OTTAWA DEMOLITION CONTRACTORS

House Demolition

Taking a whole house down to grade, from the permit to the last load.

4 Expert Answers from Demolition IQ

ottawademolitioncontractors.ca/construction-brain

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Q1

Fire-damaged house in Orleans: how does demolition get started?

A fire-damaged house still needs a City of Ottawa demolition permit before work begins, and the fire changes the order of a few steps without removing any of them. The place to start is the designated substances list.

Health Canada advises hiring a professional to test for asbestos before demolition, and to hire a qualified asbestos removal specialist if asbestos is found. For lead, Health Canada says a home built before 1960 probably contains lead-based paint, and exterior surfaces of homes built between 1960 and 1990 may as well. Ask the contractor how they handle the designated substances list and whether an abatement contractor needs to be involved before demolition begins.

Utilities and the permit

Every utility still has to be signed off on the City's Demolition Permit Clearances Form, and a fire does not automatically mean they have been disconnected safely. Enbridge Gas requires 44 days from time of payment to disconnect natural gas service, so arranging that sign-off early matters. The clearances form covers water, sewer, Enbridge Gas, Hydro Ottawa or Hydro One (ask which one serves the property), Bell, Rogers, and, if applicable, septic decommissioning through the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority and confirmation that a heating oil tank has been emptied. O. Reg. 213/91 s.214(3) requires that all gas, electrical and other services that may endanger people be shut off and disconnected before demolition begins and remain so throughout.

The permit application goes through a My ServiceOttawa account and includes a site plan and the completed clearances form. The City lists a first review of about 10 business days. If the property is inside the Area of Demolition Control, the by-law exempts demolition carried out under a fire or unsafe-building order, so ask the City whether that applies. Ask the City's Building Code Services whether the fire damage affects any part of the application.

A few things to confirm in writing with any contractor before signing: what exactly comes down and where the work stops at grade (foundation removal and backfill are excavation work, covered at excavateottawa.ca), who applies for the permit, who coordinates each utility sign-off, where the debris goes, and what the payment schedule is.

One question for each contractor: does the price assume the fire-damaged material goes to the same place as the rest of the debris?

Q2

What does "down to grade" mean in an Ottawa demolition quote?

"Down to grade" means the contractor removes everything above the ground surface: the structure, the floors, the walls, the roof, and any attached elements like a deck or porch.

What it does not include is just as important. The foundation walls, the basement slab and the footings are not part of a down-to-grade demolition unless the quote says so. If you want those removed and the hole filled and graded, that is excavation work, covered separately at excavateottawa.ca. A demolition quote that says "down to grade" and nothing more stops at the ground surface.

What to check in the quote

Read the scope line carefully and ask the contractor to confirm exactly where the work stops. A few things worth clarifying in writing before you sign:

- Does "down to grade" include the foundation walls, or only what is above them?
- Is the basement slab included, or is slab removal a separate line item?
- What happens to the concrete steps, the front walk, or a detached garage pad?
- Does the price include hauling the debris away, or is that quoted separately?
- Where does the debris go, and is Trail Road tipping included in the price?

The published price range for a whole house down to grade runs about $15,000 to $40,000, or about $5 to $10 per square foot, based on published prices seen October 2026 (Ontario, GTA and Canadian sources; we found no Ottawa-specific published price). Slab removal, foundation removal, backfill, and grading are each priced as extras when they appear in a quote at all.
One thing to have in writing before signing: a line-by-line description of exactly what is included in the scope and where the contractor's work ends, so there is no dispute about what "grade" means on your specific lot.

Q3

Teardown and rebuild in Westboro: what has to happen first?

Before any demolition work starts in Westboro, three things need to be sorted out: the designated substances check, the utility disconnections, and the demolition permit. Heritage and demolition control may also apply, depending on the specific property.

Before you contract with anyone

The City's demolition page says that section 30 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act requires a project owner to identify designated substances on the project and provide a list to prospective contractors before entering into a binding contract. O. Reg. 490/09 lists eleven designated substances, including asbestos, lead, mercury and silica. Health Canada advises hiring a professional to test for asbestos before demolition, and says asbestos was mainly used in buildings before 1990. If a professional finds asbestos, Health Canada says to hire a qualified asbestos removal specialist. That work is handled by an abatement contractor before the demolition crew arrives; more on that at ottawaabatement.com. Ask each contractor you speak with how they handle the designated substances list and whether an abatement contractor is involved.

The City's Demolition Permit Clearances Form requires sign-off from every utility connected to the property: City water, City sewer, Enbridge Gas, Hydro Ottawa or Hydro One (ask which one serves the property), Bell, Rogers, and the home heating fuel confirmation if there is an oil tank. Enbridge Gas requires 44 days from time of payment to disconnect natural gas service, which is the longest published wait, so contact them early. Each utility may charge its own fee. The clearances form goes in with the permit application; the City's first review takes about 10 business days.

Two additional layers may apply in Westboro. Demolition Control By-law 2012-377 covers residential properties within a mapped area of the city; ask the City whether this address is inside that boundary. If it is, and no building permit for the replacement house has been issued yet, the General Manager's approval is needed with conditions, including landscaping the lot and registering an agreement. Separately, ask the City whether the property is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act or sits inside a Heritage Conservation District, both of which require council or municipal approval before demolition.

Before signing anything, confirm in writing:

- what structures come down and exactly where the work stops at grade (foundations, footings and backfill are excavation work, covered at excavateottawa.ca)
- who applies for the demolition permit and who arranges each utility sign-off
- where the debris goes and whether hauling is included in the price
- the designated substances list and how it will be handled

The one question to ask before you sign: does the price assume the demolition control and heritage questions are already answered?

Q4

What should a whole-house demolition quote in Kanata spell out?

A whole-house demolition quote should spell out exactly what comes down, where the work stops, and what happens to everything that comes off the site. Here is what to look for line by line.

The scope should name the building by address and describe what is included: the house structure down to grade, any attached structures such as a porch or deck, and whether the basement slab and foundation walls are in or out. Anything below grade, including breaking out footings, digging, backfill and grading, is excavation work covered at excavateottawa.ca, not demolition. If the quote is silent on the foundation, ask whether it stops at the top of the slab or goes further, and get the answer in writing.

The quote should list who handles each piece of the job before work starts:

- the designated substances assessment, because the City's demolition page says a project owner must identify designated substances under section 30 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and provide the list to prospective contractors before a binding contract is signed. Ask how the contractor handles that list and whether asbestos testing is arranged separately through an abatement contractor.
- utility disconnections for water, sewer, Hydro Ottawa or Hydro One, Enbridge Gas, Bell and Rogers. Enbridge Gas requires 44 days from time of payment to disconnect natural gas service, so ask when that payment is scheduled and who makes it.
- the permit application, naming who applies and who pays the City's fee. For a house in the range of a few thousand square feet, the 2026 City fee is $117 for the first 5,000 square feet of gross floor area, plus $12.75 for each additional 1,000 square feet.
- the site fence, which By-law 2014-220 requires the permit holder to erect before demolition begins.
- debris hauling and disposal, including where the material goes and whether that cost is included or billed separately.

The quote should also state the noise hours the contractor will work within. The City's 3-1-1 page groups demolition with infill projects under the Noise By-law's stricter hours: no equipment before 7 am or after 8 pm on weekdays, and not before 9 am or after 7 pm on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.
Published prices seen October 2026 (Ontario, GTA and Canadian sources; we found no Ottawa-specific published price) put a whole-house demolition at about $15,000 to $40,000, or about $5 to $10 per square foot. What moves that number is the size of the building, whether it is wood-frame or masonry, what is excluded below grade, and whether designated substances need to be removed first by an abatement contractor before the demolition crew arrives.

Under the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, if the quote includes an estimate, the contractor cannot charge more than 10 per cent above that estimate, so the more itemized the quote, the clearer your exposure.

Before you sign, ask the contractor to show you the payment schedule broken into specific milestones, and get every stage of it in writing.

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.