect concealed portions of the chimney and clearances to combustibles. The inspector checks mortar joints, brickwork, flashing, the hearth pad, appliance condition, and the entire vent system. A Level 2 takes 1.5 to 2 hours and costs \$350 to \$600. You need a Level 2 before buying a home with an existing fireplace or wood stove (most home inspectors do not have WETT certification, so you will need your own WETT inspector to satisfy insurance requirements), after a chimney fire, when transitioning from one heating appliance to another, or if a Level 1 inspection raised concerns.

A **Level 3 (invasive) inspection** involves partial demolition or removal of components to examine concealed areas — this might mean removing drywall around a chimney chase, opening up roof penetrations, or partially disassembling the appliance. Level 3 is rare and expensive (\$500 to \$1,000 or more) but necessary when structural damage is suspected, when you are considering converting a fireplace to a different fuel type, or when insurance or

code compliance requires it.

Why WETT Certification Matters in Ottawa

WETT certification is the national standard for wood-burning appliance installation and chimney inspection across Canada, and it is critical in Ottawa for two reasons. First, virtually every insurance company in Ontario now requires a WETT Level 1 inspection before they will insure a home with a wood stove, fireplace insert, or wood-burning fireplace — unlicensed inspections will not satisfy this requirement, no matter who performs them. Second, Ottawa's extreme climate and high wood-burning season mean that creosote buildup, freeze-thaw damage, and chimney deterioration are serious hazards. A WETT-certified inspector has the training and experience to spot the subtle signs of these problems that a general contractor or handyman would miss.

The WETT standard also ensures consistency — a WETT inspector in Ottawa, Toronto, or Whistler follows the same inspection protocols and applies the same safety standards. This consistency is important when you are buying a home, switching insurance companies, or documenting your system's condition for resale value.

Timing Your Inspection in Ottawa

Schedule your first WETT inspection in spring or early summer — April through June — well before the heating season begins. This timing gives you time to address any issues (chimney cleaning, cap replacement, liner repair) before you start burning wood in the fall. If you are buying a home with a fireplace in Ottawa, request a Level 2 WETT inspection as part of your due diligence; discovering a deteriorated chimney liner or dangerous creosote buildup before closing is far better than learning about it after you have owned the home for three months. Annual Level 1 inspections should be completed every spring after your burning season ends, ideally combined with a professional chimney cleaning.

A WETT-certified inspector will provide you with a detailed written report documenting the condition of every component, any safety concerns, and recommendations for maintenance or repair. Keep these reports with your home records — they are valuable documentation if you sell the home, file an insurance claim, or need to prove that you have maintained your fireplace system properly.

If you are ready to schedule a WETT inspection in Ottawa, you can browse WETT-certified chimney sweep and inspection professionals through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to find experienced inspectors in your area.

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- The Egress Group Inc
- Demontigny Carpentry
- McLaren Masonry
- Treka Construction Group

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How often should the blower fan and motor assembly be cleaned on a wood-burning fireplace insert?

The blower fan and motor assembly on a wood-burning fireplace insert should be cleaned at minimum once per year, ideally in the spring after your main heating season ends in Ottawa. If you use the insert heavily — burning 5+ cords of wood per season, which is common for Ottawa homeowners relying on wood heat — cleaning twice per year (spring and mid-season) is a smarter approach.

Why Ottawa's climate makes this essential

Ottawa's long burning season and heavy wood use means your insert works harder than fireplaces in milder climates. Ash and fine creosote particles circulate through the blower system constantly, coating the fan blades, motor windings, and housing. This dust accumulation serves as insulation, causing the motor to run hotter, work less efficiently, and fail prematurely. In Ottawa's extreme cold, a sluggish or failing blower motor in December or January is a genuine comfort problem — you lose the convection heat that makes a wood insert worthwhile.

Additionally, Ottawa's low winter humidity combined with high wood ash content creates particularly fine, clingy dust that adheres aggressively to fan blades and motor surfaces. Regular cleaning prevents buildup that reduces airflow and forces the motor to work harder for the same heating output.

How to clean it yourself

This is one of the few fireplace maintenance tasks well-suited for a capable homeowner. After the insert cools completely, access the blower assembly according to your insert manufacturer's instructions — typically this involves removing the faceplate or surround panel. Use a soft-bristled brush, old toothbrush, or small vacuum with a brush attachment to gently remove ash and dust from the fan blades, motor housing, and mounting frame. Do not use a damp cloth on the motor itself, as moisture and electricity are dangerous partners. A dry cloth is fine for wiping exterior motor housing. Compressed air (the kind used for electronics) can work well for blowing dust out of tight spaces, but avoid high-pressure air tools that might damage delicate motor bearings.

If the blower is particularly clogged or the motor sounds rough or loud, or if you are not comfortable accessing the assembly, have your WETT-certified chimney professional or a fireplace installer handle it during your annual maintenance visit. Some insert manufacturers require professional service to maintain warranty coverage.

Important considerations

Never oil or lubricate a wood stove or insert blower motor unless the manufacturer explicitly specifies it — most modern motors are sealed and adding oil will damage them. If the blower makes grinding, squealing, or rattling

noises after cleaning, or if it stops working entirely, the motor bearings may be failing and the assembly should be professionally serviced or replaced. A new blower motor assembly typically costs \$400 to \$800 installed, so catching deterioration early through regular cleaning is worthwhile.

Keep your insert manufacturer's manual nearby — it contains specific guidance on accessing your particular model's blower and any cleaning or maintenance precautions. If you are scheduling an annual chimney cleaning and WETT inspection with a fireplace professional, ask them to inspect and clean the blower assembly at the same time — the cost is modest and you will have professional peace of mind.

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- RenoMotion Inc.
- Sam's Brickworks
- L.L. Renovation
- Valcor Construction

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Q5

Can I replace a hot surface igniter on my gas fireplace myself or is that a TSSA-licensed job in Ontario?

You can replace the igniter yourself if it's a simple plug-in component, but if any gas line work, appliance disassembly beyond basic access, or electrical rewiring is involved, you'll need a TSSA-licensed gas fitter.

Here's the critical distinction: Ontario's TSSA regulations prohibit unlicensed work on gas appliances and gas lines. The question is whether your igniter replacement crosses that threshold or stays within homeowner-friendly territory.

If your igniter is a **plug-and-play hot surface igniter** — meaning it's a self-contained component with a connector that simply unplugs from the control board inside the firebox — you can replace it yourself. These are designed as user-serviceable parts, similar to changing batteries or a light bulb. The steps are straightforward: turn off the gas at the appliance knob and the main valve, allow the unit to cool completely, locate the igniter connector inside the

firebox, unplug the old one, plug in the new one (available from fireplace parts suppliers for \$80 to \$200), and test the ignition. This requires zero gas work — you're not touching gas lines, fittings, or the gas supply.

However, if replacing the igniter requires you to **disassemble the fireplace beyond simple glass or cover panel removal, disconnect any gas lines, remove the control board, or rewire electrical connections**, that crosses into TSSA territory and must be done by a licensed G2 or G3 gas fitter. The rationale is straightforward: gas appliances are inherently hazardous, and any work that goes beyond basic component swaps risks creating gas leaks, improper ignition sequences, or dangerous combustion conditions. In Ottawa, you can expect to pay \$200 to \$400 for a licensed gas fitter to replace a hot surface igniter if professional installation is required — less expensive than the appliance risk of DIY work that goes wrong.

The safest approach: Before you attempt anything, consult your fireplace's manual or call the manufacturer's support line with the model number. They'll tell you exactly whether the igniter is user-replaceable or requires professional service. If the manual says "user-replaceable" or includes DIY replacement instructions, you're safe to proceed. If it says "licensed technician," don't guess.

A critical warning: **Never shut off gas at the main meter to service a fireplace.** If you need professional igniter service and want the work done right, a licensed gas fitter has the proper tools, knowledge of local code compliance, and responsibility to tag the appliance after service — protecting both you and your home insurance coverage.

If you'd like to find a TSSA-licensed gas fitter in Ottawa who specializes in fireplace service, you can browse fireplace contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory to compare local options.

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

- 613Bins
- RenoMotion Inc.
- TIER 1 HVAC SERVICE'S INC
- Callandgone
- Treka Construction Group

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I smell gas near my fireplace but the pilot light is on — what should I do before calling someone?

Stop using the fireplace immediately and open windows to ventilate the house. A gas smell near an operating fireplace is a serious safety concern that requires professional attention right now — do not attempt troubleshooting beyond what I'm about to describe, and do not ignore it.

Here is what to do immediately:

Turn off the gas supply to the fireplace at the manual shutoff valve, which is typically located on the gas line leading to the unit (it will have a red or black handle that you turn perpendicular to the pipe direction). Do not attempt to relight the pilot or operate the fireplace again until a licensed technician has inspected the system. Open all windows and doors to create air circulation throughout your home. Turn on exhaust fans in your kitchen and bathrooms to help clear any gas from the house.

Gas smell near a fireplace with an active pilot light suggests one of several potential problems: a small gas leak at a connection point (the most common cause), a cracked or misaligned burner orifice, a deteriorated or improperly seated gas valve seal, or a problem with the pilot assembly itself. Some of these are minor fixes — a leaking connection nut might just need tightening by a licensed technician — but others indicate components that need replacement. The critical point is that **natural gas is colorless, so utility companies add mercaptan (the rotten-egg smell) specifically so you can detect leaks.** If you smell it, gas is escaping, and even a small leak is a hazard.

This is a situation where **you absolutely need a TSSA-licensed gas fitter**, not a general handyman or even a plumber. TSSA (Technical Standards and Safety Authority) is the regulatory body that oversees all gas work in Ontario, and only a licensed G2 or G3 gas fitter is legally allowed to diagnose and repair gas fireplace issues. Carbon monoxide from a gas leak or incomplete combustion can kill you silently while you sleep — Ontario law exists because people have died from exactly this scenario. A TSSA technician will test the system with proper equipment, identify the source of the leak, and either repair or replace the faulty component.

In the meantime, do not light any other flames (stove burners, candles, matches) in the house, as these could ignite leaked gas. Do not use electrical switches, doorbells, or garage door openers if you smell gas very strongly — static electricity can theoretically ignite gas in a confined space, though this is rare. If the smell is overwhelming or you feel dizzy, lightheaded, or nauseous, **leave the house immediately and call 911 or Enbridge Gas (1-866-763-5427) from outside.** These are symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning or a significant gas leak.

Once you have secured the house and turned off the gas, call a TSSA-licensed gas fitter in the Ottawa area. Most reputable fireplace contractors keep same-day or next-day slots open for gas leak calls because they understand the urgency. A service call to diagnose and repair a gas leak typically runs **\$150 to \$300 for diagnosis and minor repairs (tightening a connection or replacing a valve seal), or \$400 to \$700 if the burner assembly, gas valve, or pilot assembly needs replacement.** You can browse fireplace contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to find a licensed technician in your area — look for someone with TSSA credentials explicitly listed.

Do not attempt to tighten any gas connections yourself, even if you think you can see where the leak is coming from. One wrong turn can crack a fitting, making the problem worse. Licensed gas fitters have the proper wrenches, leak detection equipment, and knowledge of safe isolation procedures.

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

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- JC Carpentry
- Humble Homes - property maintenance
- Somar Contracting Inc.
- ARTEXPRO Tile & Finishes

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How much do Ottawa fireplace companies charge for an annual gas fireplace service plan?

Annual gas fireplace service in Ottawa typically costs **\$150 to \$250 per year**, depending on whether you choose a one-time annual visit or enroll in a multi-year maintenance plan with a fireplace contractor. Most Ottawa-area gas fireplace service companies offer competitive pricing in this range, and some offer modest discounts (typically 5 to 10 percent) if you commit to a multi-year agreement.

Why Ottawa Homeowners Should Budget for Annual Service

Gas fireplaces are sealed combustion appliances, but they still benefit from annual professional inspection and cleaning. Over the course of a heating season, dust, pollen, and debris accumulate inside the firebox and around the burner assembly. More importantly, the ignition system, gas valve, and venting components can develop slow leaks or minor performance issues that go unnoticed until they cause a problem. In Ottawa's extreme climate — where temperatures swing 60 degrees between summer and winter — the freeze-thaw cycle can stress seals, gaskets, and metal components, making annual checkups genuinely valuable.

An annual gas fireplace service visit includes: visual inspection of the burner assembly and flames for proper colour and ignition, checking the gas valve, thermocouple, and ignition system for safe operation, cleaning the burner and glass, testing the remote control or wall switch battery and operation, inspecting the vent pipe both inside and outside the house for signs of blockage or deterioration, and ensuring the appliance is operating at the manufacturer's specifications and venting safely.

Critical safety note: If you smell gas, see yellow or orange flames (instead of the proper blue flames that indicate clean, complete combustion), notice smoke or soot near the fireplace, or have a carbon monoxide detector alarm, do not use the fireplace — call a TSSA-licensed gas fitter immediately. These are signs of incomplete combustion or a gas leak, both of which are serious hazards. Annual service helps catch problems before they reach this point, but it does not replace the immediate response needed if you notice these warning signs.

Some fireplace contractors in the Ottawa area bundle annual service with other benefits — fireplace glass cleaning, minor parts replacement (like valve seals or ignition electrodes), and priority scheduling during the busy pre-winter season. If you use your fireplace frequently (most nights during winter), an annual service plan is a smart investment. If you use it only occasionally, a single annual inspection may be adequate — you can always schedule additional service visits as needed.

One practical tip for Ottawa homeowners: schedule your annual gas fireplace service in **April or May**, after the heavy winter use ends. This timing allows contractors to fit you in before the summer rush and ensures any issues

are addressed before you rely on the fireplace again in autumn. Trying to book service in November is typically a six-to-eight-week wait, and you want problems identified before the first cold snap.

When you are ready to arrange service, you can browse fireplace contractors in the Ottawa area through the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory — many contractors offer annual service plans and can discuss customized maintenance options based on your fireplace type and usage patterns.

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- RenoMotion Inc.
- ARTEXPRO Tile & Finishes
- L.L. Renovation
- Beauty of gardens

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Q8

My fireplace blower motor is making a loud humming noise — should I replace it or can it be repaired?

A loud humming noise from your fireplace blower motor typically signals that the motor is either failing, the blower wheel is bent or hitting the housing, or the bearing is deteriorating — and most of the time, replacement is the more practical and cost-effective solution than repair.

Here's why: fireplace blower motors are relatively inexpensive components (typically \$200 to \$500 for the part itself), but diagnosis and repair labour can run \$150 to \$300. If the motor bearing has worn out or the motor windings are degrading, a repair might extend the motor's life by a few months to a year before it fails again. A replacement motor, by contrast, comes with a warranty and will reliably push warm air into your living space for 10 to 15 years. The economics almost always favour replacement.

Before you replace the motor, verify what's actually causing the noise. It may not be the motor at all. Start by turning the fireplace off and waiting 10 minutes for it to cool, then carefully remove the blower motor access panel (consult your fireplace manual for location — usually on the side or back of the unit). Look for a bent or misaligned

blower wheel, which can rub against the housing and create a grinding or loud humming sound. Gently spin the wheel by hand (with the power off) — if it drags, wobbles, or clearly touches the housing, the wheel may be bent and need replacement, or the motor shaft bearings have failed and caused the wheel to shift out of alignment.

A humming sound without mechanical grinding is usually the motor itself. Motors can hum loudly due to worn bearings, a failing capacitor (which stores electrical charge and helps the motor start smoothly), or deteriorating internal windings. If it's just a humming sound and the blower still moves air, the capacitor may have failed, and that alone might be replaceable for \$50 to \$150 in parts — but diagnosis requires a technician with a multimeter.

Ottawa-specific timing matters here. If your fireplace is a gas unit and it's currently mid-heating season, you're in a bind — running a fireplace with a failing blower motor will still heat your space because gas fireplaces produce heat whether the blower runs or not, but the warm air will circulate poorly, and the motor could stop completely at any time. If you can wait until March or April, replacement is easier because there's less demand, but if you rely on the fireplace for supplemental heat, you may need to prioritize the repair now. Winter is the worst time to schedule appliance work in Ottawa because contractors are overbooked.

For diagnosis and replacement, you'll need either a fireplace technician or, if it's a gas fireplace, a TSSA-licensed technician familiar with your specific unit. Most fireplace manufacturers' service lines can walk a technician through motor replacement if it's a warranty-covered unit. If your fireplace is still under manufacturer warranty (typically 2 to 5 years depending on the brand), contact the manufacturer first — motor failure is often covered, and they may send a replacement motor at no cost or reduced cost with labour covered by warranty.

Replacement usually takes 1 to 2 hours of labour, and total cost (parts plus labour) typically runs \$400 to \$800 for a standard direct-vent gas fireplace blower motor replacement in Ottawa. If the blower wheel is also damaged and needs replacement, add another \$150 to \$300. Some blower motors are proprietary (designed specifically for one fireplace brand), which can increase the parts cost, while generic universal blower motors are cheaper but may not fit perfectly or perform as well.

One important caveat: if the humming is accompanied by a burning smell, visible smoke, or the smell of melting plastic, stop using the fireplace immediately. These signs indicate the motor is overheating or the capacitor is burning out, and continuing to run it risks an electrical fire. Shut it down and have it inspected by a professional before using it again.

When you're ready to move forward with diagnosis or replacement, you can browse fireplace service technicians through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to find experienced professionals in your area who can evaluate the motor condition and provide a firm quote for replacement.

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

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- Geerts Roofing Inc
- Vanguard Environmental
- Joe Imerti Contracting

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Q9

What's the best way to clean cloudy glass on my gas fireplace without scratching it?

The good news is that cleaning gas fireplace glass is one of the few fireplace maintenance tasks you can confidently handle yourself — and it's much easier than it looks.

The key is using the right cleaner and technique. **Never use household glass cleaners like Windex or vinegar-based products** — these can leave streaks on tempered glass and may contain chemicals that react with the high heat around the fireplace. Instead, use a cleaner specifically formulated for fireplace glass, such as Rutland Fireplace Glass Cleaner, Enviro-Log Glass Cleaner, or a similar hearth-specific product. These cleaners are designed to cut through creosote and mineral deposits without damaging the tempered glass surface.

Here's the process: First, make sure your fireplace has been off for at least 30 minutes — you want the glass completely cool to the touch to avoid thermal shock. Spray the glass cleaner generously on a soft, non-abrasive cloth (microfiber works well, or use crumpled newspaper, which works surprisingly well on fireplace glass). Wipe in circular motions or from top to bottom, applying gentle pressure. For stubborn buildup, let the cleaner sit for a few minutes before wiping. If needed, you can use a soft plastic or wooden scraper for heavy deposits, but never use steel wool, scouring pads, or abrasive powders — these will scratch the tempered glass surface, and once scratched, the damage is permanent and will actually trap more debris in the future.

For very heavy cloudiness that won't come off with standard glass cleaner, the deposit may be a mineral or chemical buildup from the combustion process or the glass coating itself beginning to degrade. In that case, stop — aggressive scrubbing won't help and will only damage the glass. Contact a WETT-certified chimney technician or your gas fireplace installer to assess whether the glass needs professional cleaning or replacement.

One prevention tip: running your gas fireplace on a higher heat setting for longer periods actually keeps the glass cleaner because the temperature prevents condensation and light creosote from sticking to the surface. Running it on low-flame decorative setting for extended periods creates more glass cloudiness over time.

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How much does it cost to replace a thermocouple on a gas fireplace in Ottawa?

Replacing a thermocouple on a gas fireplace in Ottawa typically costs **\$150 to \$350 in labour**, plus the cost of the thermocouple part itself, which usually runs **\$25 to \$75** depending on your specific fireplace model. Total out-of-pocket cost is typically **\$200 to \$400**. If your fireplace is still under warranty, the replacement may be fully covered by the manufacturer — check your documentation before paying for service.

A thermocouple is a small safety device that sits in the pilot flame of your gas fireplace. It generates a tiny electrical current that tells the gas valve "there is a pilot flame, it is safe to deliver gas to the main burner." When the thermocouple fails, the pilot light stays lit but the main burner won't ignite, or the fireplace shuts off unexpectedly after a few minutes. This is one of the most common reasons a gas fireplace stops working, and the good news is that it is usually a straightforward repair.

The actual replacement takes 30 to 60 minutes for a licensed TSSA gas fitter. The fitter will access the thermocouple (location varies depending on whether you have a fireplace insert, a built-in unit, or a standalone stove), disconnect the old thermocouple from the gas valve assembly, unscrew it from the pilot assembly, install the new thermocouple, reconnect it to the valve, test the pilot and main burner to confirm proper operation, and document the work on a compliance report. Ottawa gas fitters typically charge \$100 to \$150 per hour for service calls, though many use a flat rate for straightforward repairs like thermocouple replacement.

Here is the critical point: **all gas fireplace repair work must be performed by a TSSA-licensed gas fitter** (G2 or G3 certificate). This is not negotiable in Ontario — it is the law. Gas is dangerous, carbon monoxide is invisible and lethal, and improper thermocouple installation or connection can lead to appliance failure, carbon monoxide leaks, or gas safety hazards. Your home insurance will not cover damage or injury from unlicensed gas work, and you could face fines for hiring unlicensed contractors.

Before paying for thermocouple replacement, rule out other common causes of pilot light or ignition failure: make sure the thermocouple is actually the problem by checking whether the pilot light is burning consistently and strongly (a weak or flickering pilot often indicates a thermocouple issue, but it can also indicate a dirty pilot orifice, low gas pressure, or a faulty ignition system). Check that your fireplace's control board or ignition module is receiving power — if the display is dark or unresponsive, the problem may be electrical rather than the thermocouple. Verify that the gas supply to your home is on and that you have not inadvertently closed a gas valve. If you have recently had the fireplace cleaned or serviced, ask the technician whether they may have accidentally disturbed the thermocouple connection — this happens occasionally.

Important: If you smell gas or suspect a gas leak, do not attempt troubleshooting. Leave your home immediately, call 911, and report a gas odour. Ottawa Hydro operates a 24-hour natural gas emergency line at 1-866-763-5000 if

you need immediate assistance outside business hours.

When you are ready to schedule a thermocouple replacement, you can browse TSSA-licensed gas fitters through the Ottawa Construction Network directory, which connects you with fireplace professionals across Ottawa and the surrounding region. Get a clear quote that specifies the part cost, labour cost, and any travel fee before work begins.

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- The Egress Group Inc
- L.L. Renovation
- Dump n Dash Hauling
- Anchor Home Comfort

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Q11

My gas fireplace has a musty smell when I first turn it on each fall in Ottawa — is that normal or a maintenance issue?

A musty smell when first firing up your gas fireplace after the summer break is common in Ottawa, but it shouldn't persist beyond the first few uses. The odor typically comes from dust, pet hair, and debris that accumulates on the burner, heat exchanger, and interior surfaces during months of non-use, especially in Ottawa's humid summers.

Normal vs. Concerning Odors

The musty smell you're experiencing is likely just accumulated dust burning off — this should dissipate within 10-15 minutes of operation and disappear entirely after 2-3 uses. However, if you notice a rotten egg smell (indicating a gas leak), a persistent chemical odor, or any smell that doesn't fade quickly, shut off the fireplace immediately and contact a TSSA-licensed gas fitter.

Ottawa-Specific Maintenance Timing

Ottawa's extreme seasonal temperature swings make annual gas fireplace maintenance particularly important. The ideal time for service is September or early October, before you need the heat but while technicians aren't swamped with emergency calls. During a professional service visit, a TSSA-licensed technician will clean the burner assembly, inspect the venting system, check gas connections, and ensure proper combustion — this eliminates odors and ensures safe, efficient operation through Ottawa's long heating season.

What You Can Do

Before calling for service, remove the glass front (following manufacturer instructions) and gently vacuum visible dust and debris from the firebox area. Check that nothing has fallen down the chimney or direct-vent pipe during summer storms — birds, leaves, or small animals can create unusual odors. Ensure your carbon monoxide detectors have fresh batteries, as they're your safety backup if combustion isn't clean.

If the musty smell persists beyond a few uses or you haven't had professional maintenance in over a year, it's time for a service call. Annual maintenance typically costs \$150-250 in Ottawa and prevents more expensive repairs while ensuring your family's safety during those inevitable -30°C nights when your fireplace becomes more than just ambiance.

When you're ready to schedule professional maintenance, you can browse TSSA-licensed gas fireplace technicians through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to find experienced professionals who understand the specific demands of Ottawa's climate on gas fireplace systems.

Q12

What's the safest way to dispose of fireplace ashes in Ottawa and can I put them in the green bin?

Never put fireplace ashes in Ottawa's green bin or any municipal waste collection. Fireplace and wood stove ashes can remain hot enough to ignite for days or even weeks after your fire appears completely extinguished, and mixing them with paper, leaves, or other organic waste in the green bin creates a serious fire hazard that could ignite the collection truck or waste facility.

The only safe disposal method for fireplace ashes in Ottawa is the metal ash bucket approach. Remove ashes only when they appear completely cold, using a metal shovel to transfer them into a metal container with a tight-fitting metal lid — never use plastic, cardboard, or paper bags. Store this metal ash bucket on a non-combustible surface like concrete or stone, at least 5 metres away from your house, garage, deck, or any combustible materials. Even ashes that look stone-cold can contain buried embers that reignite when exposed to oxygen or wind.

Ottawa's extreme temperature swings make ash disposal particularly tricky during winter months. Ashes that seem cold in your firebox can actually contain hot coals that are temporarily suppressed by cold air, only to flare up when moved to a warmer location or when disturbed. The safest practice is to let ashes sit undisturbed in the metal container for at least 72 hours before final disposal. After this waiting period, you can scatter cold ashes on your garden beds as a soil amendment — wood ash contains potassium and raises soil pH — or bag them for regular garbage collection.

During Ottawa's active burning season from October through April, many homeowners accumulate substantial ash volumes. Consider designating a permanent outdoor ash storage area with a metal container that can hold several weeks' worth of ashes. This eliminates the temptation to rush the disposal process during busy winter months when you're cleaning out the firebox for the next fire.

The City of Ottawa specifically prohibits ashes in all municipal waste streams — green bin, recycling, and regular garbage pickup — until they have been cold for at least 72 hours and are contained in non-combustible packaging. Even then, double-bag cold ashes in regular garbage rather than risking contamination of organic waste. Fire departments across the Ottawa Valley respond to numerous ash-related fires each winter, typically involving ashes disposed of too quickly in combustible containers or too close to buildings.

How much should I expect to pay to repair a cracked fireplace firebox liner in an older Ottawa home?

A cracked firebox liner in an older Ottawa home is a serious issue that typically costs **\$2,500 to \$6,000 or more to repair properly**, depending on whether you're relining the entire chimney system, replacing just the firebox section, or opting for a full chimney rebuild. The exact cost depends on chimney height, the extent of damage, accessibility, and whether the supporting masonry is also deteriorating.

Why Firebox Cracks Matter in Ottawa's Climate

Older homes in Ottawa often have original clay tile flue liners that were never designed to withstand our extreme freeze-thaw cycles. Water infiltrates cracks in the clay, freezes, expands 9 percent, and breaks the liner further — it's a self-accelerating cycle of deterioration. A cracked firebox liner allows combustion gases (including carbon monoxide) to escape into the surrounding masonry or the walls and attic space of your home, creating a serious safety hazard. It also allows moisture and creosote to damage the masonry structure itself, and it can compromise the structural integrity of the chimney over time.

The firebox is where the fire burns, and the liner is the barrier that protects the masonry behind it. If you can see cracks in the clay tile or mortar inside the firebox itself — especially horizontal cracks or gaps where tile sections meet — the liner needs attention soon, not eventually. Small hairline cracks sometimes stabilize, but visible gaps or spalling (where pieces are flaking off) indicate active deterioration.

Repair vs. Relining vs. Rebuild

Your options fall into three categories. **Partial firebox relining** (\$2,500 to \$4,000) involves patching or partially replacing damaged clay tile sections with specialized refractory material or a new tile liner section. This works if damage is limited to the firebox box itself and the rest of the chimney is sound. A WETT-certified chimney technician will assess whether the masonry around the firebox is also damaged before recommending this approach.

Full chimney relining with stainless steel (\$2,000 to \$5,000 for the liner itself, plus labour) is often the better long-term choice for older chimneys. A flexible stainless steel liner is inserted down the entire chimney flue, sealing off the damaged clay tile completely and creating a new, durable venting surface rated for modern appliances. This approach solves the immediate safety problem, protects the masonry from further water damage, and typically qualifies your chimney to safely vent a new gas insert or wood stove if you upgrade the fireplace later. Stainless steel liners come in different gauges — 316L stainless is best for wood-burning appliances because it resists creosote corrosion better than 304L.

Full chimney rebuild (\$8,000 to \$20,000 or more, depending on height and extent) becomes necessary if the masonry itself is spalling, if the chimney crown is severely cracked, or if multiple components are failing simultaneously. In older Ottawa homes, especially those with original chimneys built before 1980, the surrounding masonry has often absorbed decades of moisture damage and freeze-thaw cycling. A WETT Level 2 or Level 3 inspection (which involves partial demolition to examine concealed masonry) will determine whether you can get away with relining or whether rebuilding is necessary.

Getting the Right Assessment

Before committing to any repair, get a professional WETT inspection. A Level 2 inspection (\$350 to \$600 in Ottawa) will examine the chimney visually from the roof, inside the firebox, and using a camera down the flue to assess the extent of liner damage. If the inspector suspects hidden masonry damage or if there are signs of water infiltration inside the house (dark stains on the exterior wall where the chimney sits, dampness in the basement or crawlspace near the chimney, or mortar spalling at the base), a Level 3 inspection (\$500 to \$1,000 or more) may be necessary — this involves removing bricks or exterior cladding to examine the masonry structure directly.

The inspection will tell you definitively whether a simple firebox patch is adequate, whether full relining is the right approach, or whether you're looking at a partial or full rebuild. Don't try to guess — a cracked liner that appears minor might actually indicate structural problems in the masonry behind it that will cost far more to fix later if you ignore them now.

Important Considerations for Older Homes

Older Ottawa homes often have multiple chimney complications. The chimney crown might be failing (allowing water in from the top), the flashing where the chimney meets the roofline might be leaking, and the masonry mortar itself might be soft and eroding. A responsible contractor will inspect and address these issues alongside the liner repair, or at least identify them so you understand the full scope of what needs attention. A cracked liner is often a symptom of a larger water infiltration problem, not an isolated issue.

Also consider what you want the chimney to do going forward. If you're planning to keep burning wood in an existing fireplace or wood stove, a full stainless steel reline is usually the best investment because it solves multiple problems at once — it seals off the cracked clay tile, it stops water infiltration, it protects the masonry, and it creates a durable surface for years of wood burning. If you're thinking about converting to a gas fireplace or gas insert eventually, relining now gives you a properly lined chimney that's ready for a gas appliance when you decide to upgrade.

Timeline and Seasonal Considerations

Masonry work on chimneys requires temperatures consistently above 5 degrees Celsius for mortar to cure properly. This limits exterior chimney repairs to May through October in Ottawa, with the best windows being spring (April-May) and early fall (September-October). If you discover a cracked liner in November, you have two choices: schedule the repair for spring and monitor the situation carefully through winter (avoid heavy wood burning, monitor for carbon monoxide, and keep CO detectors active), or hire a contractor willing to work in cold weather using specialized cold-weather mortar (which costs more and takes longer to cure). Most Ottawa homeowners schedule chimney repairs for spring to avoid the rush and ensure proper curing weather.

The actual repair typically takes 1 to 3 days depending on complexity, plus time for mortar to cure if masonry work is involved.

Next Steps

Get at least two written quotes that specify the exact scope of work — whether it's a partial firebox patch, full relining, or assessment for potential rebuild — along with the WETT inspection findings, materials used, labour costs

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- Humble Homes - property maintenance
- Dump n Dash Hauling
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Q14

Is it worth paying for a Level 2 chimney inspection in Ottawa or is a basic Level 1 enough for annual maintenance?

For annual maintenance in a well-functioning chimney, a Level 1 WETT inspection (\$250 to \$450) is sufficient — that visual, exterior-and-basic-interior assessment catches the creosote, obstructions, and obvious damage that need addressing before your next burning season. But a Level 2 inspection (\$350 to \$600) becomes worth the

extra cost the moment something feels off, or you are buying a home, or after any unusual event.

Here is why this matters specifically in Ottawa: our extreme freeze-thaw cycles mean chimneys deteriorate faster and more unpredictably than in milder climates. A Level 1 inspection will show you a cracked flue liner or heavy creosote buildup that demands immediate attention. But a Level 2 — which includes a video camera scope that lets the inspector see inside the flue and document structural issues — reveals hairline fractures in clay tile liners, moisture penetration patterns, mortar joint deterioration behind the flue, and early-stage spalling (the internal brick breakdown caused by water freezing and thawing) that a visual inspection might miss. By the time a Level 1 catches visible deterioration in an Ottawa chimney, you may already have significant hidden damage that will cost far more to repair later.

Here is the practical cost-benefit calculation: if you have owned your chimney for years, had no chimney fires, noticed no downdraft or smoke issues, and are simply maintaining it with annual cleaning and burning seasoned hardwood, stick with Level 1 and put the money into an annual professional chimney sweep — that is your real defence against creosote fires in Ottawa's long burning season. But if you are buying a home (especially one built before 1990, when masonry standards were looser), if you noticed any change in how your fireplace or stove performs last season, if your chimney is more than 30 years old, if you have never had a Level 2 done and you are a heavy wood burner, or if you are considering converting an old fireplace to a new gas insert or wood stove, invest in the Level 2. The video inspection costs a little more but often saves you thousands by catching problems before they become structural emergencies.

One important distinction: you do need an official WETT inspection (any level) before your insurance company will insure a home with a wood-burning appliance, and most insurers require either annual Level 1 inspections or a Level 2 every three to five years. Check your policy — some insurers in Ottawa are now requiring Level 2 inspections every two years for heavy users, driven by increasing chimney fire claims in the region. If you have had insurance claims or previous chimney issues, your insurer may mandate Level 2. Always ask your insurance agent what your policy requires rather than guessing.

The timing of your inspection also matters in Ottawa's seasonal cycle. Schedule Level 1 inspections in spring (April or May, before the heating season is fully over) or early fall (September or October, before you restart burning). If you need a Level 2 or suspect damage, do not wait for the season-change rush — book it immediately, because by November the good WETT inspectors in Ottawa are swamped with last-minute calls from people who suddenly realized their chimney is sketchy right as temperatures are dropping.

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Q15

What safety checks should I do myself before lighting my Ottawa fireplace for the first time each fall?

Before lighting your fireplace for the first time each fall, you should perform a thorough visual inspection of the firebox, damper mechanism, and surrounding area to catch any obvious problems before they become safety issues. These checks take 20 to 30 minutes and can prevent carbon monoxide exposure, chimney fires, and house fires.

Fall Pre-Season Fireplace Safety Checks

Inside the firebox, look for debris, dead animals, nesting material, or fallen masonry. Ottawa squirrels and birds are particularly creative about using chimneys as home bases during summer months — it's surprisingly common to find a nest or bird droppings inside. Use a flashlight and look up into the chimney opening to check for obvious obstructions. If you see a significant nest or debris, stop and call a WETT-certified chimney sweep — do not attempt to remove nesting material yourself, as it may contain disease vectors and you could dislodge dangerous objects into the firebox.

Test the damper by opening and closing it smoothly several times. It should move freely without grinding or sticking. If it's stuck, rusty, or won't seal completely, you have a problem. A stuck damper means you cannot properly control draft, which leads to heat loss and potential downdraft issues. If the damper won't close completely, warm air will escape up the chimney all summer long, and cold air can blow back into the room during windstorms. Do not force a stuck damper — call a professional. A damper repair typically costs \$200 to \$400.

Inspect the hearth and surrounding area for cracks, loose tiles, or missing mortar. The hearth takes years of heat stress, and cracks can widen dramatically over a season if water gets in and freezes during Ottawa's winter. Look at the fireplace surround and mantel for any signs of heat damage, discoloration, or warping — if you see scorch marks on wood, that's a clearance-to-combustibles violation that needs professional attention.

Check the chimney cap from the ground using binoculars if you have them, or examine any photos you took earlier in the year. The cap should be intact, not dented or rusted through, and the spark arrestor mesh should be visible and not clogged with leaves or debris. A damaged cap or clogged spark arrestor can allow rain into the flue, create downdraft problems, or permit embers to escape. A chimney cap typically costs \$200 to \$600 to replace if damaged.

Look at the fireplace glass (if you have a gas fireplace with a sealed glass front). Check for cracks, discoloration, or buildup. Small cracks in tempered glass can spread rapidly once exposed to heat cycling, and heavy creosote or soot buildup on the inside of the glass indicates incomplete combustion. Clean gas fireplace glass using only manufacturer-recommended glass cleaner — never use household glass cleaner, which can leave residue that degrades the seal. If you see a significant crack or the glass is heavily discolored despite cleaning, that indicates a combustion problem and you should have a TSSA-licensed gas fitter inspect the appliance before use.

For wood fireplaces or stoves, examine the gasket or door seal by closing the door gently and looking for light coming through any gaps. The gasket should feel firm and not compressed or cracked. If you can see light or feel a draft around the door, the gasket needs replacement — a faulty seal allows cold air in and heat to escape, and it makes the stove difficult to control. Replacement gaskets for wood stoves typically cost \$30 to \$100 and are an easy DIY replacement if you have the right material.

Check for carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home. You should have at least one detector on each level, and ideally one in every bedroom and one near the fireplace area. Test the batteries by pressing the test button — it should beep. If you don't have CO detectors or yours are more than five years old, replace them now. A functioning carbon monoxide detector can save your life if your fireplace or chimney malfunctions. They cost \$30 to \$80 each and are non-negotiable safety equipment in any home with a fuel-burning appliance.

Schedule a professional chimney inspection before the heating season. This is the single most important safety step. An annual Level 1 WETT inspection (visual examination of the chimney interior, exterior, and connections) costs \$250 to \$450 in Ottawa and should happen every year before you regularly use the fireplace. If it's been more than a year since your last inspection, or if you have never had one, book this immediately — WETT inspections typically take 1 to 2 hours. The inspector will identify creosote buildup, chimney damage, improper sizing for your appliance, clearance-to-combustibles violations, and structural problems you cannot see from the ground. This is not optional if you want insurance coverage for a chimney fire or related incident — most insurance companies require annual chimney inspections for homes with wood-burning fireplaces or stoves.

For gas fireplaces, verify that your TSSA compliance label is visible on or near the appliance. This label shows that a licensed gas fitter installed or last serviced the unit. If you cannot find the label or it is more than two years old, schedule a professional service call before using the fireplace. An annual gas fireplace service inspection costs \$150 to \$250 and should include verification of proper gas pressure, combustion analysis, safety valve function,

and venting integrity.

The most critical safety mistake Ottawa homeowners make is assuming their fireplace is safe without professional inspection. Do your visual checks, then call a WETT-certified chimney sweep or TSSA-licensed technician to do the work you cannot do yourself. If you need help finding experienced chimney professionals in Ottawa, you can browse fireplace contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory — they can schedule your pre-season inspection before the October rush begins.

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

- Homeupgraders
- The Egress Group Inc
- Ottawa Caulking
- ZinoM Concrete & Landscaping
- Colonnade Security Inc

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How much does professional chimney sweeping cost in Ottawa for a two-storey home with a wood fireplace?

Professional chimney sweeping in Ottawa for a two-storey home with a wood fireplace typically costs **\$175 to \$350**, with most jobs landing in the \$225 to \$300 range for a standard Level 1 inspection and cleaning.

The final price depends on a few Ottawa-specific factors. A WETT-certified chimney sweep will assess creosote buildup, chimney height, and accessibility — a taller chimney or one requiring scaffolding costs more. If your chimney has heavy Stage 2 or Stage 3 glazed creosote (the hard, shiny black coating that forms during Ottawa's long heating season), you may need additional treatment or even a second sweep, which adds \$100 to \$150. Some sweeps include a basic visual inspection in the quoted price, while others charge separately for a Level 1 WETT inspection (\$250 to \$450). Always clarify what is included when you call for a quote.

Ottawa's extended heating season and cold winters mean your wood fireplace likely accumulates more creosote than fireplaces in milder climates. If you burn 4 to 8 cords of wood per season — typical for Ottawa homeowners using a fireplace as supplemental heat — a **single annual cleaning is the minimum**. Heavy users or those burning in cooler shoulder months should consider twice-yearly sweeps (fall and late winter) to keep creosote buildup manageable and reduce the risk of a dangerous chimney fire. Wood that is not properly seasoned (12 to 18 months of drying to reach 15 to 20 percent moisture content) produces dramatically more creosote, so burning wet or green wood will necessitate more frequent cleaning.

While chimney sweeping is not legally mandated in Ontario, virtually all home insurance companies now require proof of regular professional chimney cleaning as a condition of coverage for homes with wood-burning fireplaces, inserts, or stoves. If you have a claim related to a chimney fire and cannot produce documentation of recent professional cleaning, your insurer may deny coverage. This makes professional sweeping not just a safety best practice but an insurance requirement. Additionally, a WETT-certified sweep can identify developing problems — cracks in the flue liner, deteriorating mortar joints, water damage, or the chimney crown damage that is so common in Ottawa's freeze-thaw climate — before they become expensive repairs.

Schedule your chimney cleaning in spring (April to May) or early fall (August to September), well before the heavy heating season. Many Ottawa sweeps are booked solid by October as homeowners scramble to prepare for winter, and you may face delays or higher pricing. An early sweep also gives you time to address any repairs the sweep identifies before cold weather arrives.

When you are ready to book, you can browse WETT-certified chimney sweeps through the Ottawa Construction Network directory, or call three local sweeps to compare pricing, services included, and availability. Ask each one whether they are WETT-certified, whether a Level 1 inspection is included, and whether they can identify and

document any repair needs during the cleaning.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- RenoMotion Inc.
- McLaren Masonry
- BFI Renovations
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Q17

My fireplace glass has a white haze that won't wipe off — is this a safety issue or just cosmetic buildup?

The white haze on your fireplace glass is almost certainly a cosmetic buildup problem rather than a safety issue, but identifying exactly what it is matters for how you clean it — and what you should never use on fireplace glass in Ottawa.

The haze is most likely mineral deposits from hard water, salt residue from road treatments that drifted into your chimney, or a thin layer of ash and dust that's accumulated over the heating season. Direct-vent gas fireplaces can also develop a white film from condensation that deposits minerals on the glass over time, especially if you run the fireplace infrequently during shoulder seasons when outside temperatures are still cold but the unit isn't burning long enough to reach full operating temperature. None of these are safety concerns — they are purely visual problems that affect how clearly you can see the flame.

Here is the right way to clean fireplace glass safely: First, make sure the fireplace is completely cold. For a gas fireplace, turn it off and wait at least 30 minutes. For a wood stove or insert, let the fire burn down completely and wait several hours for the glass to cool to room temperature. Never clean hot glass — thermal shock can crack it. Use only **manufacturer-recommended glass cleaner** or a simple mixture of equal parts white vinegar and water. Apply the cleaner to a soft, lint-free cloth (not paper towels, which leave residue). Wipe gently in circular motions without pressing hard — you want to lift the deposit, not scratch the glass surface. For stubborn mineral deposits, let the vinegar solution sit on the glass for 10 to 15 minutes before wiping. Do not use household glass cleaners like

Windex or abrasive scrubbers — these can scratch the glass or leave streaks that interfere with flame visibility.

For really heavy buildup, some fireplace owners use a plastic scraper (not metal, which scratches) to gently lift the deposit, followed by vinegar and cloth. Work carefully and test on a small area first. If the haze returns quickly after cleaning, it usually means your fireplace is running inefficiently — perhaps the thermocouple is aging and the unit is cycling on and off frequently, or your gas pressure needs adjustment. A professional gas fireplace service appointment (\$150 to \$250 in Ottawa) can diagnose whether your unit needs maintenance beyond just glass cleaning.

Important warning: Never use oven cleaner, bathroom tile cleaner, abrasive powders, or steel wool on fireplace glass — these will damage the surface permanently and can leave chemical residues that become airborne when the glass heats up. Never clean the glass while the fireplace is running, and never use a pressure washer or garden hose to clean glass from the outside of a direct-vent fireplace (you could damage the seal or drive water into the unit).

One more Ottawa-specific note: if you live in an area where road salt drifts travel far from major streets — especially if your home is near the Queensway, Highway 7, or other major routes — road salt particles can work their way into your chimney system and settle on the glass more aggressively than in other homes. This is not a problem with your fireplace, just a reality of winter in Ottawa. Cleaning it with vinegar and water every month or two during the heavy heating season is normal maintenance, not a sign of trouble.

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- Homeupgraders
- JC Carpentry
- The Deck Store Inc
- Canadian Masonry Services
- Capitalstoneworks

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Q18

What's the cost to have a gas fireplace valve and thermocouple serviced by an Ottawa TSSA-licensed technician?

A gas fireplace valve and thermocouple service by a TSSA-licensed technician in Ottawa typically runs **\$150 to \$250** for a straightforward diagnostic and repair visit, assuming the parts do not need replacement. If the thermocouple or valve requires replacement rather than repair, add **\$200 to \$400** for parts and labour combined — so a complete thermocouple or valve replacement usually totals **\$350 to \$650**.

These components wear out gradually in Ottawa's extreme climate. The thermocouple is a heat-sensing device that tells your gas fireplace's safety system whether the pilot light is burning — if it fails, the gas fireplace will not stay lit or will shut down unexpectedly. The valve controls gas flow to the burner and pilot; when it sticks or loses responsiveness, you may notice delayed ignition, uneven flame height, or the burner shutting off during operation. Both are safety-critical components, and both are more prone to wear in Ottawa because fireplace owners run their units for longer heating seasons than homeowners in milder climates.

The service call itself — where the technician diagnoses the problem, tests the components, and makes adjustments or replacements — is what costs \$150 to \$250. Most TSSA-licensed gas fitters in Ottawa charge a base service call fee of \$100 to \$150, then add diagnostic and labour costs on top. If your technician simply cleans carbon buildup from the thermocouple (a common issue), the charge may be minimal. If replacement is needed, the parts themselves run \$80 to \$150 for a thermocouple and \$150 to \$300 for a valve, depending on your fireplace model. Always ask your technician for a written estimate before work begins and confirm whether the quoted price includes the service call fee, parts, and labour.

Critical note: Only a TSSA-licensed gas fitter (holding a G2 or G3 certificate) can legally work on gas fireplaces in Ontario. This is not a suggestion — it is Ontario law. Unlicensed gas work voids your home insurance and creates serious risks of carbon monoxide poisoning and gas leaks. After any gas fireplace service, your technician should tag the appliance with a compliance label confirming the work was performed by a licensed professional and the system is safe to operate.

If your fireplace is not responding to the thermostat or remote control, or if you smell gas, do not attempt to troubleshoot — turn off the appliance and contact a TSSA-licensed technician right away. When you are ready to book a service call, you can browse fireplace service professionals through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to find licensed gas fitters in your area.

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

- Homeupgraders
- The Egress Group Inc
- Custom By Arie

- Vanguard Environmental
- Edenza Landscaping

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How often does creosote need to be removed from a wood-burning fireplace chimney in Ottawa's climate?

Creosote Removal Frequency in Ottawa

In Ottawa's climate, annual chimney cleaning and creosote removal is the bare minimum — and many households should plan for twice-yearly sweeps, depending on how much wood they burn and the type of fire they operate. This is not cautious overkill; it is a direct consequence of Ottawa's extreme cold and the way our winters force wood-burning appliances to work harder and longer than in milder climates.

Why Ottawa's Climate Demands More Frequent Cleaning

Ottawa's severe continental climate is the driving factor. The average winter temperature hovers well below freezing for months, and homeowners with wood stoves or fireplaces typically burn 4 to 8 cords of wood per season — significantly more than households in milder regions. This extended burning season, combined with frequent cool shoulder-season fires (fall and spring), creates ideal conditions for creosote accumulation.

Here is the mechanics: creosote forms when smoke and combustion byproducts condense inside a cool chimney. During Ottawa's shoulder seasons (April, May, September, October), outdoor temperatures often sit between 5 and 15 degrees Celsius. On these cool mornings and evenings, homeowners light moderate fires to take the edge off the chill, but the chimney is already cold from overnight air. The smoke cools as it rises, and creosote condenses onto the flue walls instead of being carried out as vapour. Over weeks of these cool-burning fires, creosote layers build up rapidly.

The most dangerous form — **stage 3 glazed creosote** — is a hard, shiny, tar-like coating that looks almost like black glass stuck to the inside of the chimney. It is tacky, flammable, and extremely difficult to remove. Stage 3 creosote is much more common in Ottawa than in warmer regions because our prolonged cool-burning seasons create exactly the low-temperature conditions that produce glazed creosote. Once it accumulates, even a vigorous chimney fire cannot always dislodge it completely.

Recommended Schedule for Ottawa Households

For households using a wood stove or fireplace as primary or supplemental heat: Get a chimney cleaning at least once per year, ideally in spring (March through May) after the main burning season ends. If you burn more than 5 cords per season, or if you notice heavy creosote buildup during a spring inspection, schedule a second cleaning in fall (September or October) before the winter burning season begins. This two-sweep approach catches stage 1 creosote (soft, fluffy deposits) before it hardens into stage 2 or stage 3.

For households using a fireplace occasionally (weekend entertaining or ambiance during cold snaps): Once-yearly cleaning in spring is usually adequate, but do not skip it — even light recreational burning adds creosote, and Ottawa's long dormant season between May and September gives that creosote time to harden.

For households that have not used a fireplace or stove in months: Get a Level 1 WETT inspection and cleaning before lighting the first fire of the season. Creosote does not evaporate or decompose over the summer — it sits there, hardening, waiting for you to light a fire and potentially trigger a chimney fire.

The Chimney Fire Risk

A chimney fire in Ottawa is not a small problem that clears itself. Stage 3 glazed creosote burns at extremely high temperatures — hot enough to crack clay tile liners, damage steel liners, weaken mortar joints, and spread fire into the attic and roof framing if the chimney extends through the home. Worse, a chimney fire can happen silently — you might not even know it is happening until you smell burning or see flames shooting from the chimney top. By then, damage has already occurred.

The warning signs of dangerous creosote buildup include a strong, pungent smell from the fireplace (especially noticeable on humid days), dark deposits visible in the firebox opening, reduced draft (smoke not pulling up and out), and slow-burning, smoky fires even with dry wood. If you notice any of these, get a WETT-certified sweep out immediately — do not wait until your scheduled annual cleaning.

Cost and Timing Considerations

A chimney cleaning and sweep costs **\$175 to \$350** in Ottawa, depending on the extent of buildup and chimney accessibility. This is one of the best insurance investments you can make — the cost of one cleaning is a fraction of the price to repair fire damage, rebuild a damaged chimney, or recover from a house fire. Schedule your annual cleaning in spring when the weather is stable, temperatures are above 5 degrees Celsius for any needed repairs, and contractors are more readily available than in the rush of early fall.

A **WETT Level 1 inspection** (\$250 to \$450) is also worth doing annually if you plan to keep burning wood. The inspector will assess creosote stage, chimney condition, clearances to combustibles, and overall safety — information that gives you real confidence heading into another burning season.

If you are serious about wood burning in Ottawa, think of annual (or twice-yearly) cleaning not as maintenance but as seasonal routine — like winterizing your car or cleaning your eavestroughs. Your chimney is working hard in one of Canada's coldest climates. It deserves professional care.

If you need a WETT-certified chimney sweep or want to discuss a cleaning schedule tailored to your specific burning habits, you can browse experienced fireplace and chimney professionals through the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory.

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

- Homeupgraders
- RenoMotion Inc.
- ALM Construction & Landscaping Inc.
- Humble Homes - property maintenance
- SDR Electric, Plumbing & Heating Inc.

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Q20

What does a WETT inspection involve for selling my Ottawa home and how much should I budget for it?

A WETT inspection is a comprehensive assessment of your wood-burning fireplace, wood stove, or pellet appliance and its entire venting system — and if you're selling an Ottawa home with any of these features, it's become a non-negotiable requirement for most buyers and their mortgage lenders. While WETT certification isn't legally mandated by Ontario law, virtually every insurance company in the province now requires it before they'll insure a home with a wood-burning appliance, and many buyers simply won't proceed without one. In a real estate transaction, a WETT inspection protects both you and the buyer by verifying that the heating appliance is safe and compliant.

What the Inspection Actually Covers

For a typical home sale in Ottawa, you'll want a **Level 2 WETT inspection**, which is the standard for real estate transactions. This is more thorough than a Level 1 (basic annual maintenance inspection) but less invasive than a Level 3 (which involves partial demolition to examine concealed areas like framing inside walls).

A Level 2 WETT inspection examines the entire system from the appliance through to the chimney cap. The inspector will visually assess the wood stove, fireplace insert, or fireplace itself — checking door seals, the firebox condition, the grate, internal baffles, and any visible damage. They'll inspect all accessible chimney sections, checking for cracks in clay tile liners, deterioration of stainless steel liners, proper chimney sizing, and structural integrity. The inspector tests proper draft and air flow, measures clearances from the appliance to combustible materials like walls and framing (minimum 18 inches for most wood stoves, though it varies by appliance),

examines the chimney flashing where it meets your roofline, checks the chimney crown and cap condition, and verifies that the hearth extension meets Ontario Building Code requirements (typically 16 inches in front and 8 inches on the sides for wood stoves). They'll look for creosote accumulation, check that the damper operates smoothly in a fireplace, and assess whether the chimney is properly supported and correctly sized for the appliance being vented.

The inspector will also note any modifications or upgrades — such as a relining, a new chimney cap, or the installation of a modern stove into an older fireplace. All findings are documented in a detailed written report that becomes part of your real estate file and reassures the buyer that the system is safe and functional.

Ottawa-Specific Timing and Cost

In Ottawa, you should budget **\$350 to \$600 for a Level 2 WETT inspection**. The cost varies based on the complexity of your system (a simple wood stove with a straight chimney run costs less than a two-storey masonry fireplace with multiple offsets), the accessibility of your chimney from the roof, and whether the inspector identifies issues that require further documentation or remediation assessment. Some inspectors charge a flat rate; others charge by the hour (typically \$100 to \$150 per hour) plus travel time.

The timing of your inspection matters significantly in Ottawa's climate. Schedule it in **spring (April to May) or early fall (September to October)** — not in the dead of winter when contractors are overwhelmed with emergency chimney and heating calls, or in summer when roofers and masons are booked solid. If you're selling in winter and the inspection reveals that your chimney crown is cracked or your liner is damaged, you won't be able to get repairs done until spring, which could delay your sale or require you to credit the buyer for repairs. Many Ottawa homeowners schedule their WETT inspection at the same time as their annual chimney cleaning and sweep, which typically costs \$175 to \$350 — bundling these services often saves time and sometimes yields a modest discount.

What Happens If Issues Are Found

If the WETT inspector identifies problems — and Ottawa's extreme freeze-thaw climate means chimney issues are common — you have options. A crack in the chimney crown might require a repair (\$300 to \$1,200 depending on severity). A cracked or deteriorated clay tile liner will likely need relining with stainless steel (\$2,000 to \$5,000 depending on chimney height and diameter). Creosote buildup that exceeds safe levels requires professional cleaning by a WETT-certified sweep before the home can be sold with the appliance active. Improper clearances to combustibles might require the appliance to be removed or the framing to be modified — a more complex and expensive remediation.

When issues appear on the inspection report, you'll need to decide whether to repair them before closing (which ensures the buyer assumes a working system) or to offer a credit toward the buyer's repairs. In a competitive

Ottawa real estate market, buyers are skeptical of repair credits for chimney work — they'd rather know the system is safe and functioning before they move in. A chimney in poor condition can become a deal-killer, especially with mortgage lenders who increasingly require that fuel-burning appliances be in safe, operational condition.

The Bigger Picture for Sellers

Think of a WETT inspection as insurance for your sale. The \$350 to \$600 you invest now prevents the buyer from walking away six weeks into the negotiation because their home inspector flagged chimney concerns, and it eliminates the liability risk of selling a home with a dangerous heating appliance. Many real estate agents in Ottawa now recommend WETT inspections at the start of the selling process — not just when a buyer requests one — because it gives you time to address issues before listing and makes your home more attractive to serious buyers.

If you haven't used your fireplace or wood stove in a few years, consider a professional chimney cleaning and Level 1 inspection (\$250 to \$450) well before you list. That tells you whether you're looking at a quick Level 2 inspection for sale purposes or whether there are underlying issues that need attention first. The last thing you want is to discover a deteriorated chimney liner or dangerous creosote buildup once your home is on the market.

If you're moving forward with selling and need a WETT-certified inspector, you can browse fireplace and chimney professionals through the **Ottawa Construction Network directory** who can perform your inspection and connect you with repair specialists if issues emerge. Getting this done early takes the pressure off and lets you focus on the rest of your sale.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- JC Carpentry
- Edenza Landscaping
- Grunt Work 4 Grunts
- Ottawa Heating Cooling Repair

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Q21

When should I schedule my fireplace cleaning in Ottawa to be ready before winter heating season starts?

You should schedule your chimney cleaning and fireplace inspection between **late August and early September** — ideally by Labour Day — to ensure everything is ready before the first cold snap hits in late September or early October. This timing gives you a comfortable buffer to address any repairs that the inspection uncovers before you actually need to rely on your fireplace or wood stove for heat.

Why Early Fall Timing Matters in Ottawa's Climate

Ottawa's heating season is long and unpredictable. While most people think of winter as starting in December, the city regularly experiences hard freezes in late September and October, and those shoulder-season nights are when fireplace calls spike dramatically. A homeowner discovers a chimney problem the hard way — by attempting to light their fireplace on a chilly October evening and finding it either won't draft properly or fills the room with smoke. By that point, reputable chimney sweeps are booked solid for weeks, and you may face a 2- to 3-week wait for service. Worse, if the inspection reveals that your chimney needs relining, cap replacement, or crown repair, you could be without heating capability for an entire month heading into winter.

Scheduling in late August or early September accomplishes several things at once. First, you get a WETT Level 1 inspection (\$250 to \$450) that identifies any creosote buildup, deterioration, or safety issues. Second, if minor repairs are needed — like chimney cap cleaning, flashing adjustment, or a new gasket on your wood stove door — they can be completed before cold weather arrives. Third, if major work like relining (\$2,000 to \$5,000) or chimney crown repair (\$300 to \$1,200) is required, you have time to budget for it, get multiple quotes, and schedule the work for completion before October. Fourth, if you discover that your chimney is unsafe or inadequate for your appliance, you have weeks to explore alternatives like installing a gas fireplace or wood insert rather than facing a heating emergency in November.

The Creosote Factor in Ottawa

Ottawa's extreme continental climate and long heating season make creosote accumulation a heightened concern. Homeowners here burn significantly more wood and run their fireplaces and stoves for longer periods than in milder regions — often 4 to 8 cords per season if a wood stove is their primary supplemental heat source. This extended burn time creates substantial creosote deposits in the flue. Stage 1 creosote is a powdery soot that a standard chimney sweep removes easily, but Stage 3 creosote — a hard, glazed, shiny black coating — is a chimney fire waiting to happen and requires specialized removal techniques. Early fall cleaning ensures you catch creosote accumulation before it reaches dangerous levels and before you light your first fire of the season.

What Happens If You Wait Until November

If you push your cleaning into late October or November, you will encounter the worst possible timing. Every fireplace owner in the Ottawa region has the same idea — get it done before winter. Professional chimney sweeps are booked weeks in advance, and you may not get an appointment until November or even December. This is problematic for several reasons. First, a severe early freeze could leave you without heat and without access to a sweep for weeks. Second, if the inspection finds a problem requiring repair, contractors are also slammed in November, and you could face a 4- to 6-week wait for work like chimney relining. Third, masonry work — which is required for crown repair, tuckpointing, or chimney rebuilds — cannot proceed safely below 5 degrees Celsius, meaning any exterior chimney repairs discovered in November may not be completed until spring, leaving your chimney vulnerable to freeze-thaw damage all winter.

Seasonal Considerations for Gas and Wood Appliances

If you heat primarily with a gas fireplace, the timing is somewhat more flexible — gas appliances do not accumulate creosote the way wood-burning fireplaces and stoves do. However, a pre-season service (\$150 to \$250) that includes checking the ignition system, cleaning the burner, and verifying proper venting is still advisable by mid-September. This confirms that your appliance will operate reliably when you need it on those first cold nights.

For wood stove or fireplace owners, early fall cleaning is non-negotiable. Heavy wood-burning users in Ottawa may even benefit from a twice-yearly cleaning schedule — once in late August or early September before the heating season starts, and once again in mid-winter around January or February if you are burning heavily through the season. This is especially true if you are burning less-seasoned wood or if you are damping down your stove frequently (which increases creosote production). Your WETT-certified sweep can advise whether twice-yearly cleaning is appropriate for your situation.

Building in Time for Repairs and Permits

Budget an extra 2 to 3 weeks after your inspection for any remedial work. If your chimney needs a new cap, that is a straightforward job typically completed within a few days to a week. If the crown is damaged and requires repair, that may take 1 to 2 weeks depending on weather and contractor availability. If the chimney needs relining, expect 2 to 4 weeks for material ordering and installation. Any work requiring a City of Ottawa building permit adds another 1 to 2 weeks to the timeline. Early September scheduling ensures that even if repairs are needed, they will be finished by late September or early October, well before you rely on your fireplace for supplemental heat.

Insurance and Real Estate Considerations

If you are new to your home or have recently purchased a property with a fireplace or wood stove, a WETT Level 2 inspection (\$350 to \$600) is a wise investment. This goes beyond the standard annual inspection and examines the system more thoroughly — ideal for post-purchase peace of mind. Insurance companies in Ontario increasingly

require WETT certification before they will insure a home with a wood-burning appliance, so if you have a wood stove or fireplace that has not been inspected in a few years, scheduling an inspection is not optional — it is essential for maintaining coverage.

The bottom line: **aim for late August through Labour Day for your chimney cleaning and fireplace inspection.** This single decision puts you ahead of the rush, ensures any repairs are completed before cold weather arrives, and gives you reliable heat when Ottawa's first hard freeze hits in late September or October. If you need a professional WETT-certified chimney sweep or fireplace technician, you can browse experienced providers through the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory.

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

- Homeupgraders
- JC Carpentry
- MAK Construction and Development Inc
- M.O.T. CONSTRUCTION INC.
- Denys Builds Designs Renovations

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How much does an annual fireplace inspection cost in Ottawa and what does it typically include?

An annual fireplace inspection in Ottawa typically costs **\$250 to \$450 for a Level 1 WETT inspection**, which is the standard annual maintenance check that most homeowners need. If your inspection reveals issues that require a more detailed assessment, a Level 2 inspection runs **\$350 to \$600**, and a comprehensive Level 3 inspection (which involves partial demolition to examine concealed areas) ranges from **\$500 to \$1,000 or more**.

Why Annual Inspections Matter in Ottawa's Climate

Ottawa's extreme freeze-thaw cycle and long heating season make annual fireplace and chimney inspections far more critical here than in milder climates. Homeowners who heat with wood or run their fireplaces regularly during Ottawa's brutal winters are burning significantly more fuel than people in warmer regions — a typical Ottawa household with a supplemental wood stove might burn 4 to 8 cords per season, creating substantial creosote buildup inside the chimney. That creosote, combined with the relentless freeze-thaw damage that cracks mortar joints and spalls brick, means your chimney deteriorates faster in Ottawa than almost anywhere else in Canada. An annual inspection catches problems early, before a small crack in the chimney crown becomes a structural failure or creosote glazes into dangerous Stage 3 buildup that could ignite during a chimney fire.

What a Level 1 WETT Inspection Includes:

A Level 1 inspection — the annual standard — involves a visual examination of the entire fireplace and chimney system from both inside and outside the home. The inspector will check the condition of the chimney exterior (looking for cracks, spalling, loose mortar, and deterioration of the chimney crown and cap), examine the flashing where the chimney meets the roofline, inspect the firebox or stove interior for cracks or damage, assess creosote accumulation on the flue walls, verify proper clearances to combustibles around the appliance, check the hearth extension dimensions, examine the damper operation (for masonry fireplaces), and confirm that all safety components are in place and functioning. The inspector will also verify that your carbon monoxide detector is properly located and operational — Ontario law requires a CO detector on every level of a home with a fuel-burning appliance, and many inspectors include this verification in their report.

Level 2 inspections are more thorough and recommended after a chimney fire, when purchasing a home with an existing fireplace (critical before closing), or if a Level 1 inspection raised concerns. Level 2 adds interior video inspection using a chimney camera to examine the full length of the flue and identify cracks, blockages, or deterioration that might not be visible from the top or bottom of the chimney.

Level 3 inspections involve partial removal of drywall, siding, or other materials to inspect concealed portions of the chimney structure — these are rare and typically only necessary if structural damage is suspected or if you are considering relining a masonry chimney.

What to Expect from Your Inspector:

A reputable WETT-certified chimney sweep will provide a written report detailing the current condition of your chimney, any issues found, and recommendations for maintenance or repair. You will receive a Level 1 inspection report that specifies the type and amount of creosote present (in stages: Stage 1 is loose, flaky soot; Stage 2 is thicker buildup; Stage 3 is hard, glazed creosote that requires aggressive cleaning), the condition of the flue liner and chimney structure, and whether the appliance is operating safely. If your chimney needs cleaning as part of the inspection, that is typically a separate charge — chimney cleaning and sweeping in Ottawa runs **\$175 to \$350** depending on chimney height, condition, and how much creosote buildup is present.

Timing and Insurance:

Schedule your annual inspection in spring (April to May) or early fall (August to September) rather than waiting until October when every chimney contractor in Ottawa is booked solid before the heating season. Most homeowners plan to have their chimney cleaned and inspected in the same visit, which consolidates the appointment and cost. For insurance purposes, many insurers now require proof of annual WETT inspection for homes with wood-burning fireplaces or stoves — this is not optional for coverage, so keep your inspection reports on file. If you burn wood regularly or operate a wood stove as a supplemental heating source, some chimney professionals recommend **twice-yearly inspections** — one in fall before heating season and one in spring after — to monitor creosote accumulation, especially if you are burning wood during shoulder seasons when cooler flue temperatures promote creosote formation.

If you are ready to schedule an inspection or need a WETT-certified chimney sweep in Ottawa, you can browse fireplace and chimney professionals through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to find inspectors in your area.

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

- 613Bins
- The Egress Group Inc
- SDR Electric, Plumbing & Heating Inc.
- Elie The Carpet Guy Inc.

- Diamond renovations

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