OTTAWA ROOFING PRO

Flat Roofs

EPDM, TPO and modified bitumen roofs on Ottawa garages, additions and flat-roofed homes

5 Expert Answers from Roofing IQ

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Q1

Rooftop solar on an Ottawa flat roof: membrane first?

Membrane first, then solar: what the Code says and what to sort out before you start

The 2024 Ontario Building Code (Div. B, 9.26.1.4.) permits a solar collector system above roofing materials that conform to the Code's material standards. That means the membrane underneath must meet those standards before panels go on top. For a flat roof, the relevant standards are ASTM D4637 for EPDM, ASTM D6878 for TPO, CAN/CGSB-37.54 for PVC, and CGSB 37-GP-56M and CSA A123.23 for modified bitumen. If your existing membrane is aging, damaged or does not meet those standards, replacing it before the array is installed is the right sequence, because pulling panels off later to do membrane work adds cost and complexity.

The minimum slope for a modified bituminous membrane is 1 in 50 under the 2024 Code (Div. B, Table 9.26.3.1.); for built-up roofing without gravel, 1 in 25 to 1 in 2. A roofer can confirm what your roof's slope is and which membrane type suits it.

On permits: a solar collector system with a combined face area of five square metres or more needs a City of Ottawa building permit. For systems under five square metres, we found no City of Ottawa statement either way, so confirm with the City before work starts. For the membrane itself, the City's permit-exemption list names installing asphalt shingles; it says nothing about replacing a flat-roof membrane, so confirm that with the City as well. Heritage-designated properties and properties in a Heritage Conservation District are not covered by any exemption and need City approval before changes.

A fair quote for this project should address these items in writing:

- the membrane: material type and standard it meets, slope, tear-off of the existing membrane, and disposal
- sheathing: price per square foot if rot or damage is found at tear-off (published Ottawa-area quotes show about $3 to $6 per square foot as an extra)
- flashing at the roof edges and any penetrations
- how the racking system attaches and how those penetrations are sealed
- the permit, if one is required, and who pulls it
- WSIB clearance for the roofing crew and whether Working at Heights training is current

For the solar side of the quote, ask separately about the electrical permit and inspection, which is a different process from the building permit.
Ottawa-area published quotes for flat-roof installation run about $6 to $18 per square foot for the membrane work alone; tear-off adds about $1.50 to $3.50 per square foot. Too few published Ottawa figures exist for the solar

racking and installation to quote a range here, so get that in writing from the contractor.

The most useful first call is to the City of Ottawa's Building Code Client Service Centre, before you sign anything with either a roofer or a solar installer, because the permit question covers both the membrane and the array and the answer will shape how both quotes are written.

Q2

Tapered insulation for ponding on an Ottawa flat roof?

Tapered insulation is one way to create positive slope on a flat roof so water moves toward drains or scuppers instead of sitting. The 2024 Ontario Building Code (Div. B, 9.26.3.1.) sets a minimum slope of 1 in 50 for modified bituminous membranes (and 1 in 25 for built-up roofing without gravel), so ask the roofer which slope the proposed membrane needs and how the tapered layout reaches it.

The work involves removing the existing membrane, assessing the deck, installing the tapered insulation boards cut to a slope pattern, and then applying a new membrane that meets the Code's material standards: EPDM to ASTM D4637, TPO to ASTM D6878, PVC to CAN/CGSB-37.54, or modified bitumen to CGSB 37-GP-56M and CSA A123.23. The membrane must also be installed to the manufacturer's written instructions, as required by the 2024 Ontario Building Code (Div. B, 9.26.2.2.). The purpose clause (Div. B, 9.26.1.2.) is clear: the roof shall effectively shed water and prevent moisture from entering the building.

On permit: the City of Ottawa's exemption list names installing asphalt shingles. A flat-roof job, and particularly one that changes the insulation thickness and drainage geometry, is not on that list. Confirm with the City whether a permit is required before work starts. If your building is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act or sits in a Heritage Conservation District, talk to the City's heritage planners as well.

On cost: published Ottawa-area quotes show flat-roof installation at about $6 to $18 per square foot and tear-off at about $1.50 to $3.50 per square foot. We found too few published Ottawa figures for tapered insulation specifically to quote a range, so ask each roofer to break it out as a line item. Roof area, the membrane chosen and any deck repair found once the old system is off all show up in the total.

A complete quote for this job should itemize:

- tear-off and disposal (ask whether the quote covers contractor disposal or whether you arrange it separately through Trail Road at the residential rate)
- deck inspection and any sheathing or deck repair, priced per square foot

- tapered insulation supply and layout
- membrane supply and installation, with the product standard it meets
- flashing at parapets, drains, penetrations and any adjoining walls
- the written warranty, covering both materials and workmanship, with the term stated

Ask the roofer for a current WSIB clearance certificate. The Construction Act requires you to hold back 10 per cent of the price of services and materials as they are supplied; ask a lawyer about release timing on a larger job. After the job, keep the signed contract, the itemized quote, the written warranty, and photos of the roof surface taken before and after the work: those documents are what you have if a dispute or a warranty claim comes up later.

Q3

Repairing a split EPDM seam on an Ottawa garage?

Repairing a split EPDM seam is a targeted repair, and there are too few published Ottawa prices for flat-roof repairs to quote a range. The published $6 to $18 per square foot figure is for a whole new flat roof, not a seam repair. Ask each contractor to give you a written price that breaks out labour, materials and any sheathing or decking work separately.

A roofer will want to know how long the split runs, why it opened, whether water has already worked under the membrane, and whether the decking beneath is soft or rotten. Published Ottawa-area quotes price sheathing replacement as an extra, at about $3 to $6 per square foot. Under the 2024 Ontario Building Code, EPDM must meet ASTM D4637, and the Code requires installation in conformance with the manufacturer's written instructions (Div. B, 9.26.2.2.). Ask which repair materials the membrane maker's instructions call for.

The City of Ottawa's permit exemption names asphalt shingles specifically. We found no City of Ottawa statement that flat-roof membrane repairs are exempt. For a seam repair on an existing EPDM surface, confirm with the City before work starts. If your garage is on a heritage-designated property or in a Heritage Conservation District, talk to the City's heritage planners as well.

Ask the contractor to put in writing:

- The length and location of the seam being repaired
- The repair method and the specific EPDM-compatible materials being used
- How rotten decking, if found, will be priced and approved before work continues

- Disposal of any removed material
- Whether the work carries a written warranty and for how long

You can also search the contractor's WSIB clearance online before work begins; the homeowner exemption does not extend to rental properties.
The single most useful question to ask before signing: if you open the seam and find wet or rotten decking underneath, exactly how will you price that extra work and will you get my approval before proceeding?

The request form on this page sends your job details to Ottawa roofing contractors listed in the Ottawa Construction Network directory.

Q4

Insulating a flat roof during replacement in Ottawa?

A flat-roof replacement is a chance to decide on insulation, and the 2024 Ontario Building Code (Div. B, 9.26.1.2.) requires the roof to effectively shed water and prevent moisture from entering the building. There are too few published Ottawa prices for flat-roof insulation alone to quote a range. Published 2026 prices for a flat roof installed run about $6 to $18 per square foot, with tear-off about $1.50 to $3.50 per square foot; ask each contractor whether insulation is included and to itemize it.

The insulation decision turns on where it sits in the assembly. On a flat roof, insulation can go above the deck or below it in a vented space. The 2024 Ontario Building Code (Div. B, 9.19.1.1.) says that where insulation is placed between a ceiling and the roof sheathing, there must be a ventilated air space allowing movement to the outside, unless it can be shown to be unnecessary. Ask the roofer to explain in writing how the assembly they propose meets the Code.

The membrane itself must meet the standard for the material chosen: EPDM must meet ASTM D4637, TPO must meet ASTM D6878, PVC must meet CAN/CGSB-37.54, and modified bitumen must meet CGSB 37-GP-56M and CSA A123.23, per the 2024 Ontario Building Code. The minimum slope for modified bituminous membranes is 1 in 50 (Table 9.26.3.1.), and the roofer should confirm the existing deck meets that before the new assembly goes down.

On permits: the City of Ottawa's exemption list names installing asphalt shingles; we found no City of Ottawa statement covering flat-roof membrane replacement. Confirm with the City before work starts whether a permit is needed for your specific job.

A fair quote for this work should spell out:

- the membrane product and the standard it meets
- the insulation type, thickness and R-value
- whether the existing deck is included in the price or priced as an extra if rot is found
- tear-off of the existing membrane and disposal
- how the drain, parapet flashing and any penetrations are handled
- what the warranty covers and for how long

Search the roofer's current WSIB clearance online, and ask whether the crew's Working at Heights training under O. Reg. 297/13 is current; that duty sits with the employer, but you can ask.
A line in a flat-roof quote that can hide extra cost is the one that says rotten or wet decking will be priced separately at the time of tear-off, without giving you a per-square-foot rate in writing before work begins.

Q5

Line items an Ottawa flat roof quote should list?

What a flat-roof quote should itemise

A fair quote for an Ottawa flat roof breaks the job into distinct line items so you can compare bids and spot what is missing. Here is what to look for.

Tear-off and disposal. The quote should state the number of existing membrane layers being removed and the cost to remove them. Published Ottawa-area prices for flat-roof tear-off run about $1.50 to $3.50 per square foot. Disposal should be a named line, not buried in a general labour charge, since roofers arrange their own disposal.

Deck inspection and sheathing repairs. Once the old membrane is off, the crew will find any soft or rotten sections. The quote should name a per-square-foot rate for sheathing replacement rather than leaving it open-ended. Published Ottawa-area figures for sheathing run about $3 to $6 per square foot. Ask that this line show the rate and a not-to-exceed cap, or ask for a written change-order process.

New membrane, fully specified. The quote should name the membrane type (EPDM, TPO, PVC, modified bitumen), the thickness, and the installation method (fully adhered, mechanically fastened, ballasted). The 2024 Ontario Building Code names the standard each membrane must meet (EPDM ASTM D4637, TPO ASTM D6878, PVC CAN/CGSB-37.54, modified bitumen CGSB 37-GP-56M and CSA A123.23) and requires installation to the manufacturer's written instructions (Div. B, 9.26.2.2.). A quote that says only "flat roof membrane" gives you nothing to hold the contractor to.

Insulation and slope correction. Ask whether tapered insulation is included or whether the existing deck slope already drains; the Code sets a minimum slope of 1 in 50 for modified bituminous membranes (Table 9.26.3.1.). This should be a separate line.

Flashing and penetrations. Every parapet wall, drain, vent stack, HVAC curb and skylight curb needs flashing. The Code requires roofing, including flashing, to shed water and keep water out of the building (Div. B, 9.26.1.2.). Each penetration type should appear in the quote, not grouped as "miscellaneous flashing".

Drains and drainage. The quote should confirm whether existing drains are being cleaned, reseated or replaced, and whether scuppers or overflow drains are part of the scope.

Warranty terms in writing. Ask for the membrane manufacturer's warranty period and the contractor's workmanship warranty as separate written documents, not a verbal promise.

Permit. Replacing a flat-roof membrane is not on the City of Ottawa's list of permit-exempt projects (that list names installing asphalt shingles). Before work starts, confirm with the City of Ottawa's Building Code Client Service Centre whether a permit is needed for your specific job, because the answer can depend on whether any structural work is involved.

Taxes. Under the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, a contract signed at your home must include an itemized list of prices including taxes.

The Construction Act requires an owner to hold back 10 per cent of the price as work is supplied; ask a lawyer about release timing on a larger job.

The most useful first call is to the City of Ottawa's Building Code Client Service Centre, before you sign anything, because the City's exemption names asphalt shingles only and the permit question on a flat roof depends on your specific job.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Roofing Pro. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa or your own municipality) before starting any roofing project, and do not go on a roof yourself. Roofing work in Ontario must meet the 2024 Ontario Building Code (O. Reg. 163/24). Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawaroofingpro.ca** for the latest answers.