

OTTAWA GARAGES

Garage Insulation & Heating

Insulation, heating, and climate control for Ottawa
garages

18 Expert Answers from Garage IQ

ottawagarages.com/construction-brain

Table of Contents

1. How much does it cost to add blown-in insulation to my garage attic space in Ottawa?
2. Is it worth insulating a garage that I only use for parking and storage in Ottawa?
3. Is a ductless mini-split heat pump efficient enough to heat a garage through an Ottawa winter?
4. How much does a ceiling-mounted radiant tube heater cost for a three-car garage in Ottawa?
5. How much does it cost to insulate the garage ceiling to stop heat from escaping the rooms above it in Ottawa?
6. What's the best way to insulate between my attached garage and the living space inside the house?
7. Can I insulate a garage with a cathedral ceiling or vaulted roof, and how does that work?
8. What are my options for insulating garage windows, and is it worth replacing them in Ottawa?
9. Why am I getting condensation and moisture on the walls and ceiling of my heated garage in Ottawa?
10. How much does a propane garage heater cost compared to natural gas in Ottawa, and which is the better choice?
11. Should I use electric baseboards or a forced air heater to heat my garage in Ottawa?
12. How much does it cost to add insulation to an existing garage door in Ottawa, and does it actually make a difference?
13. Is there a crawl space under my garage that needs insulation, and how would that work?
14. How important is air sealing before insulating my garage, and what does it cost to do both in Ottawa?
15. Can I insulate my own garage in Ottawa or do I need to hire a contractor?
16. What are the most common insulation mistakes people make in Ottawa garages?
17. What happens when you skip the vapour barrier in an Ottawa garage?
18. Is spray foam or blown-in insulation better for garage walls in Ottawa and what does each cost?

Q1

How much does it cost to add blown-in insulation to my garage attic space in Ottawa?

Adding blown-in insulation to your garage attic space in Ottawa typically costs \$2.50 to \$4.50 per square foot, meaning a standard two-car garage (24x24 feet) would run \$1,440 to \$2,600 for professional installation. This price includes the insulation material and labour but assumes you already have adequate attic access and ventilation in place.

The cost matters significantly in Ottawa because heating an uninsulated garage through our brutal winters is extremely expensive. Without proper attic insulation, heated air rises and escapes directly through the roof, forcing your heating system to work constantly against outdoor temperatures that regularly hit -25°C or colder. The return on investment for garage attic insulation in Ottawa is typically 3 to 5 years through reduced heating costs, making it one of the most cost-effective garage upgrades you can make.

Several factors affect the final price in Ottawa. The type of blown-in insulation impacts cost — cellulose runs \$2.50 to \$3.50 per square foot and offers good performance, while fibreglass blown-in costs \$3.00 to \$4.50 per square foot and resists moisture better in our humid summers. The target R-value also affects pricing — achieving R-32 (minimum recommended for heated Ottawa garages) requires about 10 inches of cellulose or 12 inches of fibreglass. If your garage lacks proper attic access, adding a scuttle hole or pull-down stairs adds \$300 to \$800 to the project cost.

Important considerations for Ottawa installations: Ensure adequate attic ventilation exists before adding insulation — soffit and ridge vents prevent ice dam formation during our freeze-thaw cycles. The insulation contractor should also air-seal any gaps around electrical fixtures, plumbing penetrations, or the garage door header before blowing in material, as air leaks dramatically reduce insulation effectiveness. Many Ottawa contractors offer package deals that include air sealing and blown-in insulation for \$4.00 to \$6.00 per square foot.

If you're planning to heat your garage or already struggle with high heating costs, you can browse garage insulation contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to compare local specialists who understand our climate requirements and can ensure proper installation for maximum energy savings.

Q2

Is it worth insulating a garage that I only use for parking and storage in Ottawa?

Yes, insulating a garage in Ottawa is worth considering even for parking and storage, but the value depends on whether you heat the space and your specific priorities. Without heating, insulation provides modest benefits like preventing extreme temperature swings that can damage stored items and making the space more comfortable for brief winter tasks.

The real value of garage insulation in Ottawa comes when you add heat to the space. An uninsulated garage in January will hover around -20°C , making it brutal for any winter maintenance, seasonal storage access, or quick repairs. With proper insulation and a modest heating system, you can maintain the garage at $5\text{-}10^{\circ}\text{C}$ for minimal cost, which keeps vehicles easier to start, prevents freezing of stored liquids, and makes the space usable year-round. This temperature also reduces the thermal shock on your vehicle when transitioning from -25°C outdoor air to a slightly warmer garage.

For walls and ceiling, you're looking at R-20 walls and R-32 ceiling insulation to make heating economical. Fibreglass batt insulation runs \$3,000 to \$6,000 for a typical two-car garage, while spray foam costs \$8,000 to \$12,000 but provides superior air sealing. The garage door is equally important — upgrading to an R-16 to R-18 insulated steel door costs \$1,200 to \$2,500 but eliminates the largest thermal weak point.

Important considerations: Insulation without heating provides limited benefit in Ottawa's extreme climate. If you do insulate, ensure proper vapour barrier installation to prevent moisture problems. Also consider that an insulated, heated garage significantly increases your home's value and functionality.

If you're planning to eventually use the garage as workshop space or want the flexibility to heat it occasionally, insulating during construction or renovation is much more cost-effective than retrofitting later. You can browse garage insulation contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to get quotes for your specific situation.

Q3

Is a ductless mini-split heat pump efficient enough to heat a garage through an Ottawa winter?

A ductless mini-split heat pump can absolutely heat a garage through an Ottawa winter, but its efficiency depends heavily on the garage's insulation level and your heating expectations. Modern cold-climate mini-splits maintain heating capacity down to -25°C or lower, which covers most Ottawa winter conditions, though efficiency drops as temperatures fall below -15°C .

The key factor is insulation — a well-insulated garage with R-20 walls and R-32 ceiling will allow a mini-split to operate efficiently even during Ottawa's coldest snaps. However, an uninsulated or poorly insulated garage will force the unit to work constantly against heat loss through every surface, driving up electricity costs and potentially overwhelming the system during extreme cold. Ottawa's temperature swings from -30°C to +35°C also mean you'll get excellent cooling performance in summer, making a mini-split one of the few garage heating options that provides year-round climate control.

Mini-split installation costs in Ottawa run \$3,500 to \$6,000 for a garage-appropriate unit, compared to \$1,500 to \$3,500 for a natural gas unit heater. Operating costs favor gas heating during the coldest months, but the mini-split's cooling capability and precise temperature control often justify the higher upfront investment. The units also operate quietly and don't require gas lines or combustion air considerations.

One important consideration is backup heating for extreme weather events when temperatures drop below the unit's effective range for extended periods. Many Ottawa garage owners pair a mini-split with a small electric heater for those rare but inevitable -35°C stretches.

If you're planning a garage heating upgrade, you can browse experienced HVAC contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to get proper sizing calculations and installation quotes for your specific garage.

Q4

How much does a ceiling-mounted radiant tube heater cost for a three-car garage in Ottawa?

A ceiling-mounted radiant tube heater for a three-car garage in Ottawa typically costs \$2,500 to \$5,000 installed, depending on the BTU capacity needed and whether you choose a single large unit or multiple smaller units. For a standard three-car garage (approximately 900 to 1,200 square feet), you'll likely need 45,000 to 75,000 BTU capacity to handle Ottawa's extreme winter temperatures effectively.

Radiant tube heaters are an excellent choice for larger Ottawa garages because they heat objects and people directly rather than trying to warm all the air in the space. This makes them particularly efficient in drafty or uninsulated garages where traditional forced-air heaters struggle. The radiant heat feels comfortable even when the ambient air temperature is cool, and these units reach full heat output within minutes rather than the 20-30 minutes required for a space to warm up with conventional heaters.

For a three-car garage, you have two main options: a single 60,000-75,000 BTU unit (\$1,800 to \$3,200 for the heater plus \$700 to \$1,200 installation) or two smaller 30,000-40,000 BTU units (\$1,200 to \$2,000 each plus \$500 to \$800 installation per unit). Multiple smaller units provide more even heat distribution and allow you to heat only the section of the garage you're using. Popular models include Modine Hot Dawg and Reznor units, both engineered for Canadian conditions.

Installation requires a licensed gas technician and electrical connections for the blower motor and controls. The units mount 8-10 feet above floor level and need proper venting through the roof or wall. Factor in \$300 to \$600 for gas line extension if your garage doesn't already have natural gas service. These heaters work exceptionally well in Ottawa's climate and can maintain comfortable working temperatures even when it's -30°C outside.

When you're ready to get quotes for installation, you can browse gas heating contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network directory to compare local professionals experienced with radiant tube heater installation.

Q5

How much does it cost to insulate the garage ceiling to stop heat from escaping the rooms above it in Ottawa?

If you have living space above your garage, an uninsulated or poorly insulated garage ceiling is one of the biggest energy drains in an Ottawa home. That floor assembly between the garage and the room above is a direct pathway for heat loss, and during our winters where temperatures regularly sit at minus twenty or colder for weeks at a time,

you can lose a remarkable amount of energy through that surface. People often notice the room above the garage is always the coldest in the house, and insulating the garage ceiling is usually the single most effective fix.

For a standard two-car garage ceiling in Ottawa, expect to spend between \$2,500 and \$5,500 depending on the insulation method you choose and the complexity of the job. If the ceiling is open with exposed joists, batt insulation like R-24 or R-28 mineral wool fitted snugly between the joists is the most straightforward approach and runs on the lower end of that range. If you want higher performance, having closed-cell spray foam applied to the underside of the subfloor above gives you both insulation and an air barrier in one step, though it typically costs \$4,000 to \$5,500 for a full two-car garage ceiling. The spray foam route is especially worthwhile if there are a lot of penetrations like wiring, plumbing, or ductwork running through the joist bays, because batts alone leave gaps around those obstacles.

One thing that gets overlooked is that the rim joist area where the garage ceiling meets the exterior walls is a massive source of air leakage. A good installer will pay special attention to sealing those rim joists, either with spray foam or with rigid foam board cut to fit and sealed with caulk. Without addressing those edges, even the best ceiling insulation underperforms because cold air sneaks in around the perimeter.

Ottawa building code requires a minimum of R-31 for the ceiling assembly between a garage and living space, and if you are doing a renovation that requires a permit, the inspector will check for that value. Many contractors recommend exceeding that minimum given our climate zone, and going to R-40 in the ceiling is not uncommon for homeowners who want to really solve the cold floor problem upstairs.

You should also know that fire separation requirements apply to the garage ceiling. The Ontario Building Code requires at least a 45-minute fire separation between an attached garage and living space, which typically means 5/8-inch Type X drywall on the garage side. If your garage ceiling is currently unfinished, the insulation project will also need to include that drywall, which adds roughly \$1,200 to \$2,000 to the total cost but is not optional from a code standpoint.

Most Ottawa insulation contractors can complete a garage ceiling job in one to two days. The payoff is immediate since that perpetually cold bedroom or office above the garage becomes comfortable, and you will see a noticeable difference in your heating bills through the winter months.

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

- Homeupgraders
- RenoMotion Inc.

- Lifetime Ottawa Garage Door Service
- Dreamwood Construction & Renovations
- Valcor Construction

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q6

What's the best way to insulate between my attached garage and the living space inside the house?

The shared wall between an attached garage and your living space is a critical barrier that serves double duty in Ottawa homes. It needs to block heat transfer so your house stays warm efficiently, and it needs to prevent garage air, including vehicle exhaust, stored chemical fumes, and carbon monoxide, from migrating into your living areas. Getting this wall right matters more than most people realize.

The Ontario Building Code requires a continuous air barrier and a minimum fire separation of 45 minutes on the garage side of any shared wall with living space. In practice, this means 5/8-inch Type X drywall on the garage side with all joints taped and sealed, and insulation in the wall cavity. For a standard 2x4 wall, R-14 batt insulation is the minimum you would typically install, but many Ottawa contractors now frame this wall with 2x6 studs or add rigid foam to the garage side to achieve R-20 or higher, which makes a real difference when it is minus twenty-five outside.

The air sealing component is arguably more important than the insulation value itself. Warm, moist air from inside the house will try to migrate through that wall into the cold garage, and if it finds gaps around electrical boxes, plumbing penetrations, or poorly sealed framing connections, you get both energy loss and potential moisture problems inside the wall cavity. Every electrical outlet and switch on the shared wall should have a foam gasket behind the cover plate, and any penetrations through the framing need to be sealed with fire-rated caulk or spray foam.

Choosing the Right Insulation Material

For new construction or a full gut renovation where the wall cavities are open, mineral wool batts are an excellent choice for this application. They are naturally fire resistant, which complements the fire separation requirement, they do not absorb moisture, and they provide good sound dampening so you hear less noise from the garage. Fibreglass batts work too but need to be installed carefully with no compression or gaps to perform at their rated value.

If you are retrofitting an existing wall without removing the drywall, dense-pack cellulose blown into the wall cavities through small holes is effective and relatively affordable. An experienced installer drills holes at the top of each stud bay, fills from bottom to top until the cavity is completely packed, then patches the holes. This approach typically costs \$1,500 to \$3,000 for the shared wall of a two-car attached garage.

Do not forget the door between the garage and the house. That door should be solid core, properly weatherstripped on all four sides including the threshold, and ideally have a self-closing hinge or spring so it never gets left open accidentally. A hollow-core interior door with daylight visible around the edges defeats much of the work you put into insulating and air sealing the rest of that wall.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Dreamwood Construction & Renovations
- Floor-2-Wall Inc
- Titley Construction

[View all contractors ?](#)

Can I insulate a garage with a cathedral ceiling or vaulted roof, and how does that work?

Cathedral or vaulted ceilings in garages are common in Ottawa, especially in detached garages and carriage houses where the roofline comes right down to the walls without a flat ceiling or attic space above. Insulating these is absolutely doable, but it requires more careful planning than a standard flat ceiling because you are working within the rafter cavity and you need to manage both thermal performance and moisture control within that limited space.

The fundamental challenge is that a cathedral ceiling has no attic for ventilation or for piling on loose-fill insulation. Everything has to fit between the rafters or be added to the underside of them, and you still need to manage moisture so condensation does not rot the roof sheathing from the inside. In Ottawa's climate, where the temperature difference between a heated garage interior and the outside air can be fifty degrees or more, moisture management in a cathedral ceiling assembly is critical.

There are two main approaches that work well in our climate. The first is a vented cathedral ceiling, where you maintain a continuous two-inch air gap between the top of the insulation and the underside of the roof sheathing, with soffit vents at the bottom and a ridge vent at the top. Rigid foam or cardboard baffles are stapled to the underside of the sheathing in each rafter bay to maintain that ventilation channel, and then you fill the remaining depth with insulation. With standard 2x8 rafters, after the ventilation channel you have about four inches left for insulation, which only gets you to around R-14 with batts. That is often not enough for a heated garage in Ottawa, so many people sister additional lumber onto the rafters to deepen the cavity, or add rigid foam board to the underside of the rafters before installing the finished ceiling.

The second approach is an unvented cathedral ceiling using closed-cell spray foam applied directly to the underside of the roof sheathing. The spray foam acts as both the insulation and the air and vapour barrier, eliminating the need for a ventilation channel and allowing you to use the full rafter depth for insulation. In a 2x8 rafter bay, you can get about five and a half inches of closed-cell spray foam, which delivers roughly R-33. You can then add batt insulation below the spray foam to bump the total value higher before installing the ceiling finish. This approach is more expensive but gives you the best performance in the least amount of space.

Ottawa's building code does not specify a minimum insulation value for a detached garage ceiling since detached garages are not typically conditioned space in the code's eyes. However, if you are heating the garage and want the insulation to actually work, targeting R-30 to R-40 is reasonable for our climate. For an attached garage with living space above, the code requirements for the floor assembly above take precedence.

One practical note about cathedral ceiling garages: because heat rises and collects at the peak of the vault, you will notice the upper portion of the garage feels significantly warmer than the lower walls. A ceiling fan set to run in reverse at low speed helps push that warm air back down and makes the space more comfortable without adding heating cost.

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

- 613Bins
- JC Carpentry
- ALTIOR CONSTRUCTION
- Regimbal
- Demontigny Carpentry

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q8

What are my options for insulating garage windows, and is it worth replacing them in Ottawa?

Garage windows are often the weakest link in an otherwise decent building envelope, and in Ottawa's climate they deserve attention if you are heating your garage or trying to keep it above freezing through the winter. Most builder-grade garage windows are single-pane units or low-end double-pane units that were chosen for cost rather than performance, and after fifteen or twenty years of Ottawa freeze-thaw cycles, the seals on double-pane units frequently fail and you lose whatever insulating value they originally had.

If your garage windows are single-pane, the most cost-effective improvement is adding interior storm window panels. Companies make clear acrylic or polycarbonate panels that mount to the interior window frame with magnetic strips or compression clips, creating a dead air space between the existing glass and the panel. This effectively turns a single-pane window into a double-pane setup for a fraction of the cost of replacement. For a typical garage window that measures two feet by three feet, an interior storm panel costs between \$80 and \$150 and takes about fifteen minutes to install. They are removable in summer if you want to open the windows for ventilation.

Window insulation film is the budget option and works surprisingly well for the cost. The shrink-fit film kits that you apply with double-sided tape and then heat with a hair dryer to pull tight create an air gap similar to the storm panels. A kit that covers three or four garage windows costs around \$25 to \$40. The downside is that the film needs to be replaced each season and looks less polished than rigid panels, but for a garage where aesthetics are secondary, it is hard to beat the value.

If your windows are truly in poor shape with cracked glass, rotted frames, or broken hardware, replacement makes more sense than trying to improve what is there. A quality double-pane vinyl window with a low-E coating and argon gas fill for a standard garage window opening costs \$350 to \$600 installed in Ottawa. If you have four windows, you are looking at \$1,400 to \$2,400 total, which is a meaningful investment but one that pays back over time through reduced heat loss and also makes the garage significantly more comfortable to work in.

For garages where the windows do not need to open, such as high transom windows that are there only for natural light, fixed insulated glass units are the most energy-efficient option. Fixed windows have no operable hardware that can develop air leaks over time, and they can be sealed tightly into the rough opening with spray foam for an excellent air barrier.

Do not overlook the weatherstripping and caulking around your existing windows regardless of whether you are replacing them or adding storm panels. Run your hand around the perimeter of each window on a cold windy day and you will often feel distinct drafts where the caulk has cracked or pulled away from the frame. A tube of exterior-grade silicone caulk and fifteen minutes per window can make a noticeable difference for almost no cost. On the interior side, foam backer rod pressed into any gaps between the window frame and the rough opening, followed by low-expansion spray foam, stops air infiltration through the wall assembly around the window.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Pure Flow Water Solutions inc.
- Somar Contracting Inc.
- Best Hand2Hand moving company

[View all contractors ?](#)

Why am I getting condensation and moisture on the walls and ceiling of my heated garage in Ottawa?

Condensation in a heated Ottawa garage is one of the most common complaints homeowners run into, and it can range from a mild nuisance with foggy windows to a serious problem with water dripping from the ceiling, rust forming on tools and vehicles, and eventually mould growing on walls and stored items. Understanding why it happens is the key to fixing it, and the explanation comes down to basic physics combined with some garage-specific factors.

When you heat a garage, you raise the air temperature, and warm air can hold more moisture than cold air. The problem is that garages have enormous sources of moisture that living spaces do not. In winter, your vehicle brings in snow and ice on the undercarriage, wheel wells, and body panels every time you pull in. A typical car can carry twenty to thirty litres of snow and slush into the garage on a bad Ottawa winter day. As the garage warms up, all of that melts and evaporates into the air. That moisture-laden warm air then contacts cold surfaces like uninsulated walls, the garage door, window glass, or the concrete floor, and the water vapour condenses back into liquid water on those surfaces. This is exactly the same process that puts water droplets on a cold glass of water in summer, just happening on a larger scale across your garage.

The first and most important step to controlling condensation is managing the moisture at its source. If you park vehicles inside, consider letting them drip dry outside for a few minutes before pulling into the garage, or installing a floor drain so meltwater can leave rather than evaporate. Some Ottawa homeowners use containment mats under their vehicles that collect the meltwater and can be drained or mopped periodically.

Ventilation is the second essential piece. A heated garage needs controlled air exchange to remove moisture-laden air and replace it with drier outside air. In winter, cold outside air is actually very dry once you account for relative humidity at those temperatures. A small exhaust fan, even a bathroom-style fan rated at 80 to 100 CFM, running on a timer or humidistat can make a dramatic difference. Mount it high on the wall where warm moist air accumulates, and provide a makeup air inlet low on the opposite wall. A humidistat-controlled fan is ideal because it only runs when the moisture level actually warrants it.

Insulation plays a critical role too, but it has to be done correctly or it can make condensation worse. When you insulate the walls and ceiling, you raise the surface temperature of those materials so they stay above the dew point and condensation does not form on them. However, if you insulate without installing a proper vapour barrier on the warm side of the insulation, moisture from the garage air migrates into the insulation and condenses inside the wall cavity where you cannot see it. In Ottawa's climate, a six-mil polyethylene vapour barrier on the garage interior side of the wall insulation is standard practice, and all seams should be overlapped and taped.

The garage door itself is usually the biggest condensation surface because it is the largest uninsulated area in the space. Even with an insulated garage door, the R-value is modest compared to the walls, and the metal surface temperature drops quickly. There is no perfect solution for garage door condensation other than raising the overall insulation level of the door and ensuring the garage is not excessively humid. Running a dehumidifier is an option but adds to your electricity costs, and most people find that addressing the moisture sources and adding ventilation solves the problem without needing a dehumidifier running all winter.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- RenoMotion Inc.
- BFI Renovations
- Rrenovatio
- Epoxy Academy

[View all contractors ?](#)

How much does a propane garage heater cost compared to natural gas in Ottawa, and which is the better choice?

Choosing between propane and natural gas for heating an Ottawa garage is a decision that mostly comes down to what fuel is available at your property and what the installation costs look like, because once you get past those two factors, the heaters themselves perform very similarly. Both fuels burn cleanly, both are available in unit heaters and tube heaters sized appropriately for garages, and both deliver heat quickly and efficiently.

If your home already has a natural gas connection from Enbridge, extending a gas line to the garage is almost always the better long-term choice. The installation cost to run a new gas line from your existing meter to a detached or attached garage typically ranges from \$1,500 to \$3,500 in Ottawa, depending on the distance, whether the line needs to be trenched underground to a detached garage, and the size of the line required. The heater unit itself, a ceiling-mounted forced-air unit heater in the 30,000 to 60,000 BTU range suitable for a two-car garage, costs \$800 to \$1,800 for the unit plus \$500 to \$1,000 for installation including venting. So your total all-in cost for a natural gas garage heater in Ottawa is typically \$2,800 to \$6,300.

Propane makes sense when natural gas is not available at the property, which is common in rural areas around Ottawa including parts of Kanata South, Manotick, Vars, Cumberland, and Navan. A propane unit heater costs roughly the same as its natural gas equivalent, often the identical unit with a different orifice, so \$800 to \$1,800 for the heater and \$500 to \$1,000 for installation. However, you also need a propane tank, which you can either rent from your propane supplier for \$75 to \$150 per year or purchase outright for \$800 to \$2,500 depending on the size. A 420-pound tank is the most common size for garage heating and provides enough fuel to heat a two-car garage through an Ottawa winter with moderate use.

The ongoing fuel costs are where natural gas has a clear advantage. Natural gas in Ottawa through Enbridge costs roughly \$0.30 to \$0.35 per cubic metre at current rates, while propane runs \$0.75 to \$0.95 per litre depending on your supplier and whether you lock in a fixed rate or float with the market. When you convert those to cost per BTU of heat delivered, natural gas typically costs about forty to fifty percent less than propane for the same amount of heat output. For a garage that you heat regularly through the winter, that difference adds up to several hundred dollars per year.

Installation Considerations

Both propane and natural gas heaters require proper venting to the exterior, and in Ottawa this installation must be done by a licensed gas fitter. The Technical Standards and Safety Authority oversees gas installations in Ontario, and your installer should provide you with a certificate of compliance when the job is complete. The heater must be mounted with adequate clearance from combustible materials, and in a garage where vehicles are present, the

burner must be at least eighteen inches above floor level to stay above the zone where gasoline vapours could accumulate.

Ventilation is another requirement regardless of fuel type. Any fuel-burning heater in a garage needs combustion air supply, either from a dedicated outside air intake ducted to the heater or from the garage space itself if the garage has sufficient air volume and natural air leakage. Your installer will calculate the combustion air requirements based on the heater's BTU input and the garage's volume.

One advantage propane does have is portability and independence from utility infrastructure. If you ever move the heater or if the garage is in a location where trenching a gas line would be prohibitively expensive, propane gives you that flexibility. But for most Ottawa homeowners with existing natural gas service, extending the line to the garage and running natural gas is the more economical choice over the life of the heater.

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- RenoMotion Inc.
- ARTEXPRO Tile & Finishes
- Titley Construction
- Ottawa Garage Doors & Openers

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q11

Should I use electric baseboards or a forced air heater to heat my garage in Ottawa?

Electric baseboards and forced air heaters represent two fundamentally different approaches to heating an Ottawa garage, and each has clear strengths and weaknesses depending on how you use the space. The right choice depends on whether you need the garage heated continuously or just occasionally, how quickly you need it to warm up, and how much you are willing to spend on electricity through the winter.

Electric baseboard heaters are simple, silent, and inexpensive to install. A pair of 1,500-watt baseboard units with a wall thermostat can be installed in a two-car garage for \$600 to \$1,200 total including the electrical work, and there

is essentially no maintenance required. They provide gentle, even heat with no moving parts and no noise, which is pleasant if you spend extended time in the garage working on projects. However, baseboards heat a space slowly because they rely on natural convection, with warm air rising from the heater and gradually circulating through the room. In a two-car garage that has cooled to minus fifteen overnight, baseboard heaters can take two to three hours to bring the temperature up to a comfortable working level, and during that entire warm-up period they are drawing maximum power.

A forced air electric heater, sometimes called a garage unit heater or a fan-forced heater, pushes warm air directly into the space using a built-in fan. These units mount on the wall or ceiling, typically draw 4,000 to 7,500 watts, and can warm a two-car garage much faster than baseboards because they actively circulate the air. A quality 240-volt garage unit heater costs \$300 to \$700 for the unit, and installation with a dedicated circuit runs \$400 to \$800, so total installed cost is \$700 to \$1,500. The trade-off is fan noise, which ranges from a moderate hum to quite loud depending on the model.

The operating cost is where both electric options face a challenge in Ottawa. Ontario electricity rates through Hydro Ottawa run approximately \$0.10 to \$0.17 per kilowatt-hour depending on time of use, and heating a two-car garage electrically is not cheap. If you keep the garage at ten degrees Celsius through the winter, a reasonable target for preventing freezing and keeping it usable, expect to add \$150 to \$300 per month to your electricity bill depending on the garage's insulation level and how cold the winter is. If you heat it to a comfortable eighteen or twenty degrees for regular workshop use, that number can climb to \$300 to \$500 per month.

For garages that are only used occasionally, a forced air heater with a programmable thermostat or a WiFi thermostat that you can trigger from your phone before heading out to the garage is the most practical electric option. You set it to maintain just above freezing when you are not using the space, then bump it up an hour before you plan to work out there. The forced air circulation gets the temperature up relatively quickly without running at full power around the clock.

For garages that you want to keep warm continuously, such as a workshop you use daily or a space with plumbing that cannot be allowed to freeze, the monthly electricity costs often push homeowners toward natural gas or propane heating instead. A natural gas unit heater delivering the same BTU output costs roughly forty to sixty percent less to operate than electric resistance heating at current Ottawa utility rates.

One scenario where electric baseboards make excellent sense is as supplementary heat in an attached garage that already benefits from some heat transfer through the shared wall with the house. If the garage naturally sits at five or six degrees in winter due to that shared wall, baseboards only need to add a few degrees to keep the space at ten, and the electricity cost is modest. Adding a forced air gas heater for that small temperature lift would be overkill on the installation side.

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Timely Touchups Construction
- ALM Construction & Landscaping Inc.
- Ottawa Integrated Security

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q12

How much does it cost to add insulation to an existing garage door in Ottawa, and does it actually make a difference?

Adding insulation to an existing garage door is one of the most popular garage improvement projects in Ottawa, and for good reason. The garage door is by far the largest opening in the building envelope, typically sixteen feet wide by seven or eight feet tall for a double door, and an uninsulated steel door has almost no thermal resistance. On a cold January night in Ottawa, that door is essentially a giant metal panel at the same temperature as the outside air, radiating cold into the space and making it nearly impossible to maintain any warmth.

Retrofit garage door insulation kits are widely available and cost between \$100 and \$250 for a standard two-car door. These kits typically include pre-cut expanded polystyrene or polyisocyanurate foam panels that friction-fit or adhesive-mount into each panel section of the door. Installation is straightforward and takes two to four hours for a homeowner comfortable with basic tools. The panels snap or press into the recessed areas of each door section, and the better kits include adhesive retaining clips that hold the panels securely so they do not fall out when the door operates.

The R-value you gain depends on the kit and the foam thickness. Most retrofit kits add R-4 to R-8 to the door, which does not sound like much compared to the R-20 or R-24 in your walls, but the improvement is meaningful because you are going from essentially R-0 to something. That jump from no insulation to even modest insulation makes a bigger practical difference than adding the same R-value on top of an already insulated surface.

Does it actually make a difference in Ottawa conditions? Yes, measurably so. Homeowners who insulate an uninsulated garage door typically report that the garage temperature stays five to ten degrees warmer than outside

temperature on cold nights, compared to roughly matching outside temperature before insulation. If you are heating the garage, the heater cycles less frequently and the space holds temperature much longer after the heater shuts off. If you are not heating the garage but want to keep it above freezing for stored items or plumbing, the insulated door combined with even modest heat gain from an attached house can often keep the space above zero through most Ottawa winters.

There are a few practical considerations with retrofit insulation. First, the added weight of the foam panels changes the door's balance. Most modern garage doors are counterbalanced with torsion springs, and adding twenty to forty pounds of insulation can make the door feel heavier to the opener and may cause it to not stay open when lifted manually. In many cases the springs need a minor adjustment, which is a job for a garage door technician since torsion springs are under extreme tension and dangerous to adjust without proper tools and knowledge. Budget \$100 to \$200 for a spring adjustment if needed.

Second, the weatherstripping around the door perimeter matters as much as the insulation in the panels. Cold air blowing in through gaps around the edges of the door bypasses whatever insulation you have added to the panels themselves. Replace the bottom seal if it is cracked or compressed, and check the side and top weatherstripping for gaps. A complete weatherstrip replacement for a two-car garage door costs \$50 to \$150 in materials.

If your existing door is severely dented, rusted, or the sections are warped enough that weatherstripping cannot seal the gaps, a full door replacement with a factory-insulated door may be a better investment than retrofitting the old one. A new insulated steel garage door with polyurethane foam core delivering R-12 to R-18 costs \$1,200 to \$2,500 installed for a standard two-car opening in Ottawa, and it will outperform any retrofit kit both thermally and in terms of air sealing.

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

- Homeupgraders
- RenoMotion Inc.
- The Granite shop
- Callandgone
- Eastern Residential Solution

[View all contractors ?](#)

Is there a crawl space under my garage that needs insulation, and how would that work?

Crawl spaces under garages are not as common as crawl spaces under houses, but they do exist in Ottawa, particularly in homes built on sloped lots where the garage is at a different elevation than the rest of the foundation, or in older properties where the garage was added after the original house was built and sits on a shallow foundation rather than a full slab on grade. If your garage floor feels bitterly cold in winter even when the space is heated, or if you can access an area beneath the garage slab through a hatch or from an adjacent basement area, you may have a crawl space that is contributing to heat loss.

The approach to insulating a garage crawl space follows the same principles as insulating any crawl space in Ottawa, with a couple of garage-specific considerations. You have two options: insulate the crawl space walls and treat it as a semi-conditioned space, or insulate the underside of the garage floor and leave the crawl space cold. In most cases, insulating the crawl space walls is the preferred method because it is more effective and easier to do properly.

To insulate the crawl space walls, you would apply rigid foam insulation board, typically two inches of extruded polystyrene giving you R-10, directly to the interior face of the foundation walls. The foam is adhered with construction adhesive and mechanically fastened, and all seams are taped with sheathing tape. The foam should extend from the top of the foundation wall all the way down to the footing, and then at least two feet horizontally across the floor to capture the heat that the surrounding soil provides. A six-mil polyethylene vapour barrier covers the entire crawl space floor, lapped up the walls behind the foam and sealed, to prevent ground moisture from entering the space.

The garage-specific complication is moisture from vehicles. If any water from the garage floor above drains or seeps into the crawl space, you need to address that before insulating. This might mean sealing cracks in the garage slab, adding or improving the floor drain, or ensuring that the crawl space has its own sump pit if water intrusion is a recurring issue. Insulating over a wet crawl space traps moisture and creates conditions for mould and wood rot that can compromise the structural framing.

If the crawl space is too shallow to work in comfortably, which is anything under about eighteen inches of clearance, insulating becomes significantly more difficult and expensive because it essentially requires someone to work lying down in a confined space. In those cases, some contractors will blow loose-fill insulation into the space through access holes, or spray foam the walls and floor from the access point using extended applicator hoses. These low-clearance jobs cost more per square foot due to the difficult working conditions, so expect to pay a premium of thirty to fifty percent over standard crawl space insulation pricing.

For a typical Ottawa garage crawl space with reasonable access, professional insulation including the vapour barrier and rigid foam on the walls runs \$2,000 to \$4,500 depending on the size and condition of the space. This is a job where professional installation is strongly recommended because crawl spaces involve working in confined areas with potential moisture issues, and getting the vapour barrier details wrong can cause more problems than leaving the space uninsulated.

After insulating, the crawl space should have some connection to the heated space above it, either through intentional vents in the garage floor or through natural air movement around the perimeter, so that a small amount of heat keeps the space above freezing and prevents the conditions that lead to frost heave under the garage foundation. A fully sealed and insulated crawl space that receives no heat at all can actually cause foundation problems in Ottawa's freeze-thaw climate.

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

- Homeupgraders
- JC Carpentry
- The Next Reno
- Renovo Construction
- M.O.T. CONSTRUCTION INC.

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q14

How important is air sealing before insulating my garage, and what does it cost to do both in Ottawa?

Air sealing before insulating is not just important, it is the single most impactful step in the entire process, and skipping it is the most common mistake homeowners and even some contractors make when insulating Ottawa garages. Insulation works by trapping still air within its fibres or cells, and that trapped air resists heat flow. But if outdoor air is freely blowing through gaps and cracks in the building envelope, it bypasses the insulation entirely. You can fill every wall cavity with R-20 insulation and still have a cold, drafty garage if the air sealing was not done first.

The typical Ottawa garage has an enormous number of air leakage points that people do not think about. The sill plate where the framing sits on the foundation is often the worst offender, with gaps where the wood meets the concrete that allow cold air to pour in at floor level all around the perimeter. The rim joist area above the sill plate is another major leak zone. Every penetration through the walls or ceiling for electrical wiring, light fixtures, hose bibs, exhaust vents, and the garage door opener adds another potential air leak. The junction where the garage framing meets the house framing in an attached garage is often poorly sealed from original construction. And the garage door itself, even a good one, allows significant air infiltration around its perimeter.

Professional air sealing for a two-car garage in Ottawa typically costs \$800 to \$2,000 as a standalone service, depending on the number and severity of the leakage points. The work involves methodically going through the space and sealing every crack, gap, and penetration with the appropriate material. Sill plates and rim joists get closed-cell spray foam. Electrical and plumbing penetrations get fire-rated caulk or canned spray foam. Gaps around windows and doors get backer rod and caulk. Larger openings around vents or pipes get rigid foam cut to fit and sealed in place.

When you combine air sealing with full insulation, the total cost for a two-car garage in Ottawa falls in the range of \$4,000 to \$10,000 depending on the scope. On the lower end, that covers air sealing plus batt insulation in the walls and ceiling with a vapour barrier and drywall. On the higher end, it includes spray foam insulation on all surfaces, which inherently provides air sealing as part of the insulation application, plus finishing with drywall.

The Practical Sequence

The work should follow a specific order for best results. Start with any structural repairs, since there is no point sealing gaps that will reopen. Then do the air sealing while the framing is exposed and all the leakage points are accessible. Next comes insulation, installed tightly against the air barrier with no gaps, voids, or compression. Then the vapour barrier on the warm side of the insulation, with all seams overlapped and sealed with acoustic sealant. Finally, the drywall finish, which also contributes to the air barrier and provides the required fire separation in an attached garage.

Some homeowners try to save money by doing the air sealing themselves and hiring out only the insulation installation. This is a reasonable approach if you are thorough and patient with the detail work. A few weekends spent with cans of spray foam, tubes of caulk, and rolls of weatherstripping can address the majority of air leakage points, and then the insulation contractor can focus on their part of the job. The materials for DIY air sealing a two-car garage cost \$150 to \$400, which is a meaningful savings over the professional rate.

The payoff from proper air sealing and insulation is substantial in Ottawa's climate. Homeowners consistently report that a previously uninsulated garage goes from being unusable in winter to being comfortable with modest heating, and those with attached garages notice that the rooms adjacent to the garage are warmer and more comfortable as

well. The heating cost to maintain a reasonable temperature in the garage drops dramatically because the heater is no longer fighting a constant flow of cold outside air pouring through every crack in the envelope.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- JC Carpentry
- Transitions Renovations
- Home Front Services
- Jaiko Cleaning Services

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q15

Can I insulate my own garage in Ottawa or do I need to hire a contractor?

Insulating a garage is one of the more DIY-friendly projects you can take on, and many Ottawa homeowners handle it successfully without hiring a contractor. That said, the line between what you can do yourself and what requires professional help depends on the type of insulation, the scope of the work, and whether your project involves any electrical or structural components.

For a straightforward **batt insulation** job — filling the stud cavities in your garage walls with R-14 or R-20 fiberglass or mineral wool batts — this is well within reach for a capable homeowner. The materials are available at any Ottawa building supply store, the tools are basic (utility knife, staple gun, safety glasses, dust mask), and the technique is not complicated. You cut the batts to fit snugly between studs without compressing them, staple the kraft paper facing to the stud edges if applicable, and move on to the next bay. A single-car garage can be done in a weekend, a double in two. Material costs for batt insulation in a standard two-car garage typically run **\$400 to \$800** depending on the R-value you choose.

Where things get more complex is **spray foam insulation**, which is the superior choice for Ottawa's climate because it provides both insulation and an air barrier in one application. Closed-cell spray foam delivers roughly R-6 per inch compared to R-3.5 per inch for fiberglass batts, and it seals the air leaks that account for a significant portion of heat loss in garages. However, spray foam requires specialized equipment, proper mixing ratios, controlled application temperatures, and personal protective equipment including a supplied-air respirator. The

chemicals involved — isocyanates — are genuinely hazardous if mishandled. Professional spray foam installation in an Ottawa two-car garage costs **\$2,500 to \$5,000** depending on thickness and coverage area, and this is a case where the professional result is measurably better than what a homeowner can achieve with DIY spray foam kits.

DIY spray foam kits do exist and sell for **\$300 to \$600** per kit, but they have significant limitations. The yield is often less than advertised, the application quality is inconsistent without experience, and you can easily end up with gaps, thin spots, and wasted material. Most professionals in Ottawa will tell you that the cost difference between buying multiple DIY kits and hiring a spray foam crew shrinks quickly once you factor in the learning curve and waste.

What Requires Professional Help

If your insulation project involves any of the following, you need to bring in professionals. Any **electrical work** — moving outlets, adding circuits, or relocating wiring to accommodate insulation — requires a licensed electrician and an ESA permit under Ontario law. You cannot legally do your own electrical work in Ontario unless you are a licensed electrician. If your garage has **structural concerns** such as damaged studs, sagging headers, or moisture damage in the framing, those need to be addressed by a qualified contractor before insulation goes in. And if you are converting a garage to heated living space, the Ontario Building Code imposes specific vapour barrier, fire separation, and ventilation requirements that typically need a building permit and professional installation to meet code.

The practical middle ground that works well for many Ottawa homeowners is to handle the batt insulation and vapour barrier yourself, hire a spray foam contractor for the rim joists and ceiling if needed, and bring in an electrician for any electrical modifications. This hybrid approach can save you **30 to 50 percent** compared to having a contractor do everything while still ensuring the critical components are done right.

Browse Ottawa Garages for insulation and garage renovation professionals who can handle the parts of the job that are beyond DIY scope.

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

- Homeupgraders
- JC Carpentry
- Vanguard Environmental
- Elie The Carpet Guy Inc.
- Dreamwood Construction & Renovations

[View all contractors ?](#)

What are the most common insulation mistakes people make in Ottawa garages?

Insulation mistakes in Ottawa garages are frustratingly common, and they tend to fall into a few predictable categories that all share the same root cause — treating a garage like a simple box rather than a building that has to perform in one of the harshest climates in southern Ontario. Ottawa's winters regularly hit **minus 25 to minus 35 degrees Celsius** with wind chill, and our summers push into the high thirties with significant humidity. An improperly insulated garage fails in both directions.

The most widespread mistake is **using the wrong insulation type for the application**. Homeowners frequently stuff fiberglass batts into garage walls and call it done, without understanding that fiberglass alone performs poorly in a garage environment. Garages experience more moisture exposure than interior rooms — vehicles dripping with snowmelt, temperature swings that cause condensation, and air leakage around the large garage door opening. Fiberglass batts that get damp lose a significant portion of their R-value, and in a garage where moisture is inevitable, this means your insulation is underperforming from the first winter onward. For Ottawa garages, **closed-cell spray foam** or **rigid foam board** on the exterior of the framing provides far better moisture resistance and thermal performance, though these options cost more upfront.

The second major mistake is **ignoring the vapour barrier or installing it on the wrong side**. In Ottawa's climate, the vapour barrier goes on the **warm side of the insulation** — the interior side of the wall in a heated garage. This prevents warm, moist interior air from reaching the cold sheathing and condensing inside the wall cavity. Homeowners and even some inexperienced contractors install the vapour barrier on the cold side, omit it entirely, or leave gaps and tears that defeat its purpose. The result is moisture accumulation inside the wall assembly, which leads to mould growth, rotting framing, and insulation degradation that you will not discover until the damage is extensive.

Another frequent error is **insulating the walls but neglecting the ceiling and garage door**. Heat rises, and an uninsulated ceiling in a heated garage lets a tremendous amount of energy escape into the attic or roof space. Similarly, the garage door represents the single largest surface area in the building, and a standard uninsulated steel door has an R-value of approximately **R-0 to R-2**. You can insulate every wall perfectly and still have a garage that refuses to stay warm because the door is radiating cold. Insulated garage doors with **R-12 to R-18** ratings are available and make a dramatic difference in Ottawa's climate.

Failing to address thermal bridging is a subtler mistake that significantly reduces the effective insulation value of the entire assembly. Wood studs conduct heat far more readily than the insulation between them, and in a standard 2x4 wall framed at 16 inches on centre, the studs represent roughly 25% of the wall area. The effective R-value of

the wall is therefore much lower than the R-value printed on the insulation packaging. Adding a continuous layer of **rigid insulation** (1 to 2 inches of XPS or polyiso) over the exterior sheathing before the siding goes on breaks the thermal bridges and brings the wall's actual performance much closer to its theoretical rating.

Finally, many homeowners **undersize their insulation for Ottawa's climate zone**. Ottawa falls in **Zone 6** under the Ontario Building Code's energy efficiency requirements, which calls for minimum wall insulation of approximately **R-22 to R-24** for heated spaces. A garage insulated to R-12 with standard 2x4 walls and fibreglass batts will struggle to maintain comfortable temperatures without excessive heating costs. If you plan to heat your garage, building with **2x6 walls** to accommodate R-20 batts, combined with continuous exterior insulation to reach R-24 or higher, is the approach that pays off over Ottawa's long heating season.

Find builders on Ottawa Garages who understand these climate-specific insulation requirements and can spec the right assembly for your intended garage use.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- JC Carpentry
- Dreamwood Construction & Renovations
- MAK Construction and Development Inc
- Nic's D.U.C.T Works Inc

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q17

What happens when you skip the vapour barrier in an Ottawa garage?

Skipping the vapour barrier in an Ottawa garage sets off a chain of moisture-related problems that damage the building from the inside out, often invisibly, until the damage is extensive enough to require major remediation. The vapour barrier is one of the least expensive components of a garage build, but its absence is one of the most costly mistakes to fix after the fact.

To understand why it matters so much in Ottawa specifically, you need to understand the **moisture dynamics** at play. During Ottawa's heating season — roughly October through April — warm air inside a heated garage holds

significantly more moisture than the cold air outside. That warm, moisture-laden air is constantly trying to move outward through the wall assembly toward the cold side. Without a vapour barrier on the **warm side of the insulation** (the interior face of the wall in a heated garage), moisture vapour passes freely into the insulation and wall cavity. When it reaches the cold sheathing or the interface between warm and cold zones inside the wall, it **condenses into liquid water**. This is not a one-time event — it happens continuously throughout the heating season, depositing moisture inside your walls day after day for months.

The first consequence is **insulation degradation**. Fibreglass batt insulation loses R-value rapidly when it absorbs moisture. Studies show that a fibreglass batt at just **1.5% moisture content by weight** loses approximately **35% of its insulating value**. Over a single Ottawa winter without a vapour barrier, the insulation in your garage walls can become so moisture-laden that it provides only a fraction of its rated thermal performance. You end up with higher heating costs and a garage that feels cold despite being insulated, and most homeowners blame the insulation product rather than the missing vapour barrier.

The second and more serious consequence is **mould growth**. The warm, damp conditions inside a wall cavity without a vapour barrier are ideal for mould colonization. Mould can begin growing on wood framing, sheathing, and insulation within **24 to 48 hours** of sustained moisture exposure, and once established, it spreads throughout the wall cavity. In an Ottawa garage, where the walls may stay damp from November through March, mould colonies can become extensive before anyone notices. The first sign is often a musty smell when the weather warms up in spring, or visible mould growth on the interior drywall surface — by which point the problem behind the wall is far worse than what you can see.

The third consequence is **structural decay**. Wood framing that stays damp for extended periods is vulnerable to **rot and fungal decay**. Ottawa's long winters mean that moisture deposited in the wall cavity during the cold months does not fully dry out before the next heating season adds more. Over several years, the bottom plates, studs, and sheathing can develop soft spots, delamination, and structural weakness. By the time you discover rotting framing, the repair involves stripping the wall assembly down to bare framing, replacing damaged lumber, treating for mould, reinstalling insulation with a proper vapour barrier, and refinishing the interior — a project that can cost **\$5,000 to \$15,000** per wall depending on the extent of the damage.

The garage slab also needs a vapour barrier — a **6-mil polyethylene sheet** placed over the compacted granular base before the concrete is poured. Without it, moisture wicks upward through the concrete by capillary action, causing persistent dampness on the floor surface. This moisture prevents floor coatings from bonding properly (a leading cause of epoxy and polyaspartic failures in Ottawa garages), promotes efflorescence (white salt deposits on the concrete surface), and creates a perpetually clammy environment that accelerates rust on vehicles, tools, and anything metal stored in the garage.

The cost of a vapour barrier is minimal — roughly **\$0.15 to \$0.30 per square foot** for 6-mil poly sheeting, plus the labour to install it properly during construction. For a standard two-car garage, the total material cost is under **\$200**. Compared to the thousands of dollars in damage that results from omitting it, the vapour barrier is the single highest-value-per-dollar component in a garage wall assembly.

Connect with builders through Ottawa Garages who include proper vapour barrier installation as a non-negotiable part of every garage project.

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Custom By Arie
- Timely Touchups Construction
- Speedy Pete's Inc

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q18

Is spray foam or blown-in insulation better for garage walls in Ottawa and what does each cost?

This question comes up constantly with Ottawa homeowners who want to use their garage year-round or at least keep it above freezing through winter, and the answer depends on how you use the space, how tight the building envelope is, and what you are willing to spend. Both products work in our climate but they solve different problems at very different price points.

Closed-cell spray foam is the premium option and the best-performing insulation you can put in garage walls for Ottawa's climate. It provides R-6 to R-7 per inch, so a standard 2x4 wall cavity filled with spray foam delivers roughly R-21 to R-24.5 in the 3.5-inch cavity. More importantly, closed-cell spray foam is also an air barrier and a vapour barrier in one application, which matters enormously in Ottawa where the temperature differential between inside and outside can exceed fifty degrees in January. That vapour barrier function prevents moisture from migrating through the wall assembly and condensing inside the cavity, which is a real risk in heated garages during

Ottawa winters. For a standard two-car detached garage with about 600 to 800 square feet of wall area, closed-cell spray foam costs \$3,500 to \$6,000 installed in Ottawa. The material is applied by licensed installers using specialized equipment, and the work typically takes one day. You cannot DIY this.

Open-cell spray foam is a middle-ground option at R-3.5 to R-4 per inch, costing \$2,000 to \$3,500 for the same garage. It provides excellent air sealing but is not a vapour barrier, so you still need a separate poly vapour barrier on the warm side of the wall in Ottawa. Open-cell foam absorbs moisture if exposed to it, which makes the vapour barrier critical. For a heated garage in our climate, open-cell foam with proper vapour barrier is a solid performer that costs significantly less than closed-cell.

Blown-in insulation, whether cellulose or fiberglass, is the budget-friendly option. Cellulose blown into closed wall cavities costs \$1.50 to \$2.50 per square foot, putting the total for a two-car garage at \$900 to \$2,000. Blown fiberglass runs slightly less at \$1.00 to \$2.00 per square foot for \$600 to \$1,600 total. Both materials provide R-3.2 to R-3.8 per inch in wall cavities, delivering R-11 to R-13 in a 2x4 wall. The key difference from spray foam is that blown-in insulation does not seal air leaks. Every gap around electrical boxes, framing joints, and top and bottom plates allows air movement, which in Ottawa's winters means cold air infiltration and potential condensation inside the wall. You need a separate air barrier and vapour barrier, and the blown-in material needs to be dense-packed properly to prevent settling over time.

Which One Makes Sense for Your Garage

If you are heating your garage to a comfortable working temperature through Ottawa winters and using it as a workshop, home gym, or hobby space, closed-cell spray foam is worth the investment. The combined air-vapour-insulation performance in a single application eliminates the moisture risks that plague heated garages in cold climates. The higher upfront cost is offset by lower heating bills and zero risk of moisture damage inside the walls.

If your goal is simply to keep the garage above freezing to protect your car and stored items without running a heater constantly, blown-in cellulose with a proper vapour barrier is a cost-effective solution that gets you reasonable thermal performance at a fraction of the spray foam price. The R-value difference between R-13 blown-in and R-24 spray foam is significant, but for an unheated or lightly heated garage it may be more insulation than you need to achieve your goal.

One Ottawa-specific factor to consider is the garage ceiling. If you have living space above the garage, the ceiling insulation matters more than the walls, and spray foam on the ceiling is strongly recommended regardless of what you do on the walls. Heat loss upward into cold floor cavities above garages is one of the most common comfort complaints in Ottawa homes with rooms over garages.

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

- 613Bins
- RenoMotion Inc.
- ALTIOR CONSTRUCTION
- Garage Door Depot-Ottawa
- ARTEXPRO Tile & Finishes

[View all contractors ?](#)

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Garages. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any garage construction project. Information is current as of May 10, 2026 and may change. Visit ottawagarages.com for the latest answers.