OTTAWA COMMERCIAL EPOXY

Permits & Regulations

When a commercial floor job meets City of Ottawa permits, heritage rules, change of use, fire ratings, accessibility and VOC limits

4 Expert Answers from Coatings IQ

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Table of Contents

1. Is a notice of project needed for a big Kanata floor job?
2. Is a floor coating part of a change of use permit in Ottawa?
3. Is a floor coating considered construction under Ontario law?
4. Which rules apply to coating a floor in an Orleans daycare?

Q1

Is a notice of project needed for a big Kanata floor job?

A notice of project is required under O. Reg. 213/91 s.6(1) when the total expected cost of labour and materials exceeds $50,000. The constructor files it with the Ministry, not the building owner.

For a large Kanata floor job, whether that threshold is crossed depends on the scope. Published 2025-2026 contractor ranges put commercial epoxy at about $8 to $15 per square foot installed, and polyaspartic and polyurea work at about $6 to $15 per square foot. Surface prep, if quoted separately, runs about $1 to $3 per square foot extra. Ask the contractor for the total labour and materials figure. Under OHSA, the constructor is the person who undertakes the project for the owner; ask the contractor directly whether they will be acting as constructor and whether they will file the notice.

Other paperwork and obligations worth confirming

Before any contract is signed, the building owner or tenant awarding the work should address a few points under Ontario law.

- OHSA s.30(1) requires the owner to determine whether designated substances (including asbestos, isocyanates and crystalline silica) are present and to give a list to every prospective contractor before a binding contract is made. Old vinyl tile or black mastic may contain asbestos; have it tested before any grinding takes place. Failing to provide the list makes the owner liable to the constructor and contractors for losses arising from a designated substance the owner ought reasonably to have known of (s.30(5)).
- WSIB policy 14-02-19 requires the principal to obtain a clearance certificate before work begins and to keep it in effect throughout. The householder exemption does not apply to a business. Without a clearance, the principal may be liable for the contractor's WSIB payment obligations up to the value of the labour portion of the contract.

On the product side, ask the contractor for the data sheets and safety data sheets for every product they plan to use. Under OHSA s.38(1.1), an employer whose workers may be exposed to the products must make the SDS readily available to those workers. Section 2 of the SDS covers hazards; Section 9 covers flash point, which matters if any product is solvent-based. Ontario Fire Code 4.1.5.2 prohibits open flames, sparks or heat near flammable or combustible liquids unless controlled in a manner that will not create a fire or explosion hazard. When the job is done, keep the written contract, the product data sheets and SDSs, the WSIB clearance certificate, the written warranty from the contractor, and photographs of the slab before and after: those records document what was agreed, what was applied, and the condition of the floor at handover.

Q2

Is a floor coating part of a change of use permit in Ottawa?

A floor coating on its own does not trigger a change of use permit. The Building Code Act s.10(1) requires a permit when a change of use would result in an increase in hazard, and the permit is tied to the change of use itself, not to the floor finish that happens to accompany it. If you are re-coating an existing floor in a space that stays the same use, the floor coating is not what drives the permit requirement.

Where it gets more complicated is when the floor job is part of a broader project. If a space is converting from, say, retail to a restaurant kitchen, or from storage to a food preparation area, that may be a change of use that increases hazard, which under the Building Code Act s.10 needs a permit before the use changes; talk to the City first. In that situation, the floor coating is caught up in the permit process because of the project it belongs to, not because of the coating itself.

A few other permit triggers are worth checking even when the use stays the same. Ottawa.ca lists "New flooring" and "Painting and decorating" among projects that do not require a building permit, but the page does not say clearly whether that list applies to commercial buildings, so confirm with the City for a commercial space. If the re-floor includes adding a floor drain or a trench drain, that is a plumbing alteration and needs a permit. If it involves structural slab repair, that may need one too. A designated heritage building or a building in a Heritage District Overlay is not covered by the standard exemptions.

If the floor is in a food premises, Ottawa Public Health asks to be notified when you plan to establish, build, change or significantly renovate a food premises. Whether re-coating an existing kitchen floor counts as a significant renovation is not something we found answered on the OPH site, so ask OPH before booking the work.

After the work is done, keep the written contract, the product data sheets and safety data sheets for every coating applied, any written warranty the contractor provides, and photographs of the slab condition before prep began and the finished surface after the job is complete.

Q3

Is a floor coating considered construction under Ontario law?

Floor coating work is likely construction under Ontario law. The Occupational Health and Safety Act defines "construction" to include alteration, repair and painting, so a floor coating project in an occupied commercial space is likely to fall within that definition; for an unusual case, ask the Ministry of Labour.

That classification has practical consequences for anyone hiring a floor coating contractor.

Under OHSA, a tenant can be treated as an "owner" for the purposes of a construction project. Before any contractor begins work, OHSA s.30(1) requires the owner to determine whether designated substances are present at the project site and to prepare a list. Under s.30(3), the owner must make sure a prospective contractor has that list before a binding contract is entered into. O. Reg. 490/09 lists asbestos, isocyanates and crystalline silica among the designated substances. If your floor has old vinyl tile or black mastic, have it tested before any grinding takes place. Under s.30(5), an owner who fails to comply is liable to the constructor and every contractor and subcontractor for losses arising from a designated substance the owner ought reasonably to have known of.

The OHSA classification also means a WSIB clearance certificate is required. WSIB policy 14-02-19 says a principal who directly retains a contractor for construction work must obtain a clearance before work begins, and the clearance must remain in effect throughout the job. The householder exemption does not apply to a business. Without a clearance, the principal may be liable for the contractor's WSIB payment obligations up to the value of the labour portion of the contract. Keep clearance records for at least three years.

If the total cost of labour and materials is expected to exceed $50,000, O. Reg. 213/91 s.6(1) requires a Ministry notice of project. The constructor files it.

The Construction Act also applies. Each payer must retain a holdback of 10 per cent of the price of services or materials as supplied (s.22(1)). A contractor's lien expires 60 days after the earlier of publication of substantial performance or the contract being completed, abandoned or terminated, unless preserved (s.31(2)). Whether a commercial tenant is an "owner" under the Construction Act depends on the facts and the lease; get legal advice on that question.

One question worth putting to a contractor before you sign: ask them to confirm in writing which designated substances they have been told are present at your site, and how they plan to handle the work if any are found during prep.

Q4

Which rules apply to coating a floor in an Orleans daycare?

A floor job at an Orleans daycare is likely a workplace construction project under Ontario law, and it also runs into the building permit rules and any licensing your centre has. We did not research child care licensing, so ask whoever licenses or inspects your centre whether a floor project needs notice before it starts.

Rules that apply directly

The Occupational Health and Safety Act and R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 851 (Industrial Establishments) apply because a daycare is a place of work. Floor coating is also likely construction work under the OHSA, meaning the daycare, as the owner of the project, must comply with OHSA s.30(1): before work begins, determine whether any designated substances are present and prepare a list. Under O. Reg. 490/09, asbestos, crystalline silica and isocyanates are designated substances. If the existing floor has old vinyl tile or black mastic, have it tested for asbestos before any grinding takes place. The contractor must receive that list before a binding contract is signed.

The WSIB clearance requirement applies without exception for a business. Under WSIB policy 14-02-19, the daycare must obtain a clearance certificate before the contractor starts and keep it in effect throughout the work. Starting without one is an offence, and the daycare may become liable for the contractor's WSIB obligations.

Under the 2024 Ontario Building Code (O. Reg. 163/24), barrier-free walking surfaces in a path of travel must be stable, firm and slip-resistant. If the floor is in a barrier-free path of travel, the finished surface has to meet that description. The City of Ottawa lists "New flooring" and "Painting and decorating" among projects that do not need a building permit, but the page does not say whether that covers commercial buildings: confirm with the City before booking the work.

For the Construction Act, the daycare should expect proper invoices, a 10 per cent holdback, and payment within 28 days of a proper invoice.

Before the contractor applies anything, ask for the safety data sheet for every product going on the floor. The OHSA requires the employer to make SDSs available to workers who may be exposed. Section 2 of each SDS covers hazards; Section 9 covers flash point, which matters if the space has pilot lights or other ignition sources. Some solvent-based primers may be flammable liquids under the Ontario Fire Code: no open flames or sparking equipment near those products.

One question worth putting to a contractor before signing: can you show me the safety data sheets for every product you plan to use, and walk me through how you will phase the work so children and staff are not in the building while coatings are curing?

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Commercial Epoxy. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa or your own municipality), and Ottawa Public Health for a food premises, before starting any floor coating project. Read the product's data sheet and safety data sheet before work starts. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawacommercialepoxy.ca** for the latest answers.