

OTTAWA HVAC PRO



Fireplaces

Gas fireplace installation and repair

11 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

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How often should I replace the logs in my gas fireplace?

Gas fireplace logs don't need regular replacement like wood logs - they're designed to be permanent decorative elements that can last many years with proper care.

Ceramic logs, which are the most common type, typically last 10-15 years or longer under normal use. They're built to withstand the heat and flames without deteriorating. However, they can crack or break if subjected to extreme temperature changes or physical impact. **Refractory logs** (made from a concrete-like material) are even more durable and can last 15-20 years or more.

You should consider replacing your gas fireplace logs if you notice **significant cracking, chipping, or pieces breaking off**. Damaged logs can affect the flame pattern and potentially create safety issues. Also, if the logs have shifted out of their proper position repeatedly or no longer maintain the realistic appearance you want, replacement might be worthwhile.

In Ottawa's climate, where gas fireplaces often see heavy use during our long winters, it's important to have your entire gas fireplace system inspected annually by a TSSA-licensed technician. During this service, they'll check not just the logs but also the burner, gas connections, and venting system. **This annual inspection is actually required by TSSA for safe operation** and helps catch any issues before they become safety hazards.

Signs it's time for new logs include: visible cracks, pieces falling off, logs that won't stay in position, or if they've become severely discolored in a way that affects appearance. The good news is that replacement logs are relatively affordable compared to other fireplace repairs.

For professional gas fireplace service and log replacement in Ottawa, we can help ensure your system operates safely and efficiently throughout the heating season.

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What is a direct vent gas fireplace

A **direct vent gas fireplace** is a sealed combustion system that draws outside air for burning and vents combustion gases directly outside through a two-pipe system, making it one of the safest and most efficient fireplace options available.

The key feature of direct vent technology is its **dual-pipe venting system**. The inner pipe exhausts combustion gases outside, while the outer pipe brings fresh air from outside directly to the firebox for combustion. This means the fireplace operates completely independently from your home's indoor air, eliminating concerns about backdrafting or competing with other appliances for combustion air.

Direct vent fireplaces offer several advantages over traditional fireplaces. They're highly efficient (typically 70-85% efficiency) because they don't lose heated room air up the chimney. They can be installed almost anywhere in your home since they don't require a traditional chimney - just access to an exterior wall for the vent termination. The sealed glass front keeps all combustion gases contained, making them very safe for indoor air quality.

In Ottawa's climate, direct vent gas fireplaces are particularly popular because they provide reliable heat even during power outages (many models don't require electricity), and they're not affected by wind or weather conditions that can impact other venting systems. **Installation requires a TSSA permit** and must be completed by a licensed G2 gas technician, as improper installation can create serious safety hazards.

The venting can typically extend horizontally through an exterior wall or vertically through the roof, with specific clearance requirements from windows, doors, and air intakes. Most units can vent up to 40-60 feet total length depending on the number of elbows and manufacturer specifications.

For a proper assessment of your home's suitability for a direct vent gas fireplace and to ensure code-compliant installation, consult with Ottawa HVAC Pro for a free consultation on your fireplace project.

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How long does a gas fireplace last

A well-maintained gas fireplace typically lasts 15-20 years, with some high-quality units reaching 25+ years with proper care. The lifespan depends heavily on usage frequency, maintenance quality, and the original installation.

The key components have different lifespans. The firebox and main structure usually last the longest, while components like the pilot light assembly, thermocouples, and gas valves may need replacement every 10-15 years. The blower fan, if equipped, typically lasts 10-12 years with regular use. The glass doors and gaskets are consumable items that may need replacement every 5-10 years depending on usage.

Regular maintenance significantly extends fireplace life. Annual servicing by a TSSA-licensed technician should include cleaning the burner and control compartment, inspecting the venting system, testing safety controls, and checking for proper combustion. This prevents carbon buildup that can damage components and ensures safe operation. Many Ottawa homeowners schedule this service in early fall before heating season.

Signs your gas fireplace may need major service or replacement include difficulty lighting, yellow or orange flames (should be blue), soot buildup on the glass, strange odors during operation, or the pilot light frequently going out. If your unit is over 15 years old and requiring frequent repairs, replacement might be more cost-effective than continued fixes.

For maximum safety and longevity, never attempt DIY repairs on gas fireplace components - this work requires a licensed G2 technician in Ontario. If you're experiencing issues with your gas fireplace or want to schedule annual maintenance, Ottawa HVAC Pro provides comprehensive fireplace services throughout the Ottawa area.

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Can I convert my wood fireplace to gas

Yes, most wood-burning fireplaces can be converted to gas, but it requires professional installation by a TSSA-licensed technician and proper permits. This is a popular upgrade in Ottawa homes that provides convenient, clean-burning heat with the flip of a switch.

The conversion process involves installing a **gas line** to your fireplace location, which must be done by a licensed G2 gas technician. You'll also need a **gas fireplace insert or log set** that's properly sized for your existing firebox, along with appropriate venting modifications. The existing chimney typically needs to be lined with a stainless steel liner to safely vent the gas appliance, as gas burns differently than wood and produces different combustion byproducts.

TSSA permits are required for this type of conversion in Ontario, and the work must be inspected to ensure it meets current safety codes. Your existing damper will need to be permanently fixed in the open position or removed entirely, and you'll need proper clearances from combustible materials. The gas line installation requires careful sizing to ensure adequate gas pressure for your new appliance.

In the Ottawa market, a complete wood-to-gas fireplace conversion typically costs **\$3,000 to \$6,000**, depending on the distance for gas line installation, the type of gas insert chosen, and any necessary chimney modifications. This includes the gas line, insert, venting work, permits, and professional installation.

Safety is critical with this conversion - improper installation can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning or gas leaks. Never attempt DIY gas work, as it's both dangerous and illegal in Ontario. Make sure your home has working carbon monoxide detectors on every level.

For a proper assessment of your specific fireplace and a detailed quote, contact a TSSA-licensed contractor who can evaluate your existing setup and local gas availability.

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How much does it cost to run a gas fireplace

Gas fireplaces typically cost between \$0.50 to \$1.50 per hour to operate in Ottawa, depending on the size of your fireplace and current natural gas rates. Most homeowners spend \$20-60 per month during regular use in the heating season.

The actual cost depends on several factors. **Fireplace size and efficiency** play the biggest role - a small, efficient direct-vent fireplace might use 20,000-30,000 BTUs per hour, while a large decorative fireplace could consume 40,000+ BTUs hourly. **Enbridge gas rates** in Ottawa fluctuate seasonally, but currently average around \$0.15-0.25 per cubic meter, which translates to roughly \$0.15-0.20 per 10,000 BTUs.

Usage patterns significantly impact monthly costs. Running your gas fireplace for 2-3 hours on weekend evenings might add \$15-25 to your monthly gas bill. However, using it as supplemental heating for 4-6 hours daily could increase costs to \$50-80 monthly. Modern high-efficiency gas fireplaces with electronic ignition and modulating flames can reduce operating costs by 20-30% compared to older pilot light models.

Ottawa's climate makes gas fireplaces cost-effective for zone heating during shoulder seasons (fall/spring) when you don't want to run your main furnace. Many homeowners find they can lower their overall heating bills by using a gas fireplace to heat their main living area while keeping the thermostat lower. **Always ensure your gas fireplace receives annual maintenance** - dirty burners or blocked vents can increase gas consumption and create safety hazards.

For accurate cost calculations based on your specific fireplace model and usage, check your Enbridge bill for current rates and multiply by your fireplace's BTU rating.

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How much does gas fireplace installation cost

Gas fireplace installation in Ottawa typically costs between \$3,000 and \$6,000, depending on the type of fireplace, venting requirements, and complexity of the gas line installation.

The total cost breaks down into several components. The fireplace unit itself ranges from \$1,500 to \$4,000, with basic builder-grade models at the lower end and premium units with advanced features like remote controls and realistic flame patterns at the higher end. **Installation labor typically adds \$1,500 to \$2,000** to the project, which includes running gas lines, installing venting, electrical connections, and finishing work around the fireplace opening.

Venting requirements significantly impact the final cost. Direct vent fireplaces are most common in Ottawa homes and require both intake and exhaust venting through an exterior wall, adding \$300-600 in materials. If you're installing in a location without existing gas service, running a new gas line can add \$500-1,200 depending on the distance from your meter. Some installations may also require framing modifications or hearth construction, which increases labor costs.

In Ottawa, **all gas fireplace installations require a TSSA permit and must be completed by a licensed G2 or G3 gas technician.** The permit typically costs around \$75-100 and ensures your installation meets Ontario's safety codes. Many homeowners also choose to add a wall switch or remote control system, which adds \$150-300 to the project.

Safety is paramount with gas fireplace installations - improper venting or gas connections can create carbon monoxide hazards. Always ensure your installer is TSSA licensed and that the completed work receives proper inspection and approval. For a detailed quote based on your specific home and fireplace preferences, request a consultation from a licensed HVAC contractor who can assess your space and provide accurate pricing.

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How do I maintain my gas fireplace

Regular maintenance is essential for safe and efficient gas fireplace operation. A well-maintained gas fireplace should be professionally serviced annually, but there are several things you can do yourself between service visits.

Start with visual inspections of the glass doors, checking for cracks or damage that could affect safety and efficiency. Clean the glass regularly with appropriate fireplace glass cleaner - never use household glass cleaners as they can leave residues that may cause the glass to crack when heated. Remove any debris, leaves, or bird nests from the exterior venting system, and ensure the damper operates smoothly if your unit has one.

The most critical maintenance task is annual professional servicing by a TSSA-licensed gas technician. This service includes cleaning the burner and control compartment, inspecting the venting system for blockages or damage, checking gas connections for leaks, testing safety controls and sensors, and verifying proper combustion and carbon monoxide levels. In Ottawa's climate, this service is typically best scheduled in early fall before the heating season begins.

Between professional services, watch for warning signs that indicate immediate attention is needed: yellow or orange flames instead of blue, soot buildup around the unit, unusual odors when operating, or the pilot light frequently going out. These symptoms could indicate ventilation problems, gas pressure issues, or other safety concerns that require immediate professional attention.

TSSA regulations require that only licensed G2 or G3 gas technicians perform any repairs or adjustments to gas fireplace components. Never attempt to adjust gas pressures, repair gas lines, or modify safety controls yourself - this work is both dangerous and illegal without proper licensing.

For annual gas fireplace servicing in Ottawa, consider scheduling your maintenance appointment early in the season to ensure your fireplace is ready for safe enjoyment throughout the winter months.

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Why is my gas fireplace not working

Gas fireplace issues typically stem from pilot light problems, gas supply interruptions, or safety system malfunctions. Start by checking if your pilot light is lit and whether the gas valve is fully open.

Common causes include a blown pilot light - often the most frequent culprit, especially after power outages or strong winds down the chimney. Look through the glass or access panel to see if you can spot the small blue flame. If it's out, you may need to relight it following your owner's manual instructions, but only if you're comfortable doing so and smell no gas.

Gas supply issues can also prevent operation. Check that your main gas valve (usually located near the fireplace or in the basement) is fully open - the handle should be parallel to the gas line. If you've recently had gas work done elsewhere in your home, or if other gas appliances aren't working, you may have a broader gas supply problem that requires immediate professional attention.

Safety systems like thermocouples and oxygen depletion sensors can shut down the fireplace if they detect unsafe conditions. These components can fail over time or become dirty, preventing the fireplace from staying lit even when manually started. Additionally, blocked venting or a dirty burner can trigger safety shutoffs.

In Ottawa's climate, **annual fireplace servicing is crucial** for safe operation. Our cold winters mean fireplaces often sit unused for months, allowing dust and debris to accumulate. TSSA regulations require that only licensed G2 technicians work on gas fireplaces, as improper repairs can create serious carbon monoxide hazards.

If you smell gas, hear unusual sounds, or can't easily identify the problem, turn off the gas supply and contact a licensed HVAC technician immediately. Never attempt repairs on gas components yourself - it's both dangerous and illegal in Ontario. For professional gas fireplace diagnosis and repair in Ottawa, we offer same-day service to get your fireplace safely operational again.

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Do I need a permit to install a gas fireplace

Yes, you need a TSSA permit to install a gas fireplace in Ottawa. Gas fireplace installation is regulated by the Technical Standards & Safety Authority (TSSA) in Ontario, and only licensed G2 or G3 gas technicians can perform this work legally.

The permit process involves several steps. Your licensed HVAC contractor will apply for the TSSA permit before beginning work, which includes submitting installation plans and specifications. After installation, a TSSA inspector must examine the work to ensure it meets Ontario's gas code requirements. The fireplace cannot be legally operated until it passes this inspection and receives final approval.

In Ottawa specifically, you may also need a building permit from the City of Ottawa, especially if structural modifications are required for venting or if you're adding a new gas line. The requirements can vary depending on whether you're installing a direct-vent, B-vent, or ventless model, and whether it's new construction or a retrofit. Most installations require proper venting to the exterior and adequate combustion air supply.

Safety is the primary concern with gas appliance installations. Improper installation can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning, gas leaks, or fire hazards. The permit and inspection process ensures your fireplace operates safely and efficiently. Additionally, insurance companies typically require proper permits and professional installation for coverage.

Your next step is to contact a TSSA-licensed gas technician who can assess your space, recommend appropriate fireplace options, and handle all permit requirements. They'll ensure your installation meets both TSSA and municipal codes while maximizing safety and efficiency. For a free consultation on gas fireplace installation in Ottawa, consider reaching out to licensed professionals who can guide you through the entire process.

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Is a gas fireplace safe

Gas fireplaces are generally very safe when properly installed, maintained, and operated according to manufacturer guidelines and TSSA requirements. Modern gas fireplaces have multiple safety features including oxygen depletion sensors, flame sensors, and automatic shut-off valves that make them much safer than older models.

Proper installation is critical for safety. In Ontario, gas fireplace installation requires a TSSA permit and must be performed by a licensed G2 or G3 gas technician. The installation includes proper venting, gas line connections, and clearances from combustible materials. Direct-vent gas fireplaces are particularly safe because they draw combustion air from outside and exhaust all combustion gases directly outdoors, preventing any backdrafting into your home.

Regular maintenance keeps your gas fireplace operating safely. Annual servicing by a licensed technician ensures the venting system is clear, gas connections are secure, and safety sensors are functioning properly. During maintenance, technicians check for carbon monoxide leaks, inspect the firebox and glass doors, and clean the burner and control components.

In Ottawa's climate, gas fireplaces are popular because they provide reliable heat even during power outages (with battery backup or pilot light models). However, **always ensure your home has working carbon monoxide detectors** on every level, especially near sleeping areas. Never use your gas fireplace with damaged glass doors or blocked venting, and have any unusual odors, sounds, or flame patterns inspected immediately.

If you're considering a gas fireplace installation or need annual servicing, ensure you work with TSSA-licensed technicians who understand Ontario's specific requirements and can obtain the necessary permits for safe, code-compliant installation.

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Gas fireplace insert vs freestanding - which is better

Gas fireplace inserts are generally better for most Ottawa homeowners because they're more efficient, cost-effective to install, and provide better heat output for your space.

Gas fireplace inserts are designed to fit into your existing masonry fireplace opening, converting an inefficient wood-burning fireplace into a clean, convenient heating source. They typically achieve 70-85% efficiency ratings and can heat 1,000-2,000 square feet effectively. Since they use your existing chimney structure, installation costs are lower - usually \$3,000-\$5,000 including the TSSA permit and professional installation by a licensed G2 technician.

Freestanding gas fireplaces offer more flexibility in placement since they don't require an existing fireplace, but they need their own venting system installed through an exterior wall or roof. This makes installation more complex and expensive, typically \$4,000-\$6,500. However, they can be positioned anywhere in your room for optimal heat distribution and often have larger viewing areas for better ambiance.

In Ottawa's climate, **inserts make more sense if you already have a fireplace** because they seal off the chimney draft that wastes heated air, while providing zone heating to reduce your furnace load during shoulder seasons. Freestanding units are ideal when you want to add a fireplace to a room that doesn't have one, like a finished basement or addition.

Both options require TSSA permits and licensed installation - never attempt DIY installation of gas appliances. The gas line connection, venting, and safety controls must meet Ontario's strict codes. Annual servicing is recommended to ensure safe operation and maintain efficiency.

For a free consultation about which option works best for your Ottawa home, Ottawa HVAC Pro can assess your space and provide expert recommendations based on your heating needs and budget.

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