OTTAWA DEMOLITION CONTRACTORS

Asbestos & Designated Substances

Testing for asbestos and lead before demolition,
and the owner duties the City describes.

4 Expert Answers from Demolition IQ

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Q1

Which designated substances can turn up in an older Ottawa house?

O. Reg. 490/09 under the Occupational Health and Safety Act lists eleven designated substances: asbestos, arsenic, benzene, coke oven emissions, ethylene oxide, isocyanates, lead, mercury, silica, vinyl chloride and acrylonitrile. Asbestos and lead are the two that Health Canada's guidance ties to older homes.

Asbestos is the one that changes the job most. Health Canada says fibres are released during renovation and demolition activities, and advises hiring a professional to test before any work begins. If a professional finds asbestos, Health Canada says to hire a qualified asbestos removal specialist. The City's demolition page quotes section 30 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act: a project owner must determine whether any designated substances are present and prepare a list before the project begins, and a prospective constructor must receive that list before entering into a binding contract. We did not find a published ruling on whether that duty falls on a homeowner who hires a contractor for their own house; ask the contractor how they handle the designated substances list and what they need from you before signing.

Lead is the other substance that comes up in older houses. Health Canada says a home built before 1960 probably contains lead-based paint, and that the exterior of a home built between 1960 and 1990 may contain it. We found no rule that lead-painted surfaces must be removed by an abatement contractor before demolition begins; ask the contractor how painted surfaces that may contain lead will be handled and whether an abatement contractor is involved.

A few practical points for the quote conversation:

- Asbestos testing and removal is work for an abatement contractor, separate from the demolition contract. The City's Trail Road Landfill does not accept asbestos.
- Ask whether the demolition quote is conditional on a clean abatement report, or whether the contractor expects to work around an abatement schedule.
- Ask what happens to the designated substances list: who prepares it, who signs off on it, and whether it is attached to the contract.

Before you sign, ask the contractor who prepares the designated substances list and whether it will be attached to the contract.

Q2

Can asbestos debris go into a regular demolition bin in Ottawa?

No. The City of Ottawa's Trail Road Landfill states plainly: "We do NOT accept asbestos at the landfill." That applies to homeowner loads and, as far as the City's published rules go, to any load arriving at Trail Road.

A regular demolition bin shares the same problem. Bins are hauled to a disposal facility, and if that facility does not accept asbestos, the material cannot go in. Asbestos removal and disposal is work for an asbestos abatement contractor, not part of a standard demolition.

The City's demolition page quotes section 30 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act: a project owner must identify designated substances on the project and provide a list to prospective constructors before entering into a binding contract. Asbestos is one of the eleven designated substances listed in O. Reg. 490/09. Health Canada advises hiring a professional to test for asbestos before demolition or renovation work begins, and if asbestos is found, hiring a qualified asbestos removal specialist.

What this means for your project in practical terms:

- Testing comes before contracting for demolition. Ask the abatement contractor for a written report identifying what was found and where.
- If asbestos is present, its removal is the abatement contractor's job, done before the demolition.
- Ask the demolition contractor how they handle the designated substances list, and whether their quote is conditional on the building being clear of designated substances first.
- Ask where the remaining debris goes after abatement is complete, and whether hauling is included in the quoted price.

For testing and abatement, that work sits outside this site's scope. ottawaabatement.com covers asbestos and designated substance removal.
Before any work starts, make sure you have a written contract that sets out the full scope, the price, and the start and completion dates, so there is no dispute about what each contractor is responsible for.

Q3

Can the demolition crew remove asbestos found during an Ottawa job?

No, asbestos removal is not part of a demolition crew's work. It is a separate job for an asbestos abatement contractor, arranged before the demolition.

The City's demolition page cites section 30 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which says that before a project begins, the owner shall determine whether any designated substances are present and prepare a list. That

list goes to any prospective constructor before a binding contract is signed. O. Reg. 490/09 names asbestos as one of eleven designated substances. The City's landfill at Trail Road does not accept asbestos, so it cannot go into a demolition bin with the rest of the debris.

Health Canada advises hiring a professional to test for asbestos before demolition or renovation work, and if asbestos is found, hiring a qualified asbestos removal specialist. Their guidance notes that asbestos was mainly used in buildings before 1990, and that fibres are released during demolition. Testing and removal are covered at ottawaabatement.com, which is the right place for that part of the job.

A few things worth asking before you sign anything with a demolition contractor:

- Ask whether they have received the designated substances list, or whether one has been prepared for the property.
- Ask how they handle surfaces that may contain lead-based paint, and whether an abatement contractor is involved for that as well.
- Confirm that the quote covers work only after any abatement is complete, and that it does not include asbestos handling.

The one question to ask before you sign: has the building been tested, and who is arranging the abatement if the test finds asbestos?

Q4

Lead paint on an old Vanier garage: does that change the demolition plan?

Lead paint on a garage does not stop the demolition, but it changes what has to happen before the contractor starts and what the quote should cover.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act is the starting point. The City's demolition page says that section 30 of the OHSA requires a project owner to identify designated substances on the project and provide a list to prospective constructors before entering into a binding contract. Lead is one of the eleven designated substances listed in O. Reg. 490/09. Health Canada says homes built before 1960 probably contain lead-based paint, and that exterior surfaces of homes built between 1960 and 1990 may as well. The City's page frames this as a project-owner obligation; whether that applies to a homeowner in the same way it applies to a commercial owner is a question worth putting to the contractor directly, and asking how they handle the designated substances list before the contract is signed.

In practice, it helps to know what is on the walls before the quote is final. Ask each contractor how they will handle painted surfaces that may contain lead, and whether they expect an abatement contractor to be involved; ottawaabatement.com covers testing and removal. If two companies are involved, get the order of the work in writing.

A few things to confirm in the quote for a Vanier garage:

- whether the price includes the designated substances list or assumes the homeowner provides it
- what the contractor's scope covers once abatement is done (the structure down to grade, debris hauled)
- where the debris goes and whether hauling is in the price
- whether the permit application is included, since the City requires a permit to demolish a building

The Demolition Control By-law's definition of residential property excludes a subordinate or accessory building, so demolition control does not reach a detached garage. On the City's 2026 fee schedule, a Permit to Demolish is $117 for the first 5,000 square feet of gross floor area, plus $12.75 for each additional 1,000 square feet.
Get the scope and the order of the abatement and demolition work in writing before anything is signed.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Demolition Contractors. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa) before any demolition. The City requires a permit to demolish a building or structure, and every utility connected to the property signs off before the permit is issued. Information is current as of November 22, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawademolitioncontractors.ca** for the latest answers.