OTTAWA COMMERCIAL EPOXY

Polished Concrete

Grinding, densifying and polishing existing slabs for warehouses, retail and offices

5 Expert Answers from Coatings IQ

ottawacommercialepoxy.ca/construction-brain

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Q1

Can an old warehouse floor in Bells Corners be polished?

Polishing an old warehouse floor in Bells Corners is possible, but whether the slab can actually be polished depends on its condition, its concrete mix, and what has been done to it over the years.

The two factors a contractor will look at first are the slab's hardness and its surface history. A soft or heavily contaminated slab, one soaked with oils, coated with old adhesive or mastic, or patched with materials that differ from the original pour, may not polish evenly or hold a consistent sheen. Old tile or black mastic may contain asbestos; have any of that material tested before any grinding begins. The contractor should assess the slab before quoting, because the amount of grinding needed to reach sound, consistent concrete drives both the cost and the result.

On cost, published 2025-2026 contractor ranges put polished concrete on an existing slab at about $3 to $15 per square foot, with most commercial jobs falling in the $5 to $12 per square foot range. Surface prep, when it is not already included in the quote, runs about $1 to $3 per square foot extra. Heavy resurfacing of damaged concrete costs more, and we found too few published prices to give a range for crack repair, moisture testing, or any moisture-mitigation primer the slab may need. Multiply the per-square-foot figure by your floor area to estimate the total; your quote will differ.

A few things worth confirming with the contractor before work begins:

- What surface profile they are targeting, and how they will assess the slab's hardness and contamination before committing to a price
- Whether moisture testing is included, which standard they will use (ASTM F2170 or ASTM F1869), and what happens to the scope and price if the slab reads high
- How crack repairs and any uneven patches will be handled, and whether those areas will show differently in the finished floor
- Whether the quote includes all grinding passes from coarse to fine, and what sheen level the final pass is expected to reach
- A WSIB clearance certificate and proof of liability insurance before work starts; under WSIB policy 14-02-19, a business that retains a contractor for construction work must obtain a clearance certificate before the work begins and keep it current throughout the job

Polished concrete has no coating to cure, so return-to-service timing is a question for the contractor based on the specific work planned; we found no published source on that timing.

Local floor coating contractors listed in the Ottawa Construction Network directory can be reached through the request form on this page and will reply by email.

Before signing, ask the contractor to spell out exactly what the quote includes for grinding and crack repair, since those two line items are where the scope on a job like this can shift after work starts.

Q2

Does a polished floor need a guard coat in an Ottawa mall?

A polished concrete floor does not automatically require a guard coat, but whether one belongs in a mall depends on the traffic, the stone aggregate exposed, and what the building's designer or the mall's property manager specifies. There is no Ontario Building Code provision we found that mandates a guard coat on polished concrete in a retail corridor.

What the rules actually say

The 2024 Ontario Building Code (O. Reg. 163/24), s.3.8.1.3.(2) requires walking surfaces in a barrier-free path of travel to be "stable, firm and slip-resistant." Section 3.4.6.1.(1) requires a slip-resistant finish on ramps, landings and treads in exits. Neither provision specifies a guard coat; they describe how the finished surface must perform. No slip-resistance number is set in Reg. 851, the Building Code or the AODA, so no published DCOF or pendulum value is a legal requirement in Ontario.

A guard coat is a product decision, not a code requirement, and we found no neutral source on what guard coats do. Ask the contractor to name the product, show you its data sheet and safety data sheet, and explain how the finished surface will perform wet.

For a mall specifically, the property manager or the lease may impose its own finish standard, and the building's designer of record is the right person to ask about flame-spread requirements under Table 3.1.13.7 of the Building Code if the building is a high building regulated by Subsection 3.2.6.

A fair quote for polished concrete in a mall should include the surface profile target (ICRI concrete surface profiles are the reference), the number of grinding and polishing passes, whether a guard coat or densifier is included and which product with its data sheet, and the contractor's plan for phasing work around mall hours. Ask the contractor to show you the data sheet for any topcoat they propose, and ask what the surface's slip characteristics will be once the guard coat is applied, so you can assess it against Reg. 851 s.11 and the barrier-free path requirements yourself.

The property manager's standard for the mall finish is the first place to check, because it may settle the guard-coat question before you speak to a contractor.

Q3

Is polished concrete a good choice for an Ottawa church hall?

Whether polished concrete suits a church hall depends on how the hall is used and the slab you already have. Published 2025-2026 contractor ranges put it at about $3 to $15 per square foot for an existing slab, with most commercial jobs falling in the $5 to $12 per square foot range.

Think about what your hall is used for: events, a serving kitchen, programs for children or older visitors. Each of those uses shapes what the floor needs to do. Polished concrete has no coating layer to delaminate, and its surface can be refined to different levels of sheen. That said, the 2024 Ontario Building Code (O. Reg. 163/24, s.3.8.1.3.(2)) requires that walking surfaces in a barrier-free path of travel be stable, firm and slip-resistant. If your hall is in a barrier-free path of travel, the finish level matters: a very high-gloss polish on a surface that gets wet from spills or tracked-in rain is a factor to raise directly with the contractor.

On the regulatory side, if any part of the hall is used for food preparation or service, O. Reg. 493/17 (Food Premises) requires that the floor be tight, smooth and non-absorbent in those areas. Ottawa Public Health enforces that regulation and asks to be notified when a food premises is being significantly renovated. We found nothing that says whether re-finishing an existing floor counts as a significant renovation under OPH's criteria, so it is worth asking OPH before booking the work if food is prepared or served in the space.

Before any grinding begins, check whether the existing floor has old vinyl tile or black mastic underneath, and have it tested for asbestos before any grinding takes place.

Things that move the quote include the slab's current condition, how much crack or joint repair is needed, the level of polish specified, whether a sealer is included, the square footage, and whether work needs to happen after hours or in phases around your hall's schedule.

If food is prepared or served anywhere in the hall, call Ottawa Public Health before you book a contractor: they can tell you whether the planned work triggers a notification requirement and what the floor must do in those areas.

Q4

Is polished concrete a good floor for an Ottawa warehouse?

Whether polished concrete suits an Ottawa warehouse depends on the slab you already have and how the space is used. Published 2025-2026 contractor ranges put it at about $3 to $15 per square foot, with most commercial jobs falling in the $5 to $12 per square foot range.

Polished concrete is not a coating: the existing slab is ground, densified and polished, so there is no coating film to cure or peel. That also means the finish depends on the slab: cracks, patches and old adhesive stay visible or need repair first, and heavy resurfacing of damaged concrete costs more than standard prep.

A few things will move your quote considerably. Surface prep, when it is not already included, runs about $1 to $3 per square foot extra, and you should confirm whether grinding, crack filling and joint treatment are in the base price or billed separately. The number of grinding and polishing passes, the grit level the contractor takes the floor to, and whether a densifier or guard coat is applied all affect both the final price and the surface performance. Slab condition, cracks, old adhesive and the level of aggregate exposure all show up in the price.

Ask how the chosen sheen performs wet in areas where water, condensation or spills are possible.

When you review quotes, ask each contractor to show you exactly which line items cover crack repair, joint filling and any densifier or guard coat, so you can compare like with like.

Q5

Which grit level should an Ottawa restaurant ask for?

O. Reg. 493/17, s.7(1)(c) requires that a food premises floor be "tight, smooth and non-absorbent." The regulation does not specify a grit level, a slip-resistance number or any texture measurement. What it asks for is a floor that can be kept clean and in good repair under s.7(1)(g).

Reg. 851 (Industrial Establishments), s.11 adds a workplace layer: a floor used by any worker shall not have "any finish or protective material used on it that is likely to make the surface slippery." No coefficient of friction number is set in Reg. 851, the 2024 Ontario Building Code (O. Reg. 163/24) or the AODA. Any slip-resistance value in a contractor's quote is a product claim to compare, not a legal threshold.

So the practical question is not which grit number to specify, but whether the finished floor will satisfy both rules. Anti-slip texture in a resinous floor coating comes from aggregate, such as aluminium oxide or quartz, broadcast

into a coat. A seamless resinous floor with an integral cove base is one way to meet the "tight, smooth and non-absorbent" requirement; it is not the only way, and neither the cove base nor any particular texture is stated as required by O. Reg. 493/17.

Before booking a kitchen re-floor, Ottawa Public Health asks to be notified when a food premises is being significantly renovated. We found nothing from OPH stating whether re-coating an existing kitchen floor counts as a significant renovation, so ask OPH before the work is scheduled.

On the contractor side, a few things are worth confirming before work begins. Ask for the product data sheet and safety data sheet for every product being applied. Under OHSA s.38(1.1), an employer whose staff remain on site during coating work shall make the SDS readily available to those workers.

Comparing quotes, look at the product names with their data sheets, the prep method and the surface profile each data sheet calls for, whether a moisture test is included and what happens if the slab fails it, the number of coats or the thickness specified in the data sheet, whether cove base is included and at what linear footage, the aggregate type and broadcast rate for texture, and the closure window the contractor is committing to against what the data sheet actually lists for return to service.

To hear from local Ottawa floor coating contractors by email, use the request form on this page.

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.