OTTAWA FIREPLACES

Wood Stove Installation & Maintenance

Wood stove selection, WETT-certified installation,
and seasonal maintenance for Ottawa homes

24 Expert Answers from Fireplace IQ

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Q1

How much does it cost to replace a worn-out door gasket and glass seal on my wood stove in Ottawa?

Replacing a worn-out door gasket and glass seal on your wood stove will typically cost $150 to $400 for parts and labor in Ottawa, depending on your stove model and whether you tackle it yourself or hire a professional. The gasket material itself runs $30 to $80, glass seal replacement parts cost $20 to $60, and if you hire a WETT-certified technician, expect to pay $100 to $250 for labor.

This is actually critical maintenance that directly affects your stove's efficiency and safety, especially during Ottawa's long heating season when your wood stove may run for months at a time. A compromised door gasket allows air to leak into the firebox, making it impossible to control the burn rate properly. This leads to overheating, excessive fuel consumption, and dangerous creosote buildup in your chimney. In Ottawa's climate where homeowners burn 4 to 8 cords per season, a leaky door gasket can waste hundreds of dollars in firewood while creating a chimney fire hazard.

The replacement process involves removing the old gasket from the door channel, cleaning out all adhesive residue, measuring and cutting new gasket rope to the correct length, and installing it with high-temperature gasket cement. Glass seals require removing the glass panel, cleaning the frame thoroughly, and installing new gasket material around the glass perimeter. Most modern wood stoves use 6mm, 8mm, or 10mm rope gasket, and using the wrong diameter will compromise the seal.

You can test your current door gasket with the dollar bill test — close a dollar bill in the door and try to pull it out. If it slides out easily, the gasket needs replacement. A proper seal should grip the bill firmly all around the door perimeter. Never ignore a failing door gasket, as it can lead to house fires from overheating and carbon monoxide poisoning from poor combustion control.

If you're comfortable with basic maintenance and have the manufacturer's instructions, this is a reasonable DIY project for many Ottawa homeowners. However, if you're unsure about the process or your stove is still under warranty, you can browse WETT-certified wood stove technicians through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to ensure the work is done correctly.

Q2

How much does it cost to have my old wood stove professionally repainted with high-temperature stove paint in Ottawa?

Professional wood stove repainting with high-temperature paint typically costs $300 to $800 in Ottawa, depending on the stove size, paint type, and whether any surface preparation or rust removal is needed. Most fireplace service companies charge $350 to $500 for a standard-sized wood stove using quality high-temperature paint rated for 1200°F or higher.

The cost variation depends largely on the stove's current condition and the prep work required. If your wood stove just needs a fresh coat over existing paint in good condition, you're looking at the lower end of the range. However, if there's rust, flaking paint, or surface damage that requires sandblasting or extensive prep work, costs can climb toward $600 to $800. Ottawa's harsh winters and frequent temperature cycling from cold startup to hot operation can cause stove paint to deteriorate faster than in milder climates, so surface prep is often more extensive here.

Professional repainting involves several steps that justify the cost over DIY approaches. The technician will typically remove the stove from its installation (adding $100 to $200 to the total), clean and prep all surfaces, apply primer if needed, and spray multiple thin coats of high-temperature paint for an even, durable finish. Quality high-temperature paints like Stove Bright or Thurmalox cost $40 to $80 per quart, and a typical wood stove requires 1 to 2 quarts depending on size and number of coats.

The timing matters in Ottawa's climate. Schedule stove repainting during late spring or summer when you won't need the stove for several weeks. The paint needs to cure properly, and the stove should be heated gradually through several burn cycles to properly set the finish. Many Ottawa homeowners combine repainting with their annual chimney cleaning and WETT inspection to handle all maintenance at once during the off-season.

Keep in mind that some older wood stoves may have asbestos-containing components or lead-based paint, which requires specialized handling and disposal. A qualified technician will identify these issues and factor any additional safety measures into the quote.

If you're looking for experienced wood stove service professionals who handle repainting, you can browse fireplace contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to compare local specialists and get detailed quotes for your specific stove model and condition.

Q3

What is secondary combustion in a wood stove and do secondary burn models actually save money on firewood in Ottawa?

Secondary combustion in a wood stove is a process where the stove re-burns the smoke and gases that would normally escape up the chimney, extracting significantly more heat from the same amount of wood. Modern EPA-

certified wood stoves achieve this through secondary air tubes or baffles that introduce preheated air above the primary fire, igniting the volatile gases at temperatures around 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit and creating those mesmerizing dancing flames you see in the upper firebox.

In Ottawa's climate, secondary burn wood stoves absolutely save money on firewood compared to older, non-EPA stoves or open fireplaces. A modern secondary combustion stove operates at 70 to 80 percent efficiency, meaning you extract 70 to 80 percent of the available heat from your wood. Compare this to an older stove at 50 to 60 percent efficiency or an open masonry fireplace at just 30 to 40 percent efficiency, and the savings become substantial. An Ottawa household burning 6 cords of seasoned hardwood per season in an old stove might reduce consumption to 3.5 to 4 cords with a modern secondary burn unit — a savings of $700 to $1,100 annually at current Ottawa firewood prices of $350 to $450 per cord.

The secondary combustion process also burns much cleaner, producing less creosote buildup in your chimney. This matters enormously in Ottawa because our long heating season from October through April means more wood burning and more potential for dangerous creosote accumulation. Less creosote means safer operation and potentially reduced chimney cleaning frequency, though annual cleaning by a WETT-certified sweep remains essential regardless of stove type.

Secondary burn stoves do require proper operation to achieve maximum efficiency. You need well-seasoned hardwood with 15 to 20 percent moisture content — wet or green wood will not burn hot enough to activate secondary combustion effectively. The stove must reach operating temperature before you reduce the air controls, and you need to maintain sufficient heat to keep the secondary burn active. Done correctly, you'll see those characteristic secondary flames dancing above the primary fire, indicating the stove is extracting maximum heat and burning extremely clean.

When shopping for a secondary burn wood stove in Ottawa, expect to invest $2,500 to $5,000 for the stove itself, plus $2,000 to $4,500 for professional installation including chimney pipe, hearth pad, and WETT certification. The fuel savings typically pay for the upgrade within 3 to 5 years compared to an older, inefficient unit. If you're considering upgrading to a modern secondary combustion wood stove, you can browse WETT-certified installers through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to ensure proper installation and insurance compliance.

Q4

How much can I save on Ottawa heating bills by adding a wood stove as a backup to my gas furnace?

Adding a wood stove as a backup to your gas furnace can realistically reduce your heating bills by **15 to 40 percent** during the months you actively use it, depending on how often you burn, how efficiently you operate the stove, and how cold the winter is. If you're burning consistently from November through March, you could save **$800 to $2,000 or more** on annual gas heating costs — but that savings depends entirely on the quality of your wood, your commitment to regular burning, and whether you're using the stove strategically or just running it sporadically.

Here's why the range is so wide in Ottawa specifically: a modern EPA-certified wood stove burns at 70 to 80 percent efficiency, compared to a typical gas furnace efficiency of 90 to 95 percent. That sounds like gas wins, but a wood stove generates intense, radiant heat that can make an entire main floor comfortable while allowing you to dial back the thermostat by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius in the rest of the house. That temperature setback — combined with the stove's high heat output (a good stove produces 50,000 to 70,000 BTU per burn cycle) — is where the savings come from.

The critical factor is seasoned wood. Green or unseasoned wood produces far more creosote, burns much cooler, and wastes energy. Hardwood (oak, maple, birch, ash — the species that dominate Ottawa) needs 12 to 18 months of outdoor stacking in a covered position to reach the 15 to 20 percent moisture content required for efficient burning. A cord of properly seasoned hardwood costs **$350 to $450 delivered in Ottawa**. A typical household burning a wood stove as supplemental heat uses 4 to 8 cords per season — so your fuel cost will be $1,400 to $3,600 for the season. Compare that to the gas savings, and you can see that wood stove heating makes economic sense in Ottawa's long, cold winter, but only if you're burning good wood consistently.

Operational discipline matters enormously. Many homeowners buy a wood stove expecting it to heat their home passively — that is not how it works. You need to plan your day around burning: loading the stove in the morning, monitoring it through the afternoon, adding wood before bed, and managing the damper properly so you're getting clean, efficient burns rather than smoldering, creosote-producing fires. If you're the type of person who would run the stove sporadically — burning on weekends or only during the coldest snaps — you'll see minimal savings because the furnace will still carry most of the heating load during the many moderate winter days in Ottawa. The real savings accrue when you commit to burning 4 to 6 days per week for 4 to 5 months.

Location within the house affects efficiency too. A wood stove in your main living area (living room, kitchen, or open-plan space) will heat that zone effectively and allow significant thermostat setback. A stove installed in a basement or isolated room will produce heat that doesn't reach where you actually live, wasting its potential. The

best scenario is a stove positioned on the main floor in a central location where its radiant heat can warm multiple rooms and where you naturally spend time — this is where you'll see the $800 to $2,000 annual savings realistic.

Installation costs matter too. A new wood stove installation in Ottawa costs **$4,500 to $9,500** including the stove, chimney pipe, hearth pad, and labour. At those costs, you're looking at a 3 to 5 year payback period if you achieve the $1,500 average annual savings. However, wood stoves last 20 to 30 years with minimal maintenance — you're essentially amortizing that initial cost over decades. Many Ottawa homeowners view it as an investment in both energy independence and comfort rather than a quick payback project.

One important caveat: a wood stove as "backup" heating means you still maintain your gas furnace as the primary system. You cannot simply turn off the furnace on days you burn — you need the furnace operational as a safety net for days you don't burn, nights when you're away, and rapid temperature swings during Ottawa's unpredictable spring and fall seasons. So the economics are not about replacing your furnace entirely but rather supplementing it.

Insurance and inspection. Any wood stove installation requires a WETT (Wood Energy Technology Transfer) inspection before your insurance company will cover it — this is not optional, and most insurers will not renew or will increase premiums for an uninsured wood stove. The inspection costs **$250 to $450** and should be part of your project cost calculation.

The honest reality: a wood stove in Ottawa makes genuine economic sense if you (1) are committed to burning regularly throughout the cold season, (2) can source or purchase properly seasoned hardwood consistently, (3) enjoy the ritual and warmth of real wood burning, and (4) can afford the upfront installation cost. If you view it strictly as a financial calculation, the math works — but only with discipline and consistency. If you're looking to heat your home entirely with wood, that's a different conversation involving larger stoves, additional chimneys, or a complete heating system redesign.

When you're ready to explore wood stove options specific to your home's layout and heating needs, you can browse experienced wood stove installers in the Ottawa Construction Network directory to discuss your space and get detailed payback projections based on your actual home and burning patterns.

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Q5

What's the annual cost of running a pellet stove versus burning cordwood in Ottawa including pellet delivery?

Running a pellet stove costs significantly more per heating season than burning cordwood in Ottawa, typically $1,500 to $2,500 annually for pellets versus $1,400 to $2,000 for cordwood — but the practical differences between the two fuels make the comparison more nuanced than raw cost alone.

The Real Numbers

A typical Ottawa home using a pellet stove as supplemental heat burns 3 to 5 tons of pellets per season (roughly November through March, with occasional shoulder-season use in October and April). Premium-grade pellets in Ottawa cost $250 to $320 per ton delivered, or $750 to $1,600 for a full season's supply. Add annual maintenance (cleaning the burn pot, replacing the combustion chamber gasket, professional servicing) at $150 to $300, plus electricity to run the auger, igniter, and blower fan — typically an additional $200 to $400 annually for a pellet stove running 4 to 6 hours daily during winter. Total annual cost: **$1,500 to $2,300**.

Cordwood for the same household means 4 to 8 cords per season at $350 to $450 per cord delivered — that's **$1,400 to $3,600 depending on how heavily you run the stove**. A cord of firewood is a full cord (128 cubic feet), not a "face cord" or "stove cord" (which are typically one-third of a full cord and represent 42.67 cubic feet). Buy only from reputable Ottawa-area suppliers who sell full cords; many inexperienced homeowners unknowingly purchase face cords at full-cord prices. You'll also spend $100 to $200 on chimney cleaning and sweeping annually — Ottawa's long burning season generates substantial creosote buildup, and many insurance companies now require WETT-certified cleaning. Total for cordwood: **$1,500 to $3,800 depending on burn intensity and fuel quality**.

Why Cordwood Can Actually Be Cheaper

The lower end of cordwood costs assumes you burn seasoned hardwood (15 to 20 percent moisture content) efficiently in a modern EPA-certified wood stove. A wood stove burning clean, dry hardwood at 70 to 80 percent efficiency will heat a space more effectively per dollar spent than a pellet stove running at similar efficiency. However, achieving that requires discipline: wood must be sourced 12 to 18 months in advance, properly seasoned, stacked correctly (off the ground, covered on top only, open sides for air circulation, at least 5 metres

from the house), and burned in a stove where you maintain steady, hot fires rather than damping down too aggressively.

Many Ottawa homeowners burn wood inefficiently — either because it's not properly seasoned or because they're constantly adjusting the stove, creating damped-down smoldering fires that produce enormous creosote accumulation and barely heat the space. In those scenarios, the high efficiency advantage of cordwood disappears, and you end up spending more money while creating a serious chimney fire hazard.

Why Pellets Cost More But Offer Convenience

Pellets are more expensive per BTU than cordwood because you're paying for processing, quality control, and delivery of a standardized, uniform fuel. But that consistency translates into real benefits: a pellet stove automates the heating process — the auger feeds pellets on a schedule, the thermostat controls temperature, and you don't spend Saturday afternoons stacking wood or worrying about whether your supply is seasoned properly. For busy Ottawa households or those who value predictability, that's worth the premium.

Pellet delivery in Ottawa is also more reliable than cordwood supply. A single pellet delivery can be stacked indoors or in a compact storage area, while cordwood requires significant outdoor space. If you live in an urban area like the Glebe or Sandy Hill where storage is limited, pellets become more practical despite the higher cost.

Critical Considerations for Ottawa's Climate

Electricity dependency is the hidden cost of pellets. During Ottawa's frequent winter power outages — ice storms in December, January blackouts during extreme cold snaps — a pellet stove becomes an expensive paperweight. A wood stove with a properly functioning chimney will continue providing heat even if the power goes out, which matters enormously when Ottawa temperatures plummet to -30 degrees Celsius. If you're using either appliance as genuine backup heating during an extended power outage, cordwood is the only reliable option.

Chimney cleaning costs more with wood. Cordwood produces more creosote accumulation than pellets, especially during Ottawa's shoulder seasons when cooler outdoor air creates lower draft conditions. An annual WETT-certified chimney cleaning is the legal minimum for cordwood burning, while pellet stoves can often go 18 to 24 months between cleanings. That's $175 to $350 annually you save with pellets, partially offsetting the higher fuel cost.

Moisture and storage matter enormously. Wet or partially seasoned cordwood is the most expensive fuel on Earth because it barely produces heat and generates creosote at alarming rates. If you buy cordwood but fail to season it properly or store it correctly, you'll spend $2,000 or more for wood that barely heats the space and puts your chimney at serious risk of creosote fire. Pellets are factory-dried to precise moisture content, so there's no guesswork.

The Math for Different Scenarios

If you burn moderately (3 to 4 cords of well-seasoned hardwood annually in a modern stove): **$1,200 to $1,800 total including chimney cleaning.**

If you burn heavily with a wood stove (6 to 8 cords annually): **$2,300 to $3,800 total.**

If you use a pellet stove as primary supplemental heat (3 to 5 tons annually): **$1,500 to $2,300 total.**

If you burn green or partially seasoned wood (a common mistake): **$2,000 to $3,500 total, with added creosote hazards and possible insurance complications.**

Delivery and Logistics

Pellet delivery in Ottawa is straightforward — suppliers like the major heating fuel companies deliver to your door year-round, and a single load stores easily indoors or in a shed. Cordwood delivery requires advance planning, ideally in spring or early summer (May to August) so you have full seasoning time before winter. Many Ottawa suppliers charge slightly more for fall delivery (September to November) because

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Q6

Do catalytic wood stoves need more maintenance than non-catalytic ones and what's the combustor replacement cost?

Catalytic wood stoves do require more hands-on maintenance than non-catalytic models, but the difference is manageable for Ottawa homeowners who are willing to follow the manufacturer's guidelines — and the payoff in

cleaner burning and less creosote buildup is genuinely worth the effort, especially given how heavily many Ottawa homes rely on wood heat during our brutal winters.

The Maintenance Reality

A catalytic stove's combustor — the ceramic honeycomb device that re-burns smoke and gases to extract more heat and reduce creosote — needs regular inspection and gentle cleaning to stay effective. Most manufacturers recommend cleaning the combustor every 50 to 100 burning hours or at the end of each season, which translates to roughly once every four to six weeks for a household that burns wood regularly through Ottawa's winter. The cleaning involves opening the stove's access port, gently brushing or vacuuming ash and creosote buildup from the combustor surface with a soft brush or compressed air, and reinstalling it. It's straightforward work — not difficult, but it requires attention and discipline. Non-catalytic stoves, by contrast, have no combustor to maintain beyond normal ash removal from the firebox.

The catalytic combustor is sensitive to certain conditions that are worth understanding. If you allow the stove temperature to drop below 500 degrees Fahrenheit regularly — which happens if you're constantly damping down the air intake to stretch a fire through the night — the combustor won't reach its activation temperature and won't function properly. Over time, the ceramic can crack from thermal shock if the stove experiences rapid temperature swings. Burning wet or unseasoned wood produces excessive creosote that can glaze over and deactivate the combustor. These aren't deal-breakers; they're just reasons to burn properly seasoned hardwood, maintain decent burn temperatures, and keep the combustor clean.

Non-catalytic stoves are simpler — they use secondary combustion chambers, baffles, or tubes to re-burn smoke at higher temperatures, requiring no moving parts or regular cleaning beyond normal ash management. For Ottawa homeowners who prefer a set-and-forget approach, non-catalytic design is more forgiving.

Combustor Replacement Costs

Catalytic combustors in Ottawa run $400 to $800 for the part itself, depending on the stove brand, model, and combustor size. Installation is typically straightforward enough that homeowners can do it themselves by following the manufacturer's instructions — you open the access port, unbolt the old combustor, and bolt in the new one — so labour costs are minimal unless you hire a technician, which would add another $150 to $300. A combustor typically lasts 5 to 10 years with proper maintenance, though some last longer if the stove is used occasionally and the combustor is kept clean. A combustor that is abused through constant damping, wet wood burning, or neglected cleaning may need replacement after just 2 to 3 years.

The economics matter for your long-term heating plan. A catalytic stove costs $2,500 to $5,000 for the unit itself — about the same or slightly more than a comparable non-catalytic model — but it burns 5 to 10 percent more

efficiently and produces significantly less creosote. That means fewer chimney cleaning visits (you might stretch from two annual cleanings to one, or one to every 18 months), and a lower risk of a dangerous chimney fire during Ottawa's long burning season. Over the life of the stove, the combustor replacements you'll eventually need are a reasonable cost against the efficiency gains and reduced creosote buildup.

Critical Considerations for Ottawa

Ottawa's extreme cold and long heating season make the creosote-reduction benefit of catalytic stoves genuinely valuable. If you're burning 5 to 8 cords per season — typical for Ottawa households using a wood stove as a primary or supplemental heat source — the difference in creosote accumulation between catalytic and non-catalytic design becomes significant. A catalytic stove burning properly seasoned hardwood at decent temperatures will produce roughly 30 to 40 percent less creosote than a non-catalytic model, which translates to fewer WETT chimney inspections and cleanings over time. However, this advantage only materializes if you commit to the combustor maintenance routine and burn quality fuel.

The critical warning: never run a catalytic stove below its minimum operating temperature range just to stretch a fire through the night. Damping the air intake to barely smoulder the stove defeats the combustor's purpose, produces excessive creosote anyway, and can damage the combustor through thermal shock when you open it back up in the morning and it suddenly ramps back to temperature. If overnight heat retention is important to your heating plan, non-catalytic design or a larger stove with good thermal mass might actually be the better choice.

If you're planning a wood stove installation in Ottawa and want to discuss whether catalytic or non-catalytic design makes more sense for your specific heating needs and burning habits, you can browse experienced wood stove installers through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to get personalized recommendations based on your home, fuel access, and comfort with regular maintenance.

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- Justyn Rook Contracting
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- Treka Construction Group
- JMY Renovations
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Q7

How practical is cooking on a wood stove during Ottawa ice storms and extended power failures?

Cooking on a wood stove during an Ottawa ice storm is genuinely practical and can be a lifesaving capability — it's one of the most compelling reasons homeowners in the National Capital Region install wood stoves in the first place. A properly sized, well-maintained wood stove can heat your home, provide hot water, dry laundry, and cook meals when the grid goes down, all while burning wood you've stored yourself. That said, it requires thoughtful preparation, realistic expectations about fuel supply and cooking methods, and understanding the genuine limitations of stove-top cooking compared to a conventional kitchen range.

Why This Matters in Ottawa

Ottawa's winters bring extended power outages with troubling regularity. The 1998 ice storm knocked out power across the National Capital Region for up to 36 days in some neighborhoods, and more recent severe weather in 2022 and 2023 has reminded Ottawa residents that multi-day power failures are not hypothetical scenarios. When the grid fails during a -25 degree January cold snap, a wood stove becomes far more than an aesthetic feature — it becomes central to survival. Homes with electric heating, forced-air furnaces, or heat pumps become dangerously cold within hours once power is lost. A wood stove with a reliable fuel supply can maintain livable temperatures (60-65 degrees Fahrenheit in the room with the stove, adequate for preventing pipe freezes and hypothermia) and allow you to cook, boil water, and stay sheltered in place rather than abandoning your home for an evacuation centre.

The cooking capability adds significant value to this survival equation. During the 1998 ice storm, people with wood stoves and fireplaces had warm meals while neighbors without backup heating were eating cold food from ice-filled refrigerators and relying on generators (which become scarce during widespread outages). A wood stove can boil water, simmer soups, fry eggs, reheat canned goods, and brew coffee — genuine cooking, not just theoretical capability.

What You Can Actually Cook on a Wood Stove

Wood stove cooking is not complicated, but it is different from electric or gas range cooking. You gain flexibility in what you can keep warm or simmer indefinitely, but you lose precise temperature control and the ability to manage multiple cooking tasks simultaneously at different temperatures.

Single-pot and one-dish cooking works exceptionally well: soups, stews, chili, chowder, curries, risotto, pasta, rice, beans, and porridge. These dishes benefit from the gentle, sustained heat a wood stove provides — the stove cooks them slowly and evenly, and you can keep them warm for hours without scorching. During a three-day power failure, a big pot of beef stew simmering on the back of your stove becomes the centerpiece of survival eating.

Boiling water is trivial on a wood stove — place a kettle or pot on the hotter side of the cooktop and it will reach boiling in 20 to 30 minutes. This capability alone is enormous during an outage: hot water for tea, coffee, rehydrating freeze-dried meals, washing, and sanitizing. An insulated kettle or thermos flask filled with hot water can be carried to other rooms.

Baking is possible but requires skill and patience. Some modern wood stoves have built-in ovens, but most do not. You can improvise an oven by placing a covered baking vessel (a cast-iron Dutch oven, covered baking pan, or metal box) on the stovetop with coals or heat reflected around it — but this requires experience and produces inconsistent results. Baking bread, biscuits, or pies on a wood stove is achievable but not reliable enough to depend on during an extended outage without prior practice.

Frying, scrambling, and quick stovetop cooking work well if you have cast-iron skillets and are comfortable managing the higher heat zones on the stove. Eggs, pancakes (if you have flour, eggs, and milk on hand), bacon, and vegetables all cook competently on a wood stove's cooktop.

Simmering and warming are where wood stoves truly excel. Once a pot comes to a boil, you can move it to the cooler side of the stove (usually the back) and maintain a gentle simmer indefinitely, adjusting only occasionally as the stove cools during the evening or at night.

What you cannot easily do: precise baking temperatures, broiling, toasting (except in a cast-iron skillet), cooking multiple dishes simultaneously at different temperatures, or quick, high-heat cooking like stir-fries that demand immediate temperature adjustment.

Fuel Supply: The Practical Reality

Here is where wood stove cooking becomes less romantic and more sobering. To cook reliably during a multi-day outage, you need a substantial supply of seasoned, split firewood stored in your home or immediately accessible outdoors.

A typical wood stove burns 3 to 6 cords per winter season if you use it as primary or supplemental heating — roughly 3 to 6 full-sized logs per hour when running actively, consuming approximately 75 to 150 pounds of wood per day during continuous operation in January. To cook on the stove plus maintain home heating during a three-day outage in the depths of winter, you should have at least 1 to 2 cords (2,000 to 4,000 pounds of wood) stored and protected in an unheated shed, garage, or covered outdoor location immediately adjacent to your home. This is not an insignificant amount of storage space — a full cord is a stack 4 feet high, 4 feet deep, and 8 feet long. Many Ottawa homeowners simply do not have this much dry storage available, or they underestimate how much wood burns during intensive use.

The second complication is seasoning. Firewood must reach 12 to 18 months of drying (moisture content of 15 to 20 percent) to burn cleanly and produce usable heat. Green or unseasoned wood will not burn hot enough to maintain cooking temperature, produces enormous creosote (increasing chimney fire risk, which is catastrophic during an outage when you cannot call a fire department), and wastes your available fuel supply. If an ice storm hits unexpectedly and your wood supply is underprepared or unseasoned, your stove becomes a heat source only — not a reliable cooking appliance.

Cord of seasoned hardwood in Ottawa runs $350 to $450 delivered. Storing 2 full cords on your property requires advance planning and typically costs $700 to $900. This is money well spent if you take wood stove cooking seriously

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Q8

What does it cost to switch from an old non-certified wood stove to a new EPA-certified model in Ottawa?

Switching from an old, inefficient wood stove to a modern EPA-certified model is one of the smartest heating upgrades an Ottawa homeowner can make — you'll cut your wood consumption roughly in half, reduce creosote buildup significantly, and actually enjoy a warmer, more controllable fire. The total installed cost in Ottawa typically runs **$4,500 to $9,500**, broken down into the stove itself, chimney work, and labour.

Breaking Down the Costs

The new EPA-certified stove itself will run **$2,500 to $5,000** depending on size, features, and brand. A basic non-catalytic unit sits around $2,500 to $3,500, while a premium catalytic stove with advanced controls might reach

$4,500 to $5,000. Installation labour, hearth pad construction, and chimney connections typically add **$2,000 to $4,500** to the total. You may also need chimney relining work if your existing chimney is deteriorated, which would add another **$2,000 to $5,000** on top of the base installation cost.

This is where Ottawa's climate becomes particularly relevant. Many older chimneys in Ottawa homes have cracked or missing clay tile liners that were barely adequate for the low-draft, smoky performance of a 1980s wood stove. A modern EPA-certified stove produces a much hotter, more efficient fire that demands a properly functioning, correctly sized chimney. If a WETT inspection reveals that your existing chimney has spalling, deteriorated mortar, or a damaged liner — all common issues in Ottawa's brutal freeze-thaw cycle — you will need relining before you can safely operate a new stove. This is a non-negotiable safety requirement, not an optional upgrade.

Here's a realistic scenario: your old stove removal and ash cleanup might cost $300 to $500. A quality new EPA-certified stove runs $3,000 to $4,000. Installation, hearth pad, and new chimney connector pipe add $2,000 to $3,000. If your chimney needs relining with stainless steel (the most common solution in Ottawa), budget another $2,500 to $4,000. That puts a complete switch with chimney work at **$7,500 to $11,500** in a worst-case scenario where relining is required. For homeowners lucky enough to have a sound chimney that just needs cleaning and inspection, the cost drops to **$5,500 to $7,500** installed.

Why the Upgrade Matters in Ottawa

The difference between an old and new wood stove in Ottawa's climate is genuinely transformative. A pre-1980s wood stove might operate at 30 to 40 percent efficiency, meaning that 60 to 70 percent of the heat energy escapes up the chimney unused. A modern EPA-certified stove burns at 70 to 80 percent efficiency — you get roughly twice as much usable heat from the same amount of wood. In Ottawa, where heating seasons stretch from September through May and temperatures regularly drop to -25 to -30 degrees Celsius, that efficiency difference translates to real money saved on firewood and supplemental heating costs.

Creosote accumulation is the other critical factor. Old stoves run cooler and produce far more creosote, which builds up rapidly in chimneys during Ottawa's long burning season. If you burn 4 to 8 cords per winter — not uncommon for a household using a wood stove as supplemental heat — an old stove generates enough creosote to require twice-yearly chimney sweeps to prevent chimney fires. A new EPA-certified stove produces roughly 60 percent less creosote than an old model, which means you can safely manage with annual cleanings, saving time and money on professional chimney sweeps.

The WETT Inspection is Non-Negotiable

Before you budget for a new stove, get a Level 2 WETT inspection of your existing chimney and firebox area. This inspection — costing $350 to $600 in Ottawa — will tell you exactly whether your chimney can safely accommodate

a new stove or if relining is required. Many Ottawa homeowners discover during inspection that their chimney has significant deterioration that makes it unsuitable for a modern stove's higher draft and heat output. This is not a surprise you want on installation day.

The WETT inspector will examine the chimney interior (using a camera scope if necessary), check for proper draft, measure clearances to combustibles around your stove location, evaluate the existing hearth pad, and confirm that the chimney height meets the 3-2-10 rule. If relining is needed, the inspector will recommend the proper liner diameter and material for your specific stove model — this is crucial because an incorrectly sized liner will cause draft problems, excessive creosote, and poor heating performance.

Seasonal Timing and Scheduling

Plan this project for spring (April through May) or early fall (August through September) rather than waiting until October or November. Once the first cold snap hits Ottawa, every fireplace contractor in the region is booked solid with emergency calls for malfunctioning heating systems. Scheduling early also means your new stove is installed and ready well before the serious cold arrives, and any unexpected chimney issues discovered during the WETT inspection can be addressed without urgency. You'll get better pricing, faster scheduling, and a less stressful installation timeline.

If you're ready to move forward with getting quotes from experienced wood stove installers in the Ottawa area, you can browse fireplace contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory and reach out directly to compare pricing and installation approaches. Get at least three written quotes that specify the exact stove model, whether chimney relining is included, labour timelines, and warranty terms — costs vary significantly based on whether your chimney needs work.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Gillani Heating & Appliance Care Inc.
- ComfortWay Plumbing Heating and Cooling
- Transitions Renovations

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Q9

Is a soapstone wood stove worth the extra cost over a steel model for Ottawa's long cold winters?

Soapstone wood stoves are genuinely worth the investment for Ottawa's climate, particularly if you plan to use your stove as a serious heating source during our long, intense winters rather than just occasional supplemental heat.

The core advantage of soapstone is its thermal mass. Soapstone is an incredibly dense, non-porous metamorphic rock that absorbs heat much more slowly than steel but also radiates that heat for hours after the fire dies down. A steel stove reaches full operating temperature within 30 to 45 minutes of ignition and cools down relatively quickly once you stop feeding the fire. A soapstone stove takes 45 to 90 minutes to reach full heat output but continues radiating warmth for 12 to 24 hours after the fire is extinguished, depending on the mass of the stove and how hot the fire burned. In Ottawa, where you might run your wood stove continuously from October through March — burning 4 to 8 cords of wood over a season — that extended heat release translates to dramatically more even, comfortable room temperatures and fewer dramatic temperature swings between evening fires and morning cold. You burn less wood because more of the heat stays in your home instead of disappearing up the chimney immediately after the fire cools.

The pricing difference is real. A quality steel wood stove in Ottawa costs $2,500 to $4,500, while a comparable soapstone model runs $4,000 to $7,000 or more — an extra $1,500 to $3,500 of installed cost. Over a heating season burning 6 cords of wood at $400 per cord, you are spending roughly $2,400 on fuel. If a soapstone stove reduces that consumption by 15 to 25 percent through superior heat retention and more efficient thermal cycling, you save $360 to $600 per season on firewood — meaning the premium pays for itself in 3 to 6 years of heavy use. For Ottawa homeowners using a wood stove as a genuine supplemental heat source throughout the long winter, not just occasional ambiance, that math works.

There are important caveats. Soapstone's thermal mass becomes a liability if you only use the stove sporadically or want quick heat response. If you light a fire once a week for atmosphere, a steel stove delivers comfortable warmth immediately while a soapstone stove spends 90 minutes slowly heating up — frustrating if you are not committed to maintaining the fire. Soapstone is also extremely brittle and cannot tolerate thermal shock. You must never pour water on a hot soapstone stove (it will crack catastrophically), must avoid rapid temperature changes, and must never use soapstone stoves for outdoor installation or in uninsulated spaces where freezing conditions might damage the stone. Steel stoves are far more forgiving in terms of abuse and neglect.

The other consideration is that soapstone's long heat release means the stove itself stays hot for many hours, which creates a higher burn risk for children or pets and requires larger clearances to combustibles. Modern building codes account for this — typically 24 inches to combustibles around a soapstone stove versus 18 inches

for steel — but you need to verify your fireplace inspector will approve the installation in your specific space.

For Ottawa's climate and a homeowner committed to using their wood stove as a serious heat source throughout the winter, soapstone is the better choice. For someone wanting occasional supplemental heat or flexibility in how often they use the stove, steel is more practical and still efficient by modern EPA standards. If you are ready to move forward with installation, you can browse fireplace contractors and wood stove specialists through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to compare options and get quotes on both soapstone and steel models in your area.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- The Egress Group Inc
- Dtech Services and Solutions Inc
- Custom By Arie
- McLaren Masonry

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Q10

Can a wood stove reliably heat my whole Ottawa house during a winter power outage with no electricity?

Yes, a modern EPA-certified wood stove can reliably heat your entire Ottawa house during a winter power outage without electricity — this is actually one of the strongest practical arguments for installing a wood stove in the National Capital Region, where ice storms, equipment failures, and grid strain during extreme cold snaps can knock out power for days at a time.

Unlike a gas fireplace (which requires electricity to ignite the pilot light and run the blower fan, though direct-vent units can operate in gravity-flow mode if the blower fails) or a pellet stove (which depends entirely on an auger motor to feed fuel and will not operate at all without power), a traditional wood stove needs nothing but wood, air, and the fire itself to produce heat. A properly sized, well-maintained wood stove burning seasoned hardwood will generate enough steady, radiant heat to keep your entire house comfortable even when outdoor temperatures plummet to -30 degrees Celsius with wind chill. During the 1998 ice storm that devastated Eastern Ontario and left some Ottawa neighbourhoods without power for weeks, homeowners with wood stoves were the only ones who could reliably heat their homes through the coldest nights.

Heat output and sizing matter enormously. A standard wood stove rated at 60,000 to 80,000 BTU per hour (which represents a mid-size model suitable for a 1,500 to 2,500 square foot home) will produce enough warmth to maintain comfortable living temperatures throughout a two-storey Ottawa home if it is centrally located and doors are kept open to allow heat circulation. The key is placement — a stove in a basement creates challenges with heat rising to upper floors, while a stove on the main floor in a central living area distributes warmth far more effectively. If your home has multiple separate zones (upper and lower floors with closed doors, or a large open-concept layout), you may need to accept that the immediate vicinity of the stove will be warmest while more distant rooms remain cooler. Many Ottawa families with wood stoves during power outages intentionally close off bedrooms and secondary spaces, gathering the household in the living area near the stove and sleeping in nearby rooms or moving sleeping arrangements temporarily closer to the heat source.

Wood availability and storage are the actual constraints. You need a reliable supply of properly seasoned hardwood — white oak, hard maple, birch, ash — with moisture content between 15 and 20 percent. Seasoned wood requires 12 to 18 months of proper stacking and air drying before it is ready to burn. A household running a wood stove continuously during a winter power outage might burn 1 to 2 cords of wood per week depending on outdoor temperature, stove efficiency, and how aggressively you heat. If a power outage extends beyond a few days during deep winter, you need at least 3 to 5 cords of properly seasoned wood already stacked and stored on your property. Many Ottawa homeowners with wood stoves maintain exactly this strategy — they keep a substantial cordwood supply in a covered woodshed near the house so that if the grid fails in January or February, they have

weeks of heating fuel available without leaving their property or relying on delivery trucks. This is genuine security in Ottawa's climate.

Critical operational realities you must understand: A wood stove reaches full heating capacity only after 30 to 60 minutes of established burning — you cannot light a cold stove and expect maximum heat immediately. You must actively manage the fire by loading wood regularly (typically every 4 to 8 hours depending on stove size and outdoor temperature), adjusting the air inlet damper, removing ash, and monitoring the chimney. This is fundamentally different from a gas fireplace where you flip a switch and heat flows automatically. During a multi-day power outage, running a wood stove means you cannot leave your home unattended for extended periods — someone needs to stay home to maintain the fire. If your work or lifestyle requires you to be away from home during winter days, a wood stove alone may not be practical backup heating for your entire house, though it remains valuable as a supplemental heat source even if you cannot run it 24/7.

Chimney condition is absolutely critical. A wood stove depends on a functioning chimney with adequate draft to operate safely and efficiently. If your home has an old, deteriorated chimney that is prone to creosote buildup, blockages, or draft problems — all common issues in Ottawa's older homes — the stove will not perform reliably during a crisis. Before relying on a wood stove as emergency backup heat, you must have the chimney professionally inspected by a WETT-certified chimney sweep, and any structural or draft problems must be resolved. A chimney relining in stainless steel costs $2,000 to $5,000 in Ottawa, but it is the foundation of a safe, reliable wood stove system.

Installation and insurance requirements matter. A wood stove installation costs $4,500 to $9,500 total installed in Ottawa (including the stove itself, chimney pipe, a proper hearth pad with non-combustible surround, and labour), and your homeowner's insurance company will require a WETT Level 1 inspection ($250 to $450) before they will insure the appliance. This is not a barrier — it is a safety checkpoint that ensures your stove is correctly installed. Insurance companies impose these requirements because improperly installed wood stoves cause house fires. If emergency heating during a power outage is genuinely important to your household's safety and comfort, the cost of proper installation is non-negotiable.

If you are considering a wood stove specifically as backup heat during Ottawa power outages, plan to install it during the warmer months (May through October is ideal for chimney work) rather than waiting until September or October when every chimney contractor in the region is booked solid with last-minute winter prep jobs. You can browse fireplace and wood stove installers through the Ottawa Construction Network directory if you are ready to get started with quotes.

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- The Egress Group Inc
- Denys Builds Designs Renovations
- ComfortWay Plumbing Heating and Cooling
- Treka Construction Group

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Q11

How much does a pellet stove cost compared to a traditional wood stove for heating an Ottawa home?

A pellet stove installation in Ottawa runs **$3,000 to $6,000 installed**, while a traditional wood stove costs **$4,500 to $9,500 installed** — meaning pellet stoves are typically $1,000 to $3,500 cheaper upfront, though the operational and lifestyle differences are significant enough that the lower initial cost is only part of the calculation.

The price difference reflects the fundamental mechanical difference between the two systems. A pellet stove is an automated, electronically controlled appliance with an auger that feeds compressed wood pellets from a hopper into the firebox at a controlled rate. A wood stove is mechanically simpler — you load cordwood, light it, and manage the burn rate by adjusting the air intake damper. Pellet stoves require electricity to operate the auger, thermostat, and blower fan, while wood stoves need only gravity and air movement. That automation does save you money upfront, but it creates operational dependencies that matter in Ottawa.

The real cost comparison emerges in fuel, convenience, and reliability. A cord of seasoned hardwood costs **$350 to $450 delivered in Ottawa**, while a ton of premium wood pellets costs roughly **$250 to $350**. On a BTU-per-dollar basis, pellets and cordwood are nearly equivalent when you factor in the moisture content and burn efficiency of both fuels — a modern wood stove burns at 70 to 80 percent efficiency, while a pellet stove achieves similar efficiency (typically 75 to 85 percent). However, pellets are more space-efficient to store (a ton of pellets occupies roughly 40 cubic feet compared to 128 cubic feet for a cord of split wood), and you don't have to split, season, or physically stack wood.

The critical consideration for Ottawa homeowners is the electricity dependency. A pellet stove will not operate during a power outage — a serious risk in Ottawa, where ice storms regularly knock out power for days in winter. A

wood stove keeps burning and heating regardless of whether the grid is up or down. If you are relying on your stove as backup heat during a winter power failure (which is not uncommon in Ottawa's climate), a wood stove is the more resilient choice. Some pellet stove owners address this by installing a battery backup or portable generator, but that adds another $500 to $2,000 to the total cost and introduces maintenance complexity.

Fuel sourcing and storage are also different. In Ottawa, seasoned firewood is widely available from local suppliers and landscape companies, and you can buy it gradually throughout the year — many homeowners buy cordwood in spring and summer when prices are lower and split it over several months before winter. Pellets must be ordered in bulk (typically bags of 15 to 20 kilograms delivered by the ton or half-ton), stored in a dry location, and replenished regularly. If you live in an apartment, condo, or smaller home with limited outdoor storage, pellets are more practical. If you have land and enjoy the rhythm of seasoning and stacking wood, a traditional wood stove offers more flexibility.

Maintenance costs are comparable but different. A wood stove requires annual chimney cleaning and sweeping by a WETT-certified sweep ($175 to $350) because you burn more creosote-producing wood, especially during shoulder seasons when you run longer, cooler burns. A pellet stove also requires annual cleaning (roughly $200 to $400) but produces far less creosote because the pellet fuel is engineered to burn hot and cleanly — pellet chimney cleaning is less invasive and sometimes can be stretched to every 18 months for light users, though annual is safer in Ottawa's demanding heating season.

For Ottawa specifically, the choice often comes down to lifestyle and risk tolerance. A wood stove makes sense if you have outdoor space for firewood storage, enjoy the ritual of wood burning, value resilience during power outages, and want the maximum flexibility in heating. A pellet stove makes sense if you prioritize convenience, have limited storage space, want predictable automated heat output, and are comfortable with the electricity dependency and the need for regular pellet ordering.

If professional installation is part of your decision, both systems require WETT-certified installation ($2,500 to $4,500 of the total cost) to ensure proper clearances to combustibles, adequate chimney sizing, hearth protection, and insurance compliance. After installation, you'll also want a WETT Level 1 inspection ($250 to $450) to document that the system meets code and insurance requirements.

When you're ready to compare specific models and get quotes from Ottawa installers, you can browse fireplace and stove contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory, which can help you find experienced professionals who can discuss both options and tailor a recommendation to your home, budget, and heating needs.

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

- Apple HVAC and mechanical
- The Egress Group Inc
- Home Front Services
- Elie The Carpet Guy Inc.
- Ottawa Demolition Corp.

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Q12

Are outdoor wood boilers legal to install in Ottawa residential neighbourhoods or are there bylaw restrictions?

Outdoor wood boilers are **heavily restricted in Ottawa and most residential neighbourhoods**, and they are effectively prohibited in many areas under municipal and provincial air quality bylaws. While not completely banned across the entire city, the practical reality is that few Ottawa homeowners can legally install one, and doing so without navigating complex regulations and potential neighbour complaints is extremely risky.

Why Ottawa Has Strict Outdoor Wood Boiler Rules

Ottawa's air quality and nuisance bylaws specifically target outdoor wood furnaces and boilers because they create serious problems in the city's dense residential neighbourhoods. Outdoor wood boilers (also called outdoor wood stoves or wood-fired hydronic heaters) burn wood in an uninsulated or minimally insulated firebox located outside the home, typically in the backyard. Unlike an efficient indoor wood stove that heats the home directly, outdoor boilers produce enormous amounts of smoke that drifts across neighbouring properties — and Ottawa's winter wind patterns mean that smoke routinely bothers multiple neighbours, not just the immediate adjacent properties.

The City of Ottawa's Nuisance Bylaw (Chapter 2197) prohibits activities that create persistent smoke, odours, or other conditions that substantially interfere with the use and enjoyment of neighbouring properties. Outdoor wood boilers are the archetypal nuisance complaint in residential areas — a neighbour's outdoor boiler produces acrid smoke that enters your home through windows and doors, soaks into your clothes and furniture, and can make a home uninhabitable on cold winter days when the boiler is running at full capacity. The Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Energy (now integrated into the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry) has also pushed municipalities across the province to restrict outdoor wood burning to reduce particulate matter and improve regional air quality, particularly in the National Capital Region where air quality during winter can already be poor.

Several Ottawa neighbourhoods have explicit bylaws or restrictive covenants that prohibit outdoor wood boilers entirely. If your property is in or near a heritage district, a planned community, or an area with neighbourhood design guidelines, outdoor wood heating is likely prohibited. Some Ottawa subdivisions built after 2000 have explicit deed restrictions or restrictive covenants placed on properties by the original developer that prohibit outdoor wood boilers, outdoor furnaces, or "unsightly" outdoor structures. These covenants run with the land and are binding even if the City of Ottawa does not actively enforce them.

Current Legal Status and Practical Reality

Technically, the City of Ottawa does not have a blanket prohibition on outdoor wood boilers — they are legal to install if they meet certain conditions. However, those conditions are stringent and rarely satisfied in typical residential settings. An outdoor wood boiler can legally operate in Ottawa only if:

- **It does not create a nuisance** under the city's Nuisance Bylaw. This means smoke and odours must not substantially interfere with neighbours' reasonable use of their properties — an extremely difficult standard to meet in practice because outdoor boilers by nature produce smoke, and neighbours will almost certainly complain if the boiler runs regularly during heating season.
- **The property is not in a designated area with additional restrictions** — heritage districts, planned communities, or properties with restrictive covenants.
- **The boiler meets certain emissions and efficiency standards** if the City has adopted specific technical requirements (which it has been moving toward, aligning with provincial air quality initiatives).
- **It is installed at least a certain distance from neighbouring properties** — typically 30 metres or more from property lines, though exact distances vary by bylaw interpretation. Most residential Ottawa lots are nowhere near 30 metres deep or wide.

  In practical terms, an outdoor wood boiler in an Ottawa residential neighbourhood is almost guaranteed to generate complaints from neighbours, trigger bylaw enforcement action, and require the homeowner to either remove the boiler or face fines. Installers in the Ottawa area are extremely reluctant to install outdoor wood boilers in residential neighbourhoods precisely because the liability risk and complaint likelihood are so high.

What the Ontario Building Code Says

The Ontario Building Code does not specifically prohibit outdoor wood boilers, but it does not explicitly address them either — they exist in a regulatory grey zone. The OBC focuses on indoor appliances and assumes that heating systems will be installed inside the home. An outdoor boiler connected to an in-home hydronic (hot water) heating system requires integration with the home's plumbing and heating controls, which fall under OBC purview,

but the outdoor combustion unit itself is largely unregulated at the provincial level. This creates a situation where the boiler may technically meet building code standards, but still violate local nuisance bylaws.

Practical Alternatives for Ottawa Homeowners

If you are interested in wood-fired home heating in Ottawa, far better options exist that avoid the nuisance and regulatory problems of outdoor boilers:

An indoor wood stove or fireplace insert ($4,500 to $9,500 installed) heats your home directly, produces no external smoke nuisance, complies with all Ontario regulations when installed by a WETT-certified professional, and is insurable. A modern EPA-certified wood stove is 70 to 80 percent efficient and can serve as a legitimate supplemental heat source during Ottawa's long winter season.

An indoor wood-fired hydronic heater (a sealed indoor boiler that heats your home's water system) is legal, efficient, and produces no neighbour complaints because combustion occurs inside your home. These are less common than wood stoves but are a legitimate alternative if you want hydronic heating without the outdoor boiler problems.

A high-efficiency gas fireplace or insert ($2,500 to $7,500 installed) provides reliable, clean, and convenient heating without any smoke, creosote, or nuisance concerns. A direct-vent gas fireplace is the most popular heating appliance choice in Ottawa for good reason — it works efficiently in Ottawa's extreme climate, requires minimal maintenance, and creates zero neighbourly friction.

If You Already Have an Outdoor Wood Boiler

If your Ottawa home already has an outdoor wood boiler (perhaps installed by a previous owner), understand that it is operating under increasingly intense regulatory scrutiny, and bylaw enforcement is becoming more aggressive across the city. Neighbours have legal standing to file nuisance complaints, and the City of Ottawa can issue orders to cease operations or remove the boiler. If you love wood heating, the smartest move is to invest in removing the outdoor boiler and installing an efficient indoor wood stove or a gas fireplace insert instead — you will eliminate the neighbour conflict, comply with city standards, and actually improve your home's heating efficiency in the process.

For homeowners interested in exploring legal wood heating options in Ottawa, you can browse fireplace professionals in the Ottawa Construction Network directory who specialize in wood stove installation, gas fireplace installation, and

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- The Egress Group Inc
- B.A Gas Works
- Ottawa Heating Cooling Repair
- Titley Construction

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Q13

What's the price difference between a catalytic and non-catalytic wood stove installed in Ottawa?

A **catalytic wood stove typically costs $300 to $800 more than a non-catalytic model** of comparable quality and heat output when both are fully installed in Ottawa. If a quality non-catalytic stove runs $4,500 to $6,500 installed, expect catalytic models to land in the $4,800 to $7,300 range — though the actual difference depends heavily on the specific brands and models you're comparing.

Why the Price Difference Matters in Ottawa

The price premium for catalytic stoves reflects their more complex internal combustion chamber design. A catalytic combustor — a ceramic honeycomb coated with a catalytic material — requires precision manufacturing and must be replaceable, which adds cost to both the stove itself and to future maintenance. Non-catalytic stoves use simpler baffle or secondary combustion tube designs that are cheaper to manufacture and maintain. However, in Ottawa's extreme climate where homeowners burn 4 to 8 cords of wood annually and run their stoves for extended periods during our brutal winters, the choice between these two designs involves genuine tradeoffs beyond just purchase price.

Catalytic stoves burn cooler and cleaner. The catalytic combustor re-ignites smoke and gases at lower temperatures (around 1,100 degrees Fahrenheit rather than 1,800 degrees), producing less creosote and more usable heat — typically 75 to 80 percent efficiency. This means less frequent chimney cleaning. A catalytic stove with careful operation might justify cleaning annually rather than twice per year, potentially saving $200 to $300 per season on sweep costs over a multi-year period. However, the combustor itself must be replaced every 6 to 10 years depending on burn rate and wood quality, at a cost of $200 to $400 per replacement. Heavy users in Ottawa — those burning 6+ cords per season — may replace a combustor every 5 to 7 years.

Non-catalytic stoves are more forgiving and require less maintenance expertise. They tolerate dampening down, irregular burning patterns, and less-than-ideal wood better than catalytic models. If you load the stove, dial it down to simmer heat for hours, then let it burn hard, a non-catalytic stove takes it in stride. A catalytic stove run this way will accumulate creosote faster and may deactivate the combustor prematurely. Non-catalytic stoves typically burn at 70 to 75 percent efficiency — still dramatically better than a masonry fireplace — and they require annual chimney cleaning regardless, so the creosote advantage of catalytic models is less dramatic for casual burners.

Real-World Ottawa Considerations

Your actual choice should depend on how you plan to use the stove. **If you're a disciplined burner** who maintains steady, hot fires and can commit to proper wood seasoning and annual WETT-certified chimney sweeps, a catalytic

stove's efficiency and lower creosote production can offset the higher purchase price and combustor replacement costs over a 20-year lifespan. **If you're a casual supplemental heater** who loads the stove, dampens it down, and lets it coast for hours, or if you're uncertain about your ability to maintain proper burning technique, a non-catalytic stove is the more practical choice. There's no shame in choosing the simpler, more forgiving design — Ottawa's heating demands are already substantial without adding stress about optimizing combustor performance.

Both types require the same installation costs: chimney pipe, hearth pad, clearances to combustibles, and labour run $2,000 to $4,500 regardless of which stove you choose. Both require a WETT-certified installer for insurance compliance. Both demand seasoned hardwood (12 to 18 months of proper drying, 15 to 20 percent moisture content) to perform well. Both need annual chimney inspections and cleaning by a WETT-certified sweep, ideally before the heating season begins in September or October.

When you're ready to compare specific models side by side, you can browse local fireplace contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory — many installers can walk you through the practical differences between catalytic and non-catalytic options and help you choose based on your specific heating goals and burning habits.

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

- Homeupgraders
- JC Carpentry
- Leeds Property Maintenance
- BFI Renovations
- Grunt Work 4 Grunts

View all contractors ?

Q14

How much does a new catalytic combustor cost for my wood stove and can an Ottawa dealer install it same day?

A replacement catalytic combustor for your wood stove will typically cost $200 to $500 for the part itself in Ottawa, depending on your stove's make, model, and combustor size. Same-day installation is unlikely unless you happen to call a dealer who has your exact combustor in stock and an available technician, which is uncommon given the wide variety of stove models and combustor specifications.

The catalytic combustor is a honeycomb ceramic element coated with precious metals that allows your stove to burn smoke and gases at lower temperatures, dramatically improving efficiency and reducing creosote formation. In Ottawa's climate where wood stoves often run for 4-6 months per year, combustors typically need replacement every 3-5 years depending on usage and maintenance. Signs your combustor needs replacement include difficulty maintaining secondary combustion, increased smoke from the chimney, reduced heat output, and visible cracks or deterioration in the honeycomb structure.

Most Ottawa wood stove dealers will need to order your specific combustor, which typically takes 3-10 business days depending on the manufacturer. Popular brands like Vermont Castings, Jotul, and Blaze King have better parts availability than obscure or discontinued models. The installation itself is straightforward for an experienced technician - usually 30-60 minutes - but requires removing the combustor housing and ensuring proper gasket seals. Some technically inclined homeowners can handle this replacement themselves if they're comfortable working with their stove's internal components and have the manufacturer's instructions.

Before ordering a new combustor, verify it's actually failed rather than just dirty. A combustor that appears inactive might just need cleaning with compressed air or a soft brush. Also check that your stove is reaching proper operating temperatures - combustors need 500-600°F to activate, and if your stove isn't getting hot enough due to burning wet wood or other issues, even a new combustor won't solve the problem.

If you need professional installation or want to explore upgrading to a newer, more efficient wood stove entirely, you can browse experienced wood stove technicians through the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory.

Q15

What clearance distances does Ontario code require between a wood stove and combustible walls?

The Ontario Building Code requires a minimum clearance of **36 inches (0.9 metres) from the back and sides of a wood stove to any combustible wall or surface**, and **12 inches (0.3 metres) if the combustible surface is protected with 1-inch (25 mm) of non-combustible insulation or brick veneer**. However, these are baseline code minimima, and most wood stove manufacturers specify clearances that are actually more stringent than the code requires — typically 36 inches to unprotected combustibles, sometimes more. You must follow whichever is stricter: the OBC requirement or your stove manufacturer's specifications, which are always listed in the appliance's installation manual.

The reason for these clearances is straightforward: wood stoves get extremely hot during operation. Even though modern EPA-certified stoves are highly efficient and insulated, the exterior surface temperature regularly exceeds 200 to 300 degrees Celsius during a full burn, and radiant heat travels outward in all directions. Combustible materials — wood studs, drywall, insulation, panelling, or anything with a wood content — begin to char and break down around 140 to 150 degrees Celsius with repeated exposure, even if they never directly ignite. A wall that looks fine today can have hidden charring in the wood framing behind the drywall, creating a fire risk that nobody knows about until it's too late.

In Ottawa's tight, older homes, accommodating 36-inch clearances can feel restrictive, but this is where proper heat shielding comes in. If your desired stove location doesn't have enough distance to a combustible wall, you can reduce the required clearance to 12 inches by protecting the wall with approved shielding materials: either 1 inch of brick or concrete veneer, or a WETT-approved air-gap shield system (a reflective metal barrier with an air space behind it). These shields work by reflecting radiant heat away from the wall and allowing air circulation to carry heat away before it accumulates in the wall material. A typical air-gap shield installation costs $400 to $800 depending on the wall area being protected.

One critical detail that trips up Ottawa homeowners: clearances are measured from the outer surface of the stove to the combustible surface, not from the stove's casing. If your stove is sitting on a hearth pad, the measurement starts from the hottest exterior point of the stove itself. Also, the clearance requirement applies vertically as well — you cannot reduce the clearance to combustibles above the stove. Ceiling clearances are typically 48 inches (1.2 metres) to an unprotected ceiling, or 18 inches (0.45 metres) with an insulated ceiling shield.

This is precisely the kind of detail where a WETT-certified installer earns their fee. When you're planning a wood stove installation in an Ottawa home, bring in a professional to assess your exact room layout, measure distances to all combustible surfaces (including walls that may be hidden by furniture or later additions), and determine whether your ideal location actually meets code or whether shielding or repositioning is needed. What looks like a perfect spot can turn out to have a structural wall or concealed studs that create a clearance violation. A WETT

Level 2 inspection or a pre-installation consultation with a certified installer typically costs $350 to $600 and will save you from costly mistakes or the nightmare of having to relocate a $5,000+ stove installation after it's already in place.

When you're ready to explore wood stove installation for your Ottawa home, you can browse fireplace and stove contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to connect with WETT-certified professionals who understand these code requirements and can design an installation that passes inspection the first time.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- JC Carpentry
- Home Front Services
- Canadian Masonry Services
- Coliseum concrete & interlock

View all contractors ?

Q16

Will my home insurance go up if I add a wood stove, and does WETT certification help in Ontario?

Adding a wood stove will likely impact your home insurance premiums in Ontario, but the effect depends heavily on whether you get WETT certification — and in most cases, your insurer will simply refuse to cover a wood stove without it.

Here's the reality: most Ontario insurance companies now require a WETT (Wood Energy Technology Transfer) Level 1 inspection before they will issue or renew a home insurance policy that covers a wood-burning appliance. Without WETT certification, your insurer has legitimate grounds to deny claims related to fire damage or chimney issues. Some insurers will outright deny coverage for homes with uncertified wood stoves; others will include a clause that excludes losses originating from the wood stove or chimney. Either way, you're paying for insurance that doesn't actually cover the appliance you just installed, which defeats the purpose entirely.

The WETT certification advantage is substantial. A WETT Level 1 inspection (typically $250 to $450 in Ottawa) examines the appliance itself, the chimney condition, proper clearances to combustible materials like walls and furniture, the hearth pad dimensions, and overall system safety. Once the inspection is completed and passes, you receive a WETT certificate that you can present to your insurance company. This documentation proves the installation meets the safety standards that insurers require, and it dramatically reduces their perceived risk. In many cases, having WETT certification actually keeps your premium increase modest — often just $50 to $150 per year, depending on your current policy and insurer.

Without WETT certification, you're looking at either higher premiums (if the insurer will cover you at all) or outright denial of coverage. Some insurers impose surcharges of $200 to $500 annually for uncertified wood stoves, effectively punishing you for not having the inspection done. The math is clear: a WETT inspection costs around $300 to $400 once, while the annual surcharge for skipping it can exceed that cost every single year for years.

Installation also matters. Your insurance premium will increase more significantly if clearance-to-combustible violations exist — for example, if the wood stove is too close to a wooden wall or if the hearth pad doesn't extend far enough into the room. A WETT-certified installer (which costs $4,500 to $9,500 for a complete wood stove installation in Ottawa, including the stove, chimney, hearth pad, and labour) ensures these clearances are met from the start. DIY installations or installations by unlicensed folks may create violations that cause insurers to decline coverage entirely or impose severe surcharges.

The Ontario building code is clear on this. The Ontario Building Code requires specific clearance-to-combustible distances — typically 18 inches from the stove body to wooden walls, or less if you install metal heat shields, and the hearth pad must extend at least 16 inches from the front of the stove and 8 inches on the sides. Violating these

distances not only voids your WETT certification but also creates genuine fire risk and gives your insurer grounds to deny coverage if a fire occurs.

Before you install a wood stove, contact your current home insurance provider and ask explicitly: "What is your policy regarding wood-burning stoves? Do you require WETT certification? What is the premium adjustment?" Different insurers have different thresholds — some are more lenient, others are strict. Once you know your insurer's requirements, you can factor that cost and approval process into your decision.

The good news is that WETT certification is not expensive relative to the value it provides. A few hundred dollars for the inspection, combined with hiring a WETT-certified installer from the start, ensures your installation is safe, compliant, and insurable. You can browse qualified fireplace and wood stove installers through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to find WETT-certified professionals in your area who can handle both the installation and the certification process.

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

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Q17

What's the annual cost of heating with a wood stove compared to natural gas in Ottawa?

Annual Heating Costs: Wood Stove vs. Natural Gas in Ottawa

The annual heating cost difference between a wood stove and natural gas depends heavily on fuel prices, burn efficiency, and how you use each system — but in Ottawa's climate, a modern wood stove used as a supplemental heat source typically costs **$800 to $1,500 per year in firewood**, while heating the same space with natural gas costs **$600 to $1,200 per year**, making natural gas marginally cheaper on pure fuel cost alone. However, the

economics shift dramatically when you factor in the wood stove's superior efficiency and the emotional and practical value of independent heating during Ottawa's ice storms and power outages.

Why the Numbers Matter in Ottawa's Climate

Ottawa residents typically face heating costs far higher than Canada's national average because winters are brutally long and cold — the heating season runs from October through April (roughly 7 months), with sustained temperatures well below -10°C and frequent wind chill values approaching -40°C. A typical Ottawa home requires between 15,000 and 25,000 therms of natural gas per heating season, costing $2,500 to $4,500 depending on current commodity prices (which fluctuate significantly). In 2024-2025, natural gas in Ottawa averages approximately $0.95 to $1.15 per therm for residential customers.

A modern EPA-certified wood stove burning 4 to 6 cords of properly seasoned hardwood per heating season (the typical Ottawa household supplement load) costs approximately $1,400 to $2,700 in firewood at current Ottawa pricing of $350 to $450 per cord delivered. At first glance, this appears more expensive than gas. But here's where the real comparison gets interesting: a modern wood stove operates at 70 to 80 percent efficiency, meaning 70 to 80 cents of every fuel dollar actually heats your home. Natural gas furnaces achieve roughly 90 to 95 percent efficiency in modern high-efficiency units, but standard forced-air systems run 80 to 85 percent. When you adjust for efficiency, the per-BTU cost of wood heat becomes competitive with or cheaper than natural gas, especially if you have access to cheaper firewood, harvest your own wood, or have a neighbor who does.

The real advantage of wood heat in Ottawa, however, has nothing to do with pure economics. **An ice storm knocks out the power, and your natural gas furnace becomes an expensive paperweight.** Your electric baseboard heater, heat pump, and even your forced-air natural gas furnace all require electricity to run the blower motor and ignition system. A wood stove operates entirely independently — it needs no electricity, no gas line, and no connection to any utility. During the January 1998 ice storm that left parts of Ottawa without power for three weeks, wood stoves and fireplaces kept countless homes livable while neighbors with high-efficiency gas furnaces huddled under blankets in 12-degree living rooms. This is not a hypothetical risk in Ottawa; major ice storms happen roughly once per decade.

The True Cost Comparison

Let's work through a realistic annual scenario for an Ottawa homeowner using a wood stove as supplemental heat alongside a natural gas furnace:

Natural gas furnace alone (heating 100 percent of the home): 18,000 therms × $1.05 per therm = **$18,900 per year** (2024-2025 pricing; costs vary with commodity markets and exact usage).

Natural gas furnace + wood stove supplement (furnace at 70 percent, wood stove at 30 percent): Natural gas consumption drops to roughly 12,600 therms = $13,230, plus firewood cost of 4 to 5 cords at $400/cord = $1,600 to $2,000. **Total: $14,830 to $15,230 per year** — a savings of $3,670 to $4,070 annually compared to gas alone.

Important caveat: These numbers assume you have proper chimney venting, a WETT-certified installation, annual chimney cleaning, and access to seasoned firewood. They also assume you are actually willing and able to maintain a wood fire during Ottawa's long winters — if the wood stove sits idle most of the season, the math changes dramatically. You cannot save money on a wood stove that you do not use consistently.

Wood Quality Makes or Breaks the Economics

The single biggest variable in wood stove heating costs is **fuel moisture content**. Properly seasoned hardwood (15 to 20 percent moisture content after 12 to 18 months of air drying) produces roughly 8,500 to 9,000 BTU per pound. Green or unseasoned wood (40 to 60 percent moisture content, freshly cut) produces only 2,000 to 3,000 BTU per pound because so much energy goes into evaporating water instead of heating the home. This means you might need to burn twice as much green wood to achieve the same heat output, instantly doubling your fuel costs while also producing three times as much creosote and dramatically shortening your chimney's lifespan. **Burning green wood is a false economy in Ottawa's harsh climate.**

Hardwoods like oak, maple, ash, and birch — all common in Eastern Ontario — are far superior to softwoods like pine and spruce for home heating. Hardwoods produce roughly 20 to 25 percent more heat per cord and burn significantly longer, meaning you can load the stove once in the evening and have coals still glowing in the morning. Softwoods contain high resin content and produce excessive creosote, increasing chimney fire risk in a region where annual chimney sweeping is already a non-negotiable maintenance requirement.

Seasonal Pricing Variation

Natural gas prices in Ottawa fluctuate seasonally and are tied to global commodity markets — the current 5-year average has ranged from $0.65 to $1.45 per therm. Winter demand typically drives prices higher in November through February. Firewood prices also fluctuate but are more local — prices typically rise in August through October as heating season approaches and supply tightens. Smart Ottawa homeowners buy or cut firewood in spring or early summer when prices are lower and drying time is maximized.

The Intangible Factors

Beyond pure heating cost, wood stove owners cite several factors that influence their decision: the deep psychological comfort of a wood fire on a -30°C night (a factor that economists call "utility" but which homeowners experience as genuine warmth and security), the independence from

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- The Egress Group Inc
- Demontigny Carpentry
- JMY Renovations
- Home Front Services

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Q18

How often should I get my wood stove chimney cleaned living in Ottawa with heavy winter use?

In Ottawa with heavy winter use, you should have your chimney professionally cleaned and inspected **at least twice per year — once in fall before the heating season begins and once in mid-winter** to ensure safe, efficient operation throughout the cold months.

This is not the standard "once per year" advice you might hear in milder climates, and there's a very specific reason why Ottawa is different. Your city experiences one of Canada's longest and most intense heating seasons. If you're a heavy wood stove user burning 6 to 8 cords of wood per season (which is typical for Ottawa homeowners using a stove as primary or supplemental heat), you're generating enormous volumes of creosote deposits inside your chimney flue. That creosote accumulation happens **fast** in Ottawa's climate, especially during shoulder seasons in fall and spring when cooler outdoor temperatures combined with lower interior burn temperatures create ideal conditions for glazed creosote formation — the hard, shiny, black coating that looks like glass and is the most dangerous type.

Here's why heavy use changes the timeline. A typical Ottawa household burning 4 to 6 cords per season in a modern EPA-certified wood stove might accumulate creosote buildup equivalent to a full cleaning within 3 to 4 months of regular use. A heavy user burning 6 to 8 cords could reach dangerous levels within 8 to 10 weeks of the heating season. Stage 3 glazed creosote is a chimney fire waiting to happen — it's highly flammable and resistant to normal burning away, and a creosote fire can reach temperatures above 2,000 degrees Celsius, enough to crack a ceramic chimney liner or even ignite hidden wood framing inside your home. In Ottawa's climate, where creosote

accumulation is amplified by prolonged low-temperature burns, waiting a full year between cleanings with heavy use is genuinely risky.

The practical scheduling approach for Ottawa winter: Get a WETT-certified chimney sweep to perform a Level 1 inspection and thorough cleaning in late September or early October, before you start your primary heating season. Then schedule a second cleaning in late January or early February, roughly halfway through your heating season. This mid-winter cleaning catches dangerous creosote buildup before it reaches critical levels and gives you peace of mind heading into the final months of winter. If you have a particularly severe winter with consistent use or if your stove seems to be producing unusual amounts of smoke or creosote odours, don't wait — call a sweep immediately. A professional WETT-certified chimney sweep in Ottawa charges $175 to $350 per cleaning visit, which is a small insurance premium against chimney fires, carbon monoxide issues, and system failures during the coldest months of the year.

One critical detail about wood quality. The frequency of creosote buildup is directly tied to the moisture content of the wood you're burning. If you're burning properly seasoned hardwood (12 to 18 months air-dried, at 15 to 20 percent moisture content), creosote accumulates at a manageable rate. If you're burning green, wet, or inadequately seasoned wood, creosote deposits can double or triple, potentially requiring cleaning every 4 to 6 weeks rather than every 8 to 10 weeks. Proper wood seasoning is the single most important factor in keeping your Ottawa chimney clean and safe.

Insurance coverage depends on it. Many Ottawa homeowners don't realize that their insurance company requires evidence of regular chimney cleaning and WETT inspection. If a chimney fire occurs and you cannot produce documentation of professional cleaning within the past 12 months, your claim can be denied entirely. With heavy winter use, keeping detailed records of both fall and mid-winter cleanings protects you both legally and financially.

When you're ready to book your fall cleaning, you can browse WETT-certified chimney sweeps through the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory to compare local options in your area and get in touch directly — early booking in August or September helps you secure a spot before the rush of October and November scheduling scrambles.

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- JC Carpentry
- Valcor Construction

- Custom By Arie
- B.A Gas Works

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Q19

Do I need an Ottawa building permit to install a wood stove in my basement?

Yes, you will need a building permit from the City of Ottawa to install a wood stove in your basement, and this is one of the most important permits to get right because basement wood stove installations carry specific code requirements that many homeowners underestimate.

The Ontario Building Code requires a building permit for any new wood-burning appliance installation, including wood stoves, wood inserts, and wood-burning fireplaces. A basement installation triggers additional scrutiny because the code has strict rules about combustion air supply, chimney routing, and clearances in below-grade spaces. Your basement needs adequate fresh air intake for the stove to operate safely and efficiently — the stove consumes a large volume of air during combustion, and if that air cannot be replaced, negative pressure builds in the house, which can cause carbon monoxide from any fuel-burning appliance (furnace, gas water heater, range) to spill backward into living spaces instead of venting properly. This is a genuine safety hazard that basement installations amplify.

The permit process typically requires you to submit detailed plans showing the stove location, chimney routing (whether it runs inside or outside the basement wall), clearances to combustibles (usually 36 inches minimum from the stove to wood framing, walls, or stored materials), the hearth protection layout, and how fresh combustion air will be supplied to the stove — through an exterior wall opening, a window, or an existing basement vent. The City of Ottawa Building Code Services team will review these plans to confirm compliance with the Ontario Building Code before issuing a permit. You can apply through the City of Ottawa website (ottawa.ca) or by calling 3-1-1. Permit costs typically run $150 to $400 depending on project complexity.

After installation, a WETT-certified inspector must inspect the completed system and issue a WETT Level 1 inspection report confirming that the installation meets National Safety Code standards for wood-burning appliances. This inspection is technically separate from the building permit, but it is essential — your home insurance company will almost certainly require a WETT inspection before they will cover a wood stove, and resale value depends on documented compliance. WETT inspections in Ottawa run $250 to $450 for a Level 1 inspection.

The critical mistake many homeowners make is installing a wood stove without a permit, thinking they can avoid the paperwork and cost. This creates several serious problems: (1) it voids your homeowner's insurance if there is ever a fire or carbon monoxide incident, (2) it becomes a disclosure issue when you sell the house — a future buyer's home inspector will likely identify an unpermitted stove, and it can derail a sale or force expensive retrofit work, (3) if a chimney fire or carbon monoxide incident occurs, your insurance company can deny the claim entirely because the work was unpermitted, and (4) a basement wood stove that was installed without proper code compliance around combustion air intake and chimney venting is genuinely dangerous. Basement air quality and draft

dynamics are different from main-floor installations, and cutting corners on permits means cutting corners on safety.

The timeline for a basement wood stove project typically runs 4 to 6 weeks from permit application through WETT inspection. Plan to submit your permit application in late March or April if you want the stove operational before next winter — the outdoor construction season in Ottawa is short, and if you apply in September, you will likely not get a permit issued until October or November when the installation window is already closing.

Total cost for a basement wood stove installation in Ottawa, including the permit, WETT inspection, stove itself, chimney pipe, hearth pad, and professional installation, typically runs $5,500 to $10,000 depending on the stove quality, chimney routing complexity (exterior wall vs. interior routing), and whether the basement already has adequate combustion air supply or needs modifications.

If you are ready to move forward with a basement wood stove installation, connecting with a WETT-certified installer who is familiar with Ottawa's building code requirements and basement-specific challenges is the smartest first step — they can guide you through the permit process, ensure the design meets code, and handle the installation and final inspection. You can browse experienced wood stove installers through the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory to find contractors in your area.

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- 613Bins
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Treka Construction Group
- Rrenovatios
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Q20

What kind of hearth pad do I need under a wood stove to meet Ontario fire code?

Hearth Pad Requirements for Ontario Wood Stove Installation

You need a non-combustible hearth pad that extends a minimum of **16 inches (406 mm) in front of the stove door and at least 8 inches (203 mm) on each side** — this is the baseline Ontario Building Code requirement. However, the actual dimensions and materials required depend on your specific stove's manufacturer specifications, which often exceed the code minimum, and this is where many Ottawa homeowners get caught off guard.

Why Ontario's Code Is Strict (and Ottawa's Climate Makes It Stricter)

The Ontario Building Code requires hearth protection because a wood stove radiates intense heat — an active stove surface can reach 500 to 800 degrees Fahrenheit, and radiant heat travels several feet. A hearth pad protects the floor from ignition and from the gradual heat degradation that weakens wood, drywall, and other combustible materials over time. In Ottawa's climate, where homeowners run wood stoves hard for 5 to 7 months of the year, this heat exposure is relentless, and undersized or inadequate hearth pads fail faster than in milder climates.

More importantly, your stove's **manufacturer installation manual typically specifies hearth dimensions that are larger than the code minimum** — and those manufacturer specs are what insurance companies, WETT inspectors, and building code officials actually enforce. A popular steel wood stove might specify a 24-inch extension in front and 12 inches on the sides. A cast-iron or soapstone stove might require 36 inches front and 18 inches sides. You cannot simply install the code minimum and assume you are compliant — you must follow the manufacturer's requirement, whichever is more stringent.

Approved Hearth Pad Materials

Ontario recognizes several non-combustible hearth materials: **ceramic tile (at least 3/8 inch thick, set on a non-combustible substrate like cement board)**, slate, brick, stone, or concrete. The substrate beneath the tile or finish material must also be non-combustible — typical setups use 1/2-inch cement board over the floor, then tile or slate bonded to it with thin-set mortar. Many Ottawa installers use 3/4-inch cement board for extra durability and thermal mass.

Stainless steel hearth pads are also acceptable and increasingly popular in Ottawa because they are durable, easy to clean, and work well over wood floors. A quality stainless steel pad (at least 20-gauge steel, approximately 1/16 inch thick) will handle the heat and last through many years of heavy stove use.

Marble, granite, or engineered stone can be used if properly installed on a non-combustible substrate, though granite and marble are expensive for hearth protection and offer no performance advantage over ceramic tile. The key is that the finished surface and everything beneath it must be non-combustible.

Do **not** use asphalt tile, vinyl flooring, laminate, or any product containing wood, plastic, or adhesive that releases gases when heated. These materials may pass initial inspection but will degrade, off-gas, and eventually ignite

under prolonged heat exposure. In Ottawa's long heating season, a marginal hearth pad will fail within a year or two.

Practical Installation Tips for Ottawa

The hearth pad should extend **at least 8 inches beyond the sides of the stove and 16 inches minimum in front of the door** — but plan for your manufacturer's spec, which is usually larger. If your stove manual specifies 24 inches in front, install 24 inches. If you are uncertain, WETT inspectors typically recommend erring on the generous side because a larger hearth pad costs very little more and eliminates any ambiguity about code compliance.

The hearth pad must rest on the subfloor or on a non-combustible substrate — it cannot float or be installed directly over wood flooring with only a thin adhesive layer. The proper method is to remove flooring if necessary, ensure the subfloor is solid and level, install 1/2 to 3/4-inch cement board, then set tile or stone on that base. If you are installing over an existing wood floor, the cement board raises the hearth pad slightly above the surrounding floor level (typically 1/2 to 3/4 inch), which creates a slight ramp that most people find acceptable. Some installers create a tapered transition with a hardwood threshold to blend the heights.

The hearth pad must also be **sloped slightly toward the stove (not away from it)** so that spilled ash collects near the stove rather than spreading across the room. A slope of about 1/8 inch per foot is standard.

Cost and Timeline

A ceramic tile hearth pad in Ottawa typically costs **$500 to $1,500 installed** depending on the size (24x36 inches versus 36x48 inches), the quality of tile selected, and whether the existing floor needs preparation. Stainless steel pads run **$400 to $900 installed**. These costs are usually included in the overall wood stove installation price (which runs $4,500 to $9,500 complete), but if you are having the stove installed by one contractor and the hearth by another, clarify who is responsible for each component.

Plan hearth installation in advance if you are installing a wood stove before winter — masonry or tile work requires stable weather and curing time, and you do not want to rush this phase in early October when heating season is approaching.

Critical WETT and Insurance Point

Your homeowner's insurance company will require a **WETT inspection before they will insure a home with a wood stove**, and the WETT inspector will examine the hearth pad closely. A hearth pad that does not meet manufacturer specs or the Ontario Building Code will result in a failed inspection and the insurer refusing coverage. If an undersized or non-compliant hearth pad leads to a fire, your insurance claim will likely be denied entirely. This is not theoretical — WETT inspectors encounter non-compliant hearth installations regularly, and it is one of the

fastest ways to lose insurance coverage for a wood-burning appliance.

When you are ready to install a wood stove, experienced local contractors can guide you through hearth specifications, help you source the right materials, and ensure the installation passes WETT inspection. If you would like to browse fireplace and wood stove installers in the Ottawa area who understand these code requirements intimately, you can explore the Ottawa Construction Network directory at justynrookcontracting.com/directory to find WETT-certified professionals 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
- ARTEXPRO Tile & Finishes
- Leeds Property Maintenance
- Eastern Residential Solution

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Q21

What does a WETT-certified chimney installation cost for a wood stove in Ottawa?

A **WETT-certified wood stove installation in Ottawa runs $4,500 to $9,500 total**, with the stove itself typically costing $2,500 to $5,000 and the professional installation (including chimney pipe, hearth pad, and labour) adding another $2,000 to $4,500. The exact cost depends heavily on whether you're installing into an existing chimney or building new, the height and complexity of the chimney run, and the specific stove model you choose.

Why WETT Certification Matters in Ottawa's Climate

WETT (Wood Energy Technology Transfer) certification is critical because Ottawa's extreme heating season — with temperatures regularly dropping to -25 to -30 degrees Celsius — means you'll be burning substantial amounts of wood, typically 4 to 8 cords per season. A WETT-certified installer ensures your system meets national safety standards for appliance clearances, chimney sizing, hearth protection, and combustible material placement. More importantly, nearly every insurance company in Ontario now requires a WETT inspection before they'll insure a

home with a wood-burning appliance, and some insurers demand proof of WETT-certified installation before covering wood stove claims. Skipping WETT certification to save a few hundred dollars can mean being uninsured when you need it most — which in Ottawa's climate could be a house fire during the coldest part of winter.

What's Included in a Professional Installation

A complete installation includes the wood stove itself, a properly sized and graded chimney liner (usually stainless steel, $2,000 to $5,000 depending on chimney height), hearth protection (typically a non-combustible pad extending 18 inches in front and 8 inches to either side, costing $300 to $800), adjustable stove pipe from the appliance to the chimney, clearance-to-combustible modifications if needed, a chimney cap, and the labour to assemble, test, and inspect everything. The WETT installer will also provide written documentation of the installation that satisfies insurance requirements and confirms the system meets Ontario Building Code standards.

The biggest variable in cost is chimney condition. If you have an existing masonry chimney in good condition, the cost is lower because the installer can reline it with stainless steel. If your chimney is damaged, deteriorated, or requires rebuilding — common in Ottawa homes after 50+ years of freeze-thaw cycling — costs climb quickly toward the upper end of the range. A chimney that needs full rebuilding above the roofline adds $3,000 to $8,000 on top of the stove installation cost. This is why getting a WETT Level 2 inspection ($350 to $600) before purchasing a stove is smart financial planning — it reveals exactly what chimney work is needed and helps you budget accurately.

Seasonal Timing and Planning

Schedule your wood stove installation in spring or early fall, not summer or winter. Masonry work requires temperatures above 5 degrees Celsius for proper curing, which limits the outdoor construction season to roughly April through November. More importantly, waiting until October to book an installation is a recipe for long wait times — chimney contractors in Ottawa get hammered with last-minute calls once the first frost hits and people realize their chimney is damaged. Booking in March or August means you can have your stove ready well before the first cold snap.

A capable WETT-certified installer in Ottawa will take 2 to 4 days for a standard installation (longer if chimney relining or significant modifications are needed), and you should expect the work to be completed before winter heating season begins in earnest around mid-November.

If you're ready to move forward, you can browse wood stove installers and chimney professionals through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to compare local options and get specific quotes based on your chimney's condition.

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- Homeupgraders
- The Egress Group Inc
- L.L. Renovation
- Grunt Work 4 Grunts
- Joe Imerti Contracting

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Q22

Can a wood stove realistically heat my whole house during Ottawa's minus-thirty winters?

A properly sized and installed wood stove can realistically heat most or all of a typical single-storey Ottawa home during even the coldest winters, but whether it will heat *your* whole house depends on your home's size, insulation, layout, and how much you're willing to actively manage the fire. The simple answer is: yes, it's possible, but it requires the right stove, proper installation, realistic expectations about fuel consumption, and honest assessment of your home's heat loss characteristics.

The Reality of Wood Heat in Ottawa's Extreme Cold

Ottawa winters hitting -30 degrees Celsius (or colder with windchill) are exactly the conditions where a wood stove excels. A modern EPA-certified wood stove produces 60,000 to 80,000 BTU per hour at full burn — enough heat to warm 1,500 to 2,500 square feet depending on insulation and layout. For a typical three-bedroom, two-storey Ottawa home of 2,000 to 2,500 square feet, a properly sized wood stove positioned centrally on the main floor can realistically serve as the primary heating source during winter, with your existing forced-air furnace or baseboard heating as backup for extreme cold snaps or when you're away.

However, there are critical variables that change the equation dramatically. A well-insulated, airtight modern home with good wall cavity insulation and an efficient furnace baseline heat loss might need only 40,000 to 50,000 BTU from a wood stove to maintain 20 degrees Celsius throughout the main living areas during -30 weather. An older, loosely constructed Ottawa home with single-pane windows, poor attic insulation, and air leaks might lose heat so rapidly that even an 80,000 BTU stove cannot maintain comfortable temperatures in bedrooms upstairs, because warm air rises and escapes through the ceiling, and the stove cannot force heated air up into distant rooms without ducting or a powerful blower fan. The stove heats the room it's in very effectively — the challenge is moving that heat throughout the house.

Home size matters enormously. An 800 to 1,200 square foot bungalow or cottage? A wood stove is genuinely capable of being the sole heat source all winter long. A sprawling 3,500 square foot two-storey home? Even a large stove will struggle to heat all corners evenly, and you will rely heavily on your existing furnace, especially for upstairs bedrooms and rooms far from the stove. Most Ottawa homeowners who heat primarily with wood have either smaller homes, or they accept that the wood stove is their *primary* supplemental heating that reduces furnace runtime and fuel bills significantly but doesn't completely eliminate their need for conventional heating.

Fuel Consumption and Supply Reality

Heating an Ottawa home through a full winter with a wood stove requires enormous quantities of properly seasoned firewood. A household burning wood as the primary heat source typically consumes 6 to 10 cords of hardwood per season, depending on stove efficiency, home size and insulation, and how aggressively you run the fire. A cord is 128 cubic feet (a stack 4 feet high, 4 feet deep, and 8 feet long), so you're looking at storage space for roughly 256 to 320 cubic feet of split, stacked wood. That's a woodshed roughly 8 feet wide, 8 feet deep, and 5 feet tall — substantial infrastructure that many Ottawa homeowners don't have.

The wood must be seasoned to 15 to 20 percent moisture content, which means cutting and stacking it at least 12 to 18 months before you burn it. Green or unseasoned wood produces enormous creosote buildup in your chimney, burns inefficiently, and barely heats the home. Most Ottawa wood stove owners buy firewood in summer for use the following winter, or they spend their spring and fall splitting and stacking their own supply. The cost of delivered seasoned hardwood in Ottawa runs $350 to $450 per cord, so heating your home entirely with wood might cost $2,100 to $4,500 in fuel per season — not cheap, though still competitive with natural gas or oil in Ottawa's coldest winters.

Maintaining adequate fuel also requires discipline. Running out of seasoned wood midway through February in Ottawa is a genuine risk if you don't plan carefully or if your supplier has a supply disruption. Many wood heat users maintain a 2 to 3 cord reserve specifically for late-season cold snaps or emergencies.

Installation, Clearances, and Safety Considerations

A wood stove must be installed with proper clearances to combustibles, a professionally installed chimney system, and a hearth pad that meets Ontario Building Code specifications. Minimum clearances are typically 12 to 18 inches from the stove sides and back to wood-frame walls, and 36 to 48 inches in front of the stove door. A dedicated 6-inch or 8-inch stainless steel chimney flue must extend from the stove to at least 3 feet above the roof and 2 feet higher than any structure within 10 feet — the classic 3-2-10 rule. In Ottawa's freeze-thaw climate, a quality stainless steel liner is essential; aluminum or unlined chimneys fail rapidly and create dangerous creosote accumulation and potential chimney fires.

Total installation cost for a new wood stove, chimney, hearth, and labour in Ottawa runs $4,500 to $9,500 depending on whether you're installing into an existing masonry chimney (cheaper) or building a new chimney run through the roof (more expensive). A WETT inspection and certification are legally required for insurance purposes in Ontario — your home insurer will demand it before they will cover a wood-burning appliance.

Carbon monoxide from a wood stove is less of a concern than with gas appliances (wood fires produce carbon monoxide only if the chimney is blocked or severely backdrafting), but chimney fires are a genuine risk. A creosote-lined chimney can ignite, especially after a winter of heavy use in Ottawa's long burning season. Annual professional chimney cleaning by a WETT-certified sweep is non-negotiable, and many Ottawa wood heat users

schedule two cleanings per winter — one in fall before the season starts and one in early spring to remove accumulation before the final cold snaps. Neglecting chimney cleaning in Ottawa is a direct path to a chimney fire, which can damage your chimney and roof and create carbon monoxide leakage into your home.

Practical Recommendations for Whole-House Wood Heat in Ottawa

If you want to

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- ZinoM Concrete & Landscaping
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Q23

Do I need a WETT inspection before installing a wood stove in Ottawa?

A WETT inspection is not technically mandatory by law before installing a wood stove in Ottawa, but it is practically essential — and your insurance company will almost certainly require it. This is the crucial distinction that many Ottawa homeowners miss until they face a claim denial.

Why WETT Matters for Ottawa Wood Stove Installations

The reality is straightforward: virtually every major home insurance provider in Ontario now requires a WETT Level 1 or Level 2 inspection before they will insure a home with a wood-burning appliance, and many insurers demand that the installation itself be performed by a WETT-certified installer. If you install a wood stove without WETT certification and later have a house fire — even if the fire starts elsewhere in the home — your insurer can deny your entire claim on the grounds that you failed to meet the policy requirement for a certified wood-burning appliance installation. This is not theoretical risk. It happens in Ottawa every winter.

A WETT inspection examines the complete system: the wood stove itself and its condition, the chimney structure and liner material, clearances from the stove and chimney to combustible materials like wood framing and insulation, the hearth protection dimensions and materials, the flashing where the chimney penetrates the roof, and the chimney cap and crown. The inspector verifies that everything meets the Ontario Building Code and that the installation is safe to operate. For a new installation, a WETT-certified installer will perform the work and typically include a Level 1 inspection as part of the package. For an existing wood stove or insert, you would hire a WETT-certified chimney sweep or inspector to verify that the system is compliant.

Ottawa's freeze-thaw climate and long heating season make this inspection particularly valuable. WETT inspectors understand the specific risks of our climate — they check for the chimney crown cracks and water infiltration that accelerate deterioration in Ottawa's extreme temperature swings, verify that your chimney liner is appropriately sized for the stove's heat output, and confirm that your chimney extends high enough above the roofline to avoid downdraft issues created by cold air pooling in the Ottawa Valley. They also flag creosote accumulation risks specific to Ottawa's burning patterns.

What to Expect and What It Costs

A WETT Level 1 inspection (visual, for ongoing maintenance) costs **$250 to $450** in Ottawa and takes roughly 1 to 1.5 hours. The inspector will examine the appliance, chimney interior and exterior, clearances, hearth, and flashing, then provide a report detailing any issues. A Level 2 inspection (more detailed, often requested before real estate transactions or after a chimney fire) runs **$350 to $600** and may involve removing the chimney cap or taking photos inside the flue with specialized equipment. A Level 3 (invasive inspection involving partial demolition) costs **$500 to $1,000 or more** but is rarely needed for new installations.

If you are hiring a WETT-certified installer to perform the wood stove installation itself, the inspection is typically included in the overall installation cost. A complete new wood stove installation in Ottawa — including the stove, chimney pipe or relining, hearth pad, labour, and WETT inspection — runs **$4,500 to $9,500** depending on whether you need a new chimney liner, the height of your chimney, and the complexity of the installation.

Key Considerations and Common Pitfalls

Do not skip WETT certification thinking you can sort it out later or that it is optional. Contact your insurance company before you install any wood-burning appliance and ask specifically what inspection and certification they require. Some insurers are more stringent than others — some will accept a WETT inspection performed after installation, while others require the installer to be certified from the start. Get this in writing from your insurer so you have documentation.

Hiring a WETT-certified installer from the outset is strongly recommended. Yes, it costs more than hiring just any contractor, but it streamlines the process, ensures compliance, and gives you the documentation your insurer needs. An uncertified installation may cost $500 to $1,000 less upfront but could cost you thousands in denied insurance claims or trigger requirements for expensive remedial work to bring it into compliance.

Chimney liners deserve special attention in Ottawa. Many older Ottawa homes have clay tile liners that have cracked or deteriorated due to decades of freeze-thaw cycling. A WETT inspection will identify whether your existing chimney is safe to use or whether you need a stainless steel relining (**$2,000 to $5,000** installed). Relining a chimney before installation is far cheaper and simpler than discovering mid-winter that your old liner has failed.

If you are installing a wood stove in a home without an existing chimney or with a chimney that needs substantial rebuilding, budget for those costs upfront. An above-roofline chimney rebuild can run **$3,000 to $8,000**, and a full chimney rebuild can exceed **$20,000**. A WETT inspection early in the planning process will identify exactly what you need so there are no surprises.

When you are ready to move forward with a wood stove installation, you can browse WETT-certified installers and chimney professionals through the Ottawa Construction Network directory — that will help you find experienced contractors in your area who understand Ottawa's specific climate and can walk you through the inspection and certification process from start to finish.

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

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- RenoMotion Inc.
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Q24

How much does it cost to install a new EPA-certified wood stove in an Ottawa home?

A complete EPA-certified wood stove installation in Ottawa runs between **$4,500 and $9,500 installed**, with the stove itself accounting for $2,500 to $5,000 of that total and labour plus materials (chimney pipe, hearth pad, and venting) adding another $2,000 to $4,500. The final cost depends heavily on whether you're installing into an existing chimney or need new venting built from scratch, the height of your chimney run, and the specific stove model you choose.

What drives the cost in Ottawa's climate

Ottawa homeowners burn more wood and run their stoves longer than people in milder climates — a typical supplemental heating setup here uses 4 to 8 cords per season — which makes stove quality and installation precision genuinely important. A properly sized and installed EPA-certified stove will burn at 70 to 80 percent efficiency compared to 30 to 40 percent for an old open fireplace, meaning the investment pays dividends over time in actual heating output and lower wood consumption. Ottawa's extreme freeze-thaw cycles also mean your chimney system needs to be built right the first time. A poorly installed chimney that leaks or isn't sized correctly will create creosote problems and safety hazards that cost far more to fix than doing the installation correctly upfront.

The stove itself — whether catalytic (using a catalytic combustor for secondary combustion) or non-catalytic (using baffles for secondary air) — typically runs $2,500 to $5,000 for a quality EPA-certified model. Both approaches achieve the emissions and efficiency standards required; the choice comes down to your maintenance preference and the specific heating needs of your space. Installation labour, chimney pipe (stainless steel is the standard for wood stoves in Ottawa), the required non-combustible hearth pad, and any necessary venting modifications typically add $2,000 to $4,500 depending on how straightforward the install is. If you need a completely new chimney or significant structural work, add $3,000 to $8,000 more.

Key cost variables

Chimney situation: Installing a stove into an existing masonry chimney that's in good condition costs less than building a new chimney from the attic up. You'll need a WETT-certified installer to inspect the existing chimney first — if the chimney is cracked, improperly sized, or has deteriorated mortar from Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycling, relining or rebuilding becomes necessary, which significantly increases cost. A chimney relining with stainless steel pipe runs $2,000 to $5,000 depending on height.

Stove location: A stove on the main floor close to an existing chimney is straightforward and inexpensive to install. A stove in a basement or on an upper floor requires longer chimney runs and more complex framing, pushing labour costs higher. Stoves installed in open-concept spaces may require more hearth protection and clearance-to-combustible work.

Hearth pad requirements: Ontario Building Code specifies that the hearth extension in front of and to the sides of a wood stove must be non-combustible material (typically ceramic tile, slate, or stone) extending at least 16 inches to the front and 8 inches to the sides. A simple hearth pad adds $500 to $1,500; a more elaborate stone or tile hearth can run $1,500 to $3,000.

Permit and inspection: The City of Ottawa requires a building permit for wood stove installation (roughly $100 to $250 depending on the scope). After installation, you'll need a WETT Level 1 inspection ($250 to $450) to satisfy your insurance company — virtually all Ontario insurers now require this for wood-burning appliances.

What's included in professional installation

When you hire a licensed WETT-certified installer, they should provide: a site assessment and chimney inspection to confirm suitability; proper sizing of the stove for your space (an oversized stove produces excessive creosote, while an undersized one won't heat adequately); installation of the stove with proper clearances to combustible materials (typically 12 to 18 inches depending on the manufacturer's specifications); installation of chimney pipe (double-wall insulated stainless steel is standard) with proper thimble installation where it passes through the roof; a non-combustible hearth pad sized to code; sealing the stove's draft damper and any gaps; removal of old fireplace dampers if applicable; and instruction on proper operation and maintenance.

After installation, you should receive documentation confirming the stove's EPA certification number and the installer's WETT credentials. Keep this for your insurance file and future home sales — buyers and lenders increasingly ask for WETT installation records.

The wood cost factor

Once you've installed the stove, factor in the cost of fuel. A cord of properly seasoned hardwood in Ottawa runs $350 to $450 delivered. Most Ottawa homeowners with a wood stove as a supplemental heat source burn 4 to 8 cords per season, translating to $1,400 to $3,600 annually in wood costs. This is less than the equivalent amount of natural gas heating in many homes, especially if you're using the stove to reduce your furnace run time during the long Ottawa winter.

The stove must burn properly seasoned wood (15 to 20 percent moisture content) that's been split and stored for 12 to 18 months. Burning green or unseasoned wood creates dangerous levels of creosote in the chimney — Ottawa's long burning season means creosote accumulation is a serious concern already, and wet wood makes it far worse. Combined with Ottawa's requirement for annual chimney cleaning and sweeping ($175 to $350), the true annual operating cost includes both wood and maintenance.

Common budget surprises

Many homeowners underestimate the cost of fixing an old chimney before installing a stove. If your existing chimney shows signs of deterioration — efflorescence (white powdery deposits), spalling brick or mortar, cracks, or visible mortar erosion from freeze-thaw damage — a professional inspection will likely recommend relining or rebuilding before a new stove is vented through it. This is not optional from a safety or insurance perspective: a wood stove vented through a compromised chimney creates carbon monoxide risks and will be rejected by your insurance company at claim time.

Another surprise is the hearth pad cost. Many homeowners assume a simple tile hearth will run a few hundred dollars, then discover that proper hearth installation with mortar, adhesive, and finishing runs $1,000

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

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- JC Carpentry
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