

OTTAWA PRO PLUMBING

Troubleshooting

Diagnosing noises, pressure loss, smells, and other
plumbing symptoms

6 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

ottawaplumbingpro.ca/construction-brain

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Should I replace my galvanized pipes even if they're not leaking yet?

Yes, replacing galvanized pipes before they fail is generally the smart move, especially if your home is over 40 years old. Waiting for leaks often means dealing with emergency repairs, water damage, and higher costs.

Galvanized pipes deteriorate from the inside out through a process called galvanic corrosion. The zinc coating that initially protects the steel gradually wears away, allowing rust to build up inside the pipes. This creates several problems even before visible leaks appear: dramatically reduced water pressure, discolored water that stains fixtures and laundry, and a metallic taste in your drinking water. The pipes become increasingly brittle, making them prone to sudden failure.

In Ottawa's climate, the freeze-thaw cycles put additional stress on aging galvanized pipes. Most homes built before 1980 have galvanized supply lines that are now reaching the end of their 40-50 year lifespan. **Proactive replacement with modern PEX or copper piping** eliminates the risk of burst pipes flooding your basement or walls, which can cause thousands in water damage.

The typical cost for whole-home repiping in Ottawa ranges from \$5,000 to \$15,000, depending on your home's size and accessibility. While this seems significant, it's often less expensive than dealing with multiple emergency repairs, water damage restoration, and the inconvenience of repeated service calls. Many homeowners also see improved water pressure and quality immediately after replacement.

Consider replacement if you're experiencing low water pressure, rusty or discolored water, frequent small leaks, or if you're planning any major renovations. The work requires permits in Ottawa, and a licensed plumber can assess your specific situation and provide options for partial or complete replacement based on your budget and priorities.

For a free assessment of your galvanized pipes and replacement options, request a quote from Ottawa Pro Plumbing.

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Is trenchless sewer repair worth the extra cost?

Trenchless sewer repair is typically worth the extra upfront cost when you factor in the total project expenses and long-term benefits. While traditional excavation might seem cheaper initially, trenchless methods often provide better overall value.

The cost difference is significant but justified. Traditional sewer line replacement in Ottawa runs \$8,000-\$15,000, while trenchless methods like pipe lining or pipe bursting cost \$12,000-\$20,000. However, traditional excavation doesn't include the hidden costs of landscape restoration, driveway repair, fence replacement, or deck removal that can easily add \$5,000-\$10,000 to your project.

Trenchless repair offers several compelling advantages beyond cost savings. The process typically takes 1-2 days versus a week or more for excavation, meaning less disruption to your daily life. Your landscaping, hardscaping, and property improvements remain intact. The new pipe materials used in trenchless repairs often last 50-100 years, compared to traditional clay or cast iron pipes that may need replacement again in 20-30 years.

In Ottawa's climate, trenchless methods are particularly valuable because they avoid the complications of winter excavation and the challenges of restoring landscapes after our freeze-thaw cycles. Many Ottawa homeowners find that preserving mature trees, established gardens, and expensive hardscaping makes trenchless repair the clear choice.

The best candidates for trenchless repair are properties with existing sewer lines that have structural integrity in most sections, even if they're experiencing root intrusion, minor cracks, or joint separation. However, completely collapsed or severely misaligned pipes may still require traditional excavation.

For a professional assessment of whether your sewer line is suitable for trenchless repair, request a camera inspection and quote from Ottawa Pro Plumbing to explore your options.

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My kitchen sink is leaking from underneath. Where is it coming from?

Kitchen sink leaks from underneath typically come from one of four main sources: the supply line connections, the drain assembly, the garbage disposal (if present), or the faucet base.

The most common culprit is **loose supply line connections** where the hot and cold water lines connect to the faucet. These compression fittings can loosen over time, especially in Ottawa's climate with seasonal temperature changes that cause pipes to expand and contract. You'll usually see water dripping from the threaded connections or pooling around the shut-off valves.

Drain assembly leaks are also frequent, particularly at the slip joints where the P-trap connects to the tailpiece or drain pipe. The rubber washers in these connections can deteriorate or shift, causing water to seep out during drainage. If you have a **garbage disposal**, check where it connects to the sink mounting assembly and the discharge pipe - these are common leak points that often develop after years of vibration.

Faucet base leaks occur when the packing nut under the sink becomes loose or the O-rings wear out. This type of leak often shows up as water running down the faucet stem onto the sink deck and dripping underneath.

To identify the source, dry the area completely, then run water and watch carefully. Run the faucet to check supply lines and faucet base, then fill the sink and drain it to test the drain assembly. In Ottawa's older homes, original plumbing connections may be 20+ years old and more prone to these issues.

Turn off the water supply immediately if you see a significant leak, and avoid using the sink until repairs are made. While you might tighten a loose connection yourself, most under-sink repairs require proper tools and expertise to prevent water damage to your cabinets and flooring.

For a proper diagnosis and repair of your kitchen sink leak, Ottawa Pro Plumbing can provide a free estimate and ensure the fix meets Ontario plumbing standards.

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Do plumbers charge extra for coming to diagnose a problem?

Most plumbers in Ottawa charge a service call or diagnostic fee that typically ranges from \$150 to \$250, which covers their time to come out, assess the problem, and provide you with a repair estimate.

This diagnostic fee serves several important purposes. It covers the plumber's travel time, expertise in identifying the issue, and the time spent explaining your options. Many reputable plumbing companies will **apply this diagnostic fee toward the cost of repairs** if you decide to proceed with their recommended work. This approach ensures you're getting professional assessment while the plumber isn't working for free on diagnostics.

In Ottawa's plumbing market, some companies offer free estimates for larger projects like water heater replacements or major pipe work, but smaller repair calls almost always include a service fee. Emergency calls outside regular business hours typically carry a higher diagnostic fee, often \$200-300, due to the after-hours nature of the service.

The diagnostic fee is actually valuable for homeowners because it ensures you're getting an honest, thorough assessment rather than a quick guess. A skilled plumber will often identify underlying issues you weren't aware of, potentially saving you from bigger problems down the road. They'll also provide you with a detailed explanation of what's wrong and multiple repair options with transparent pricing.

Before calling any plumber, ask upfront about their service call fee and whether it applies toward repairs.

Reputable companies are always transparent about their pricing structure. For complex issues requiring extensive diagnosis, this fee represents good value compared to the cost of misdiagnosed problems or temporary fixes.

For a transparent diagnostic assessment of your plumbing issue, Ottawa Pro Plumbing provides upfront pricing and applies service fees toward completed repairs.

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Do plumbers offer financing for expensive repairs?

Yes, many plumbers in Ottawa offer financing options for expensive repairs and installations, especially for major projects like water heater replacements, whole-home repiping, or sewer line repairs that can cost thousands of dollars.

Financing options typically include payment plans through third-party financing companies, credit applications that can be approved on-site, and sometimes in-house payment arrangements for established customers. Many plumbing companies partner with financing providers that offer promotional rates like 0% interest for 12-18 months on approved credit, or extended payment plans with competitive interest rates.

For Ottawa homeowners, financing becomes particularly valuable for emergency repairs that can't wait - like a failed water heater in winter or a burst pipe requiring extensive repairs. Rather than delaying critical repairs due to cost, financing allows you to address plumbing emergencies immediately and spread the cost over manageable monthly payments.

The most commonly financed plumbing services include water heater installations (\$1,500-\$5,500), sewer line repairs or replacements (\$3,000-\$15,000), whole-home repiping projects (\$5,000-\$15,000), and basement bathroom additions (\$15,000-\$35,000). Emergency repairs that exceed \$1,000 are also frequently financed.

When considering financing for plumbing work, ask about promotional rates, read the terms carefully, and ensure the contractor is reputable since you'll be making payments long after the work is complete. Licensed plumbers who offer financing typically work with established financial partners and can often provide same-day approval for qualified applicants.

For a free estimate on your plumbing project and information about available financing options, request a quote from Ottawa Pro Plumbing through the Ottawa Construction Network.

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What plumbing repairs are safe for a homeowner to do themselves?

Basic plumbing maintenance and minor repairs are generally safe for homeowners, but anything involving water supply lines, drainage modifications, or gas connections should be left to licensed professionals.

Most homeowners can safely handle simple tasks like **unclogging minor drain blockages** with a plunger or basic drain snake, **replacing toilet flappers and fill valves**, and **changing out faucet aerators or showerheads**. These repairs don't involve major water lines and have minimal risk of causing significant damage if something goes wrong.

Replacing a toilet seat, tightening loose faucet handles, or applying caulk around tubs and showers are also within the DIY realm. You can also safely replace a garbage disposal if you're comfortable with basic electrical connections, though you'll want to ensure the electrical circuit is properly shut off first.

However, in Ottawa's climate, even minor mistakes can lead to major problems. **Frozen pipes are a constant winter concern**, and a small leak that seems manageable can quickly become thousands of dollars in water damage. The Ontario Building Code requires permits for most plumbing work beyond basic maintenance, and insurance companies may not cover damage from unpermitted DIY work.

Avoid DIY work on anything involving: water heater installation or major repairs, pipe replacement or extension, drain line modifications, sewer connections, or any work requiring soldering copper pipes. These jobs require proper permits in Ottawa and specialized tools that most homeowners don't have.

When in doubt, get a consultation first. A licensed plumber can often assess a problem quickly and let you know if it's something you can handle safely, potentially saving you from a costly mistake. For complex repairs or installations, request a quote from Ottawa Pro Plumbing to ensure the work meets Ontario Building Code requirements.

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