TORONTO DRYWALL INSTALLERS

Repair & Patching

Hole repair, crack fixing, water damage restoration, screw pops, nail pops, and drywall patch techniques

20 Expert Answers from Drywall IQ

torontodrywallinstallers.com/construction-brain

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Q1

What is the best repair approach for drywall cracking along a staircase wall in a three-storey GTA townhouse?

Staircase wall cracks in multi-storey GTA townhouses are almost always caused by structural movement from Toronto's freeze-thaw cycles, and require a flexible repair approach that accommodates ongoing seasonal movement rather than fighting it.

The **three-storey configuration creates maximum stress** on staircase walls because they span the full height of the building and experience the greatest differential movement between floors. During Toronto's winter freeze-thaw cycles (over 50 per year), the foundation settles while upper floors shift, creating a twisting motion that concentrates stress along the staircase wall where it meets each floor level. This is why cracks typically appear at the ceiling-to-wall joint on each landing and along the angled wall that follows the stair stringers.

The key is using materials that flex with movement rather than rigid repairs that will crack again. Remove any loose or cracked joint compound along the crack using a putty knife, then clean the area thoroughly. For cracks up to 1/8 inch wide, use a high-quality acrylic caulk (like DAP Alex Plus or Tremco Dymonic) rather than joint compound for the initial fill. Caulk remains flexible and won't crack with minor movement. For wider cracks, use setting compound (20-minute hot mud) mixed slightly thinner than normal for the base coat, as it's stronger and less prone to shrinkage than pre-mixed compound.

Apply fibreglass mesh tape over the caulked crack, then embed it with a thin coat of all-purpose compound. The mesh distributes stress over a wider area than paper tape and is less likely to crack with movement. After the first coat dries (24-48 hours in GTA humidity), apply two additional coats of topping compound, feathering each coat 2-3 inches wider than the previous one. Sand lightly with 150-grit paper and prime with a high-quality PVA primer before painting.

For recurring cracks that have been repaired multiple times, consider installing vinyl corner bead (No-Coat) along inside corners where the staircase wall meets the ceiling. This flexible bead moves with the structure and eliminates the hard joint that concentrates stress. It's embedded with compound rather than nailed, so there are no fasteners to work loose.

Timing matters significantly in the GTA climate. Avoid repairs during extreme temperature swings (January-February and during summer heat waves) when movement is most active. The best repair window is late spring (May) or early fall (September-October) when temperatures are stable. Winter repairs in heated homes can work, but maintain 35-45% humidity during compound drying to prevent cracking from overly dry air.

Address the root cause if possible. Check that gutters are clean and downspouts direct water away from the foundation. Ensure basement humidity stays below 50% year-round to minimize foundation movement. If cracks are severe (wider than 1/4 inch) or accompanied by sticking doors, sloping floors, or new cracks appearing seasonally, consult a structural engineer before cosmetic repairs.

This is typically a professional job because staircase walls are highly visible, often have complex angles around the stair stringers, and require scaffolding or tall ladders for safe access to upper portions. A skilled drywall finisher can assess whether the cracking pattern indicates normal settling versus structural issues, and has the tools to achieve invisible repairs on these prominent walls. Poor DIY repairs on staircase walls are immediately obvious to anyone using the stairs daily.

Need help finding a drywall professional experienced with townhouse movement issues? Toronto Drywall Installers can match you with local contractors who understand GTA structural movement patterns and use appropriate flexible repair techniques.

Q2

How much does it cost to repair drywall cracks caused by TTC subway vibrations in a downtown Toronto home?

Drywall crack repair from TTC subway vibrations typically costs $150-$400 per crack for professional repair, though extensive cracking throughout a home can run $800-$2,500 depending on the severity and number of affected joints.

Subway vibrations create a unique type of drywall stress that's common in downtown Toronto homes, particularly those within 200-300 metres of subway lines. The constant low-frequency vibrations from passing trains cause micro-movements in the building structure, which stress drywall joints over time. Unlike settling cracks that appear once and stabilize, vibration-induced cracks tend to reopen periodically, making proper repair technique critical.

Understanding Vibration-Induced Cracking

TTC subway vibrations primarily affect homes along the Yonge-University, Bloor-Danforth, and Sheppard lines, with the most severe issues occurring near stations where trains brake and accelerate. The vibrations cause hairline cracks along taped joints, particularly at ceiling-to-wall transitions and inside corners where two walls meet. These cracks typically appear as straight lines following the joint compound seams rather than the random spider-web patterns you'd see from impact damage.

The challenge with vibration cracks is that standard crack repair often fails because the underlying cause (vibration) continues. Simply filling the crack with spackling compound and painting over it will result in the crack reappearing within months. Professional repair requires removing the failed tape, re-taping with paper tape and setting compound (which doesn't shrink), and often reinforcing with mesh tape or fiberglass mesh for added strength.

Repair Costs by Scope

For **individual cracks**, expect $150-$300 per linear crack for professional repair including removal of failed compound, proper re-taping, three-coat finishing, priming, and paint touch-up. Corner cracks where walls meet ceilings are more complex and run $200-$400 each due to the difficulty of achieving clean lines at transitions.

Multiple cracks throughout a room typically cost $400-$800 for a standard bedroom or living room, while extensive cracking affecting an entire floor of a home can reach $1,200-$2,500. Homes directly above subway tunnels (particularly along Yonge Street between Bloor and King) often experience systematic cracking that requires comprehensive re-taping of most joints.

Professional vs. DIY Considerations

While small vibration cracks might seem like simple DIY repairs, they're actually more challenging than typical settling cracks because they require specific materials and techniques to prevent recurrence. The repair must be stronger and more flexible than the original installation. Professional drywall contractors use setting compound (hot mud) for the base coat because it sets by chemical reaction rather than air drying, creating a harder, less shrink-prone repair. They often reinforce stress points with fiberglass mesh tape or apply flexible caulk at ceiling transitions in areas of ongoing movement.

Timing and Prevention

The best time for vibration crack repair is during Toronto's dry winter months (January-March) when indoor humidity is lowest and compounds cure most predictably. However, if you're planning any other renovations, consider addressing the vibration issue systematically. Some downtown Toronto homeowners invest in **vibration isolation** during major renovations — this involves resilient channel installation or double-drywall assemblies with Green Glue damping compound, which can reduce crack recurrence by 70-80% but adds $3-$5 per square foot to the drywall installation cost.

For homes with chronic vibration cracking, the most cost-effective long-term solution is often re-taping all stress joints with paper tape and setting compound during a planned renovation, rather than repeatedly patching individual cracks as they appear.

Need help finding a drywall professional experienced with vibration-related repairs? Toronto Drywall Installers can match you with contractors familiar with downtown Toronto's unique challenges.

Q3

What is the best way to repair drywall around a chimney chase that has shifted in an older Toronto home?

Chimney chase settling is extremely common in older Toronto homes, and the repair approach depends on whether the movement has stopped or is ongoing. The key is addressing both the structural cause and the visible drywall damage to prevent recurring cracks.

Understanding Chimney Chase Movement in Toronto Homes

Chimney chases in Toronto's older housing stock (particularly 1940s-1980s homes in Scarborough, North York, and Etobicoke) are notorious for settling and shifting. The heavy masonry chimney and its foundation often settle at a different rate than the house foundation, especially during Toronto's brutal freeze-thaw cycles. Over 50 freeze-thaw cycles per year cause differential movement between the chimney structure and the house framing, creating stress cracks in the drywall where the chase meets walls and ceilings.

Before any drywall repair, you need to determine if the movement is active or has stabilized. Look for fresh cracks, doors or windows near the chimney that stick seasonally, or gaps that open and close with temperature changes. If movement is ongoing, any drywall repair will crack again within months. Active movement requires structural assessment by a structural engineer before cosmetic repairs.

Repair Strategy for Stabilized Movement

If the settling has stopped (no new cracks for 2+ years), start by removing all loose drywall and failed joint compound around the chase. Cut back to solid, well-adhered material using a utility knife. For cracks wider than 1/8 inch, use fibreglass mesh tape with setting compound (hot mud) rather than paper tape with pre-mixed compound. Setting compound doesn't shrink and provides superior crack resistance for stress joints.

Apply the first coat with 45-minute setting compound, embedding the mesh tape and filling the crack slightly proud. After it sets, apply a second coat with 90-minute setting compound, feathering 6-8 inches on each side. The final coat should be topping compound for smooth finishing. This three-coat system with setting compound provides maximum crack resistance.

Addressing Ongoing Movement

For chases with active movement, consider installing **expansion joints** rather than trying to achieve invisible repairs. A small bead of paintable acrylic caulk along the chase-to-wall junction allows movement without cracking. This isn't invisible, but it's far better than recurring cracks that require annual touch-ups.

Another option is **vinyl corner bead (No-Coat)** along outside corners of the chase. This flexible bead moves with the structure and resists cracking better than traditional metal corner bead, which creates a rigid stress point.

GTA Climate Considerations

Toronto's extreme seasonal temperature swings make chimney chase movement worse. The masonry chimney expands and contracts differently than wood framing, and the chase experiences significant temperature fluctuations from the flue. Plan repairs for late spring or early fall when movement is minimal. Avoid repairs during January-February (maximum contraction) or July-August (maximum expansion).

Winter repairs in unheated spaces require temporary heating to keep the area above 10°C for proper compound curing. Summer repairs during humid periods may require dehumidification to prevent slow drying and poor bond strength.

Professional Assessment Recommended

Significant chimney chase movement often indicates foundation issues, inadequate footing design, or structural problems that go beyond cosmetic drywall repair. Many Toronto homes built in the post-war boom had minimal chimney footings that are inadequate for our freeze-thaw conditions. A structural engineer can assess whether the movement is cosmetic settling or indicates ongoing structural issues.

When to Hire a Professional

While small crack repairs are DIY-friendly, extensive chimney chase damage typically requires professional drywall contractors experienced with structural movement repairs. They understand which compounds and techniques provide the best crack resistance and can assess whether the damage pattern indicates ongoing structural issues. Professional repairs include proper surface preparation, multi-coat systems with setting compounds, and realistic expectations about long-term performance in older Toronto homes.

Need help finding a drywall professional experienced with heritage home repairs? Toronto Drywall Installers can match you with contractors familiar with the unique challenges of Toronto's older housing stock.

Q4

What is the best method to repair a large hole in drywall caused by a plumbing access in a GTA home?

The best method for repairing a large hole left by a plumbing access depends on the size of the opening, but for holes larger than 6 inches — which most plumbing access cuts are — you need a full patch using a new piece of drywall backed by wood or metal supports, not just a mesh patch or spackle. This type of repair is extremely common in GTA homes after plumbing work, whether it is a burst pipe repair during a Toronto winter freeze, a bathroom renovation rough-in, or a drain cleanout access.

For a plumbing access hole, which is typically a rectangular or irregular opening ranging from 12 inches to several feet across, the **backer board method** produces the strongest, most professional result. Start by squaring off the hole — use a utility knife and straightedge or a drywall saw to cut the ragged edges into a clean rectangle. Cutting to a clean geometric shape makes fitting the patch much easier and produces better-looking joints.

Next, **install backer supports behind the opening**. For holes up to about 16 inches, you can use 1x3 or 1x4 furring strips cut 4–6 inches longer than the opening. Slide the strip behind the drywall so it overlaps the existing drywall edge by 2–3 inches on each side, then screw through the existing drywall into the strip with 1-1/4-inch drywall screws to secure it. You will need a backer strip on each side of the opening (top and bottom, or left and right). For larger holes — anything approaching 2 feet or more — it is better to cut back to the nearest studs on each side and screw the patch directly to the studs, which provides a much more rigid backing.

Cut your patch piece from the same thickness of drywall as the existing wall — typically 1/2-inch for walls in most GTA homes. Measure the squared opening and cut the patch 1/8 inch smaller in each direction for a comfortable fit. The patch should drop into the opening with a small gap around all edges — this gap will be filled with joint compound. Screw the patch to the backer boards or studs with drywall screws every 8 inches.

Taping and finishing the patch is where the quality of the repair is determined. Apply paper tape over all four joints using setting compound (hot mud) for the first coat — setting compound is stronger than pre-mixed all-purpose and will not shrink as much, which is important for patch joints that need to be built up to match the surrounding wall plane. Feather the first coat out 4–6 inches on each side of the joint. Allow it to set fully (follow the set time on the bag — 45-minute or 90-minute compound is ideal for patches), then apply a second coat of all-purpose or topping compound, feathering out 8–10 inches. A third coat feathered to 12 inches blends the patch into the surrounding wall.

Sanding is critical — use 120-grit sandpaper on a sanding block or pole sander, with a work light held at a raking angle to the wall. The raking light reveals any ridges, bumps, or depressions that will show through paint. Sand lightly and check frequently — over-sanding exposes the tape and creates more problems than it solves.

Before painting, **prime the patch with PVA drywall primer**. Raw joint compound and drywall paper absorb paint differently than the surrounding painted wall, causing flashing — a visible difference in sheen and colour where the patch is. PVA primer seals the porous surfaces evenly so the finish paint goes on uniformly. Then apply two coats of finish paint to the entire wall, not just the patch area, for an invisible repair.

If the plumbing access might be needed again — for example, a cleanout access or a shut-off valve — consider installing a drywall access panel instead of a permanent patch. Access panels are available at GTA building supply stores for $15–$40 and provide a clean, finished opening that can be opened for future plumbing access without cutting drywall again.

A professional drywall repair for a plumbing access hole in the GTA typically costs **$250–$500** depending on the size of the opening and the difficulty of matching the surrounding finish. For a capable DIYer with basic tools, this is one of the more achievable drywall repairs — the materials cost only $20–$40 (a scrap piece of drywall, backer boards, compound, tape, and primer). The challenge is in the finishing — achieving an invisible patch requires patience and practice with feathering compound. If you want a seamless result, get matched with a drywall repair professional through Toronto Drywall Installers.

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Q5

How do I fix hairline drywall cracks that keep coming back along the ceiling joint in my Scarborough home?

Recurring hairline cracks along the ceiling-to-wall joint are almost certainly caused by truss uplift or seasonal structural movement — not poor workmanship — and the permanent fix involves accommodating the movement rather than fighting it with more compound and tape. This is one of the single most common

drywall complaints in Scarborough and across the GTA, particularly in post-war bungalows and split-levels built from the 1950s through the 1980s, and it is directly caused by Toronto's extreme temperature swings.

Here is what is happening: **your roof trusses expand and contract with temperature and humidity changes throughout the year.** During Toronto's cold, dry winters (December through March, with temperatures dropping to -10 to -20 degrees Celsius), the bottom chord of the truss — the horizontal member that your ceiling drywall is attached to — dries out and shrinks slightly, while the top chord, insulated by attic insulation, remains relatively stable. This causes the truss to bow upward in the centre, lifting the ceiling drywall away from the interior partition walls. The movement is small — typically 1/8 to 1/4 inch — but it is enough to crack the taped joint where the ceiling meets the wall. In spring and summer, the truss relaxes back down and the crack partially closes. This cycle repeats every year, and each cycle makes the crack worse.

With over 50 freeze-thaw cycles per year in the GTA, Toronto homes experience more of this movement than most Canadian cities. **The reason the crack keeps coming back no matter how many times you patch it** is that you are rigidly connecting two surfaces that are moving independently of each other. No amount of compound, tape, or even fibreglass mesh will resist this movement permanently — the forces involved are far stronger than any drywall joint.

The professional solution is to create a floating joint that accommodates the movement rather than resisting it. This involves two key changes. First, **remove the drywall screws or nails within 16 inches of the wall-to-ceiling junction on the ceiling side.** Instead, the ceiling drywall should be held in place only by fasteners farther from the wall, allowing the ceiling edge to float slightly as the truss moves. The wall drywall extends up to the ceiling and supports the ceiling edge without a rigid fastener connection. Second, **use a flexible treatment at the joint** instead of rigid tape and compound.

The most effective repair method used by GTA drywall contractors for recurring truss uplift cracks is to **remove the existing cracked tape and compound** along the affected joint using a utility knife and 6-inch taping knife, scrape back to clean drywall on both surfaces, and then install a **flexible corner bead designed for ceiling joints** — products like No-Coat Ultraflex or similar vinyl-based corner bead that flex with movement. Alternatively, some contractors apply a strip of fibreglass mesh tape bedded in setting compound, then finish with a flexible, elastomeric compound or caulk rather than standard joint compound. The flexible caulk stretches with the seasonal movement instead of cracking.

A simpler but less elegant approach that many Scarborough homeowners use is to install **crown moulding** along the ceiling-to-wall joint to conceal the crack permanently. The crown moulding is fastened only to the ceiling joists (not the wall) or only to the wall top plate (not the ceiling), allowing it to move with one surface. This does not fix the crack — it hides it — but it is an effective and attractive solution that adds visual interest to the room. Crown moulding installation in the GTA runs roughly **$4–$10 per linear foot** including materials and labour.

If you want to attempt the repair yourself, here is the practical approach: scrape out the existing cracked compound, apply a bead of **paintable latex/silicone caulk** (not standard caulk — use a product specifically designed for drywall joints) into the crack, smooth it with a wet finger or caulk tool, and paint over it. The flexible caulk will stretch with the seasonal movement. This is not a Level 4 finish — you will see a slight texture difference at the caulk line — but it will stop the crack from reappearing. Reapply as needed every 3–5 years.

A professional repair of recurring ceiling cracks in a Scarborough home typically costs $150–$400 per room, depending on the length of the affected joints and the repair method used. If the cracks are extensive — running through multiple rooms — a whole-house ceiling joint repair can run $1,000–$2,500. For persistent crack issues, get matched with a drywall repair specialist through Toronto Drywall Installers who understands truss uplift and can recommend the right solution for your specific home.

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Q6

What causes bubbling drywall tape and how can it be permanently repaired in a Toronto home?

Bubbling drywall tape is caused by insufficient compound beneath the tape during the original installation, preventing the tape from bonding to the drywall surface — and the permanent fix requires removing the failed tape entirely and re-taping the joint from scratch with proper technique. This is not a cosmetic issue that can be fixed by pushing the bubble flat and skim-coating over it; the bond has failed, and the tape must come off.

There are several specific reasons why tape bubbles form, and understanding them helps prevent the problem from recurring. **The most common cause is too little compound beneath the tape.** When paper tape is applied, it

must be fully embedded in a bed of joint compound with no dry spots or air pockets. If the installer lays the tape over a thin or uneven layer of compound, portions of the tape have no adhesive bond to the drywall. Over time — sometimes weeks, sometimes years — these unbonded sections release and form bubbles. This is a workmanship issue that is surprisingly common, even in professionally finished GTA homes, because it requires discipline to apply a consistent, full bed of compound before embedding the tape.

The second common cause is applying tape over dusty, dirty, or contaminated drywall. If the board surface was not wiped clean before taping, or if sanding dust from adjacent work settled on the compound before the tape was embedded, the bond fails at the contamination layer. In Toronto's busy construction market, where drywall crews are working fast to meet schedules, this corner-cutting happens more often than it should.

Moisture is the third major cause, and this is particularly relevant in GTA homes. In bathrooms, kitchens, and basement walls where humidity is high, moisture can penetrate behind the tape and weaken the compound bond over time. Homes in lakefront neighbourhoods like the Beaches, Mimico, and Port Credit experience higher ambient humidity due to Lake Ontario's moderating effect, making tape bond failure more common in these areas. In basements with inadequate vapour barriers or ventilation, tape bubbling can indicate a broader moisture problem behind the drywall that should be investigated before repair.

Toronto's seasonal extremes also contribute. If taping was done during winter in an unheated or poorly heated space, the compound may have partially frozen before curing, destroying the bond. Conversely, if taping was done during a hot, dry summer without humidity control, the compound may have dried too quickly on the surface while remaining soft underneath — a condition called skinning — which prevents proper tape adhesion.

The Permanent Repair

Start by removing all the failed tape. Use a 6-inch taping knife to slice along both edges of the bubbled tape, then peel it off. If the tape comes off easily, the bond failure is extensive and you should check adjacent sections — often the visible bubble is just the most obvious symptom of a larger area of poor adhesion. Pull off any tape that releases with light tugging. Scrape the exposed joint clean of old compound residue, leaving a clean surface for the new application.

Apply a generous bed of setting compound (hot mud) along the exposed joint. Setting compound is strongly recommended over pre-mixed all-purpose for re-taping because it bonds more aggressively, does not shrink, and sets by chemical reaction rather than air drying — meaning it will not fail due to humidity or temperature issues the way pre-mixed compound can. Use 45-minute or 90-minute setting compound mixed to a smooth, creamy consistency. Apply the compound in a continuous bed about 1/8-inch thick and slightly wider than the tape.

Lay new paper tape into the wet compound and press it firmly into the bed using a 6-inch taping knife, working from the centre of the tape outward to squeeze out air bubbles and excess compound. You should feel the knife

pressing the tape into full contact with the compound beneath — there should be no hollow or spongy spots. A thin, consistent layer of compound should squeeze out from under both edges of the tape. Wipe the excess with the knife, leaving the tape smooth and flat with a thin compound layer covering it.

Allow the setting compound to cure fully, then apply a second coat of all-purpose or topping compound, feathering out 8–10 inches. After drying, apply a final coat feathered to 12 inches. Sand lightly with 120-grit sandpaper using a raking work light to check for imperfections. **Prime with PVA drywall primer** before painting — this is essential because the repair area has different absorption than the surrounding painted surface.

A professional tape repair in a GTA home costs **$150–$400** depending on the extent of the bubbling and the number of joints affected. For a single joint in one room, a capable homeowner can handle this repair with about $20–$30 in materials and a few hours of work spread over two days for drying time. The key to permanent success is a full, consistent compound bed beneath the tape — do not rush the embedding step. If you have extensive tape failure across multiple rooms, it may indicate a systemic installation issue, and getting matched with a professional drywall finisher through Toronto Drywall Installers is the most efficient path to a lasting repair.

Q7

How much does it cost to repair drywall damage from a leaking roof in an Etobicoke bungalow?

Repairing drywall damage from a roof leak in an Etobicoke bungalow typically costs $300–$800 per affected area for straightforward water damage, but a widespread leak affecting multiple ceiling and wall sections can push the total to $1,500–$4,000 or more depending on the extent of the damage. The final cost depends on how long the leak went undetected, how many sheets need replacement, and whether mould remediation is required.

The first and most critical step is to **fix the roof leak itself** before any drywall repair begins. This may seem obvious, but many homeowners are tempted to patch the stained ceiling quickly — only to have the same area fail again after the next rainstorm. Once the roofing contractor confirms the leak is resolved and the framing has fully dried (this can take one to two weeks with proper ventilation), a drywall professional can assess the damage.

Etobicoke's post-war bungalows, many built between the 1950s and 1970s, are particularly susceptible to roof leak damage because their low-slope roof sections and aging shingles allow water to pool and penetrate slowly. By the time a brown water stain appears on the ceiling drywall, the gypsum core above has likely been saturated for some time. **Water-damaged drywall cannot simply be dried out and repainted — once the gypsum core absorbs water, it loses its structural integrity and becomes a breeding ground for mould.** The damaged sections must be cut out and replaced entirely.

For a typical Etobicoke bungalow ceiling repair, here is what you can expect in terms of costs. **Cutting out and replacing a single damaged section** (up to about 4 feet by 4 feet) runs $300–$600 including materials, taping, finishing to a Level 4 paint-ready surface, and primer. **Multiple areas or a full ceiling replacement** in one room will range from $800–$2,500. If the leak has spread down the walls, add $250–$500 per affected wall section. **Mould remediation**, if black mould is discovered behind the drywall or in the attic insulation, can add $1,500–$5,000 or more depending on the extent — this work should be done by a certified remediation professional, not a drywall contractor.

There are a few important things to watch for during the repair. Your contractor should inspect the wooden framing (joists and trusses) for signs of rot or mould before installing new drywall. If the home was built before 1990, the existing ceiling texture — especially popcorn or stipple finishes common in Etobicoke bungalows of that era — may contain asbestos. Ontario Regulation 278/05 requires testing before any disturbance, and if asbestos is confirmed, certified abatement is needed before the drywall work can proceed, adding $3,000–$8,000 to the project.

For the ceiling patch itself, a professional will use **5/8-inch drywall for the ceiling** (it resists sagging better than 1/2-inch) and ensure proper screw spacing at 12 inches on centre. The biggest challenge is **matching the existing**

ceiling texture — this is where skill matters enormously. A good drywall finisher can blend a patch into the surrounding ceiling so the repair is invisible, while a poor match will be obvious under any lighting.

Timing also matters in the GTA. If your roof leaked during a winter ice dam or spring thaw, the attic space may still hold moisture. Running a dehumidifier in the attic or upper space for several days before drywall installation prevents trapping moisture behind the new board, which would lead to mould growth within months.

For a small, contained area of damage — say a single stain under 2 square feet where the drywall is still firm and not sagging — a handy homeowner could attempt a cosmetic fix with a stain-blocking primer like Zinsser BIN and repaint. But if the drywall is soft, sagging, or crumbling, or if there is any sign of mould, this is firmly professional territory. Get matched with a drywall contractor through Toronto Drywall Installers for a free estimate on your project.

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Q8

What is the proper repair technique for water-stained drywall in a Toronto condo after an upstairs leak?

The proper repair depends entirely on whether the water only stained the surface or actually saturated and weakened the drywall core — a cosmetic stain on firm drywall can be sealed and repainted, but soft, sagging, or bubbling drywall must be cut out and replaced. Press your hand firmly against the stained area. If it feels solid and unchanged from the surrounding drywall, you are likely dealing with a surface stain only. If it feels soft, spongy, or gives under pressure, the gypsum core is compromised and replacement is the only proper fix.

Assessing the Damage

Condo leaks from upstairs units are one of the most common drywall repair calls in Toronto, and they require careful assessment before any work begins. First, **confirm the leak has been fully resolved** — this typically involves your building's property management and the upstairs unit owner. In Toronto condos, the source is often a bathroom supply line, drain connection, dishwasher hose, or washing machine. Until the leak is stopped and the area has dried thoroughly (allow at least 5–7 days with good airflow), no drywall repair should begin. Trapping residual moisture behind a fresh patch guarantees mould growth.

For a **surface-stain-only repair** where the drywall is firm and intact, the technique is straightforward. Lightly sand the stained area with 120-grit sandpaper to remove any raised texture or flaking paint. Apply a coat of **stain-blocking primer** — Zinsser BIN (shellac-based) is the industry standard for water stains and is far superior to regular primer for this purpose. Standard latex primer will not block tannin stains, and the brown ring will bleed through your fresh paint within weeks. Once the stain blocker has dried, apply two coats of your finish paint. This is a repair most capable homeowners can handle themselves for under $50 in materials.

For **saturated drywall that needs replacement**, the process is more involved. A professional will cut out the damaged section, extending at least 6 inches beyond the visible damage in each direction to ensure all compromised material is removed. They will inspect the ceiling joists or wall studs behind the removed section for mould and moisture, allow everything to dry completely, then install a new drywall patch. In a condo ceiling, **5/8-inch drywall** should be used to match the existing board thickness and resist future sagging. The patch gets taped with paper tape bedded in setting compound, followed by two finishing coats of all-purpose or topping compound, sanded smooth, and primed.

There is an important **condo-specific consideration** that many homeowners overlook. Toronto condos have fire-rated ceiling and wall assemblies between units — typically requiring 5/8-inch Type X drywall to maintain the 1-hour fire separation mandated by the Ontario Building Code. If your repair involves cutting into the ceiling between your unit and the one above, the replacement drywall **must be the same fire-rated Type X board** to maintain the assembly's fire rating. Using regular 1/2-inch drywall as a patch in a fire-rated assembly is a code violation and a safety hazard. Your contractor should verify the existing assembly type before selecting replacement materials.

Costs for condo water damage drywall repair in the GTA typically run **$300–$800 per affected area** for a professional repair including cutting out damaged material, replacing with proper board, taping, finishing, and primer. If multiple rooms are affected, expect $1,000–$3,000. Most Toronto condo buildings restrict construction noise to weekday business hours (typically 9 AM to 5 PM), and your building may require a construction permit or deposit before work can begin — check with your property manager before scheduling.

One final note: **document everything with photos** before, during, and after the repair. Condo water damage from an upstairs unit is typically the responsibility of that unit's insurance or the condo corporation's insurance, depending on the source. Having clear documentation of the damage and repair costs strengthens any insurance

claim. If you need help finding a drywall professional experienced with Toronto condo repairs, Toronto Drywall Installers can match you with a local contractor for a free estimate.

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Q9

Can drywall with minor surface mould be repaired or does it always need to be replaced in Ontario?

Drywall with truly minor surface mould — a thin film on the paint surface only, covering less than about 10 square feet — can sometimes be cleaned and treated without full replacement, but if the mould has penetrated into the paper facing or the gypsum core, the drywall must be removed and replaced. The critical distinction is between mould sitting on top of the painted surface versus mould that has colonized the drywall material itself.

To assess the situation, start by understanding what you are looking at. **Surface mould** appears as spots or patches on the painted face of the drywall, typically in bathrooms, kitchens, basements, or any area with poor ventilation and high humidity. If you wipe the area with a damp cloth and the mould comes off cleanly, leaving firm, intact drywall and paint underneath, you are likely dealing with surface growth only. **If the mould has caused the paint to bubble or peel, if the drywall paper feels soft or fuzzy, or if you can see dark staining that penetrates into the board, the mould has gone deeper** and cleaning the surface will not solve the problem — it will return within weeks.

For **surface-only mould on painted drywall**, the accepted repair approach involves several steps. Wear an N95 respirator, gloves, and eye protection. Clean the area with a solution of water and unscented detergent — avoid bleach on drywall, as bleach is water-based and adds moisture to the porous gypsum, potentially making the

problem worse. After cleaning and drying thoroughly, apply a **mould-killing primer** such as Zinsser Mold Killing Primer, which is specifically formulated to bind to and seal residual mould spores on the surface. Then repaint with a mould-resistant paint, especially in bathrooms and basements.

However, there are situations where **replacement is the only proper option**, regardless of how minor the visible mould appears. If mould is growing on the back side of the drywall (visible when you cut an inspection hole), the gypsum core is compromised. If the drywall was previously water-damaged — even if it dried out and felt firm — mould spores likely colonized the paper facing throughout the affected area. In basements, mould on drywall often indicates a larger moisture problem behind the wall, such as water infiltration through the foundation, missing or improperly installed vapour barrier, or condensation inside the wall cavity. In these cases, **removing the drywall to inspect and address the moisture source is essential** — otherwise you are simply covering up an ongoing problem.

Ontario does not have a specific "mould law" that mandates replacement at a certain threshold, but there are practical and health-related guidelines. **Health Canada recommends professional remediation for mould growth exceeding 3 square metres (about 30 square feet)**, or for any amount of mould in homes with occupants who have respiratory conditions, allergies, or compromised immune systems. Ontario's workplace safety regulations under OHSA also require proper protective equipment and containment for mould removal in occupied buildings.

In the GTA context, **basement mould on drywall is extremely common** and almost always indicates a systemic moisture issue rather than a simple surface problem. Toronto's freeze-thaw cycles cause foundation cracks that allow water infiltration, and many older homes in Scarborough, North York, and Etobicoke have basements that were finished without proper waterproofing or vapour barriers. If you find mould on basement drywall, a professional should remove a section to inspect the wall cavity, check for vapour barrier presence and condition, and assess the insulation. Addressing the root cause — whether it is foundation waterproofing, improved ventilation, or a dehumidifier — must happen before new drywall goes up.

Cost-wise, **professional mould-related drywall removal and replacement** in the GTA runs $500–$2,000 for a contained area (one wall section), or $2,000–$6,000 for a full basement room. If the mould is extensive enough to require certified mould remediation with containment barriers and air scrubbers, that adds $2,000–$8,000 depending on scope.

The bottom line: if the mould wipes off easily and the drywall beneath is firm, clean, and dry, surface treatment can work. But if there is any doubt about depth, any softness in the board, any history of water damage, or any musty smell behind the wall, **replacement is the safer and more cost-effective long-term choice**. A professional drywall contractor can assess the situation quickly — find one through Toronto Drywall Installers for a free consultation.

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Q10

How do professionals repair drywall around a relocated electrical panel in a GTA home renovation?

Repairing drywall around a relocated electrical panel is a multi-trade coordination job — the electrician moves the panel first, an electrical inspector approves the work, and then the drywall contractor patches the old panel opening and finishes around the new location. This is not a simple patch job because both the old and new panel locations have specific code requirements that affect the drywall work.

When an electrical panel is relocated in a GTA home renovation, it leaves behind a rectangular cutout in the drywall that is typically 14 to 30 inches wide and 30 to 50 inches tall, depending on the panel size. There are also multiple conduit or cable penetrations through the framing. A professional drywall contractor will start by **verifying that the electrician has completed all work and the ESA (Electrical Safety Authority) inspection has passed** — no drywall should go up until the electrical inspection is done, because the inspector needs to see the wiring, connections, and panel installation.

For the **old panel location**, the repair process involves several steps. The contractor first inspects the framing inside the wall cavity. If the old panel was surface-mounted, there may be a plywood backer board that needs to be removed. If it was flush-mounted, the framing may have been modified with blocking or additional studs to support the panel, and these may need to be adjusted to provide a flat nailing surface for the new drywall. Any abandoned holes through studs or top/bottom plates where wiring was routed should be sealed with fire caulking if the wall is part of a fire-rated assembly.

The contractor then cuts a **clean rectangular opening** back to the nearest stud centres on each side, providing solid backing for the patch. If studs are not conveniently located, they will install horizontal blocking (2x4 lumber) at the top and bottom of the opening, secured to the existing framing, creating a solid perimeter to screw the new drywall into. The patch is cut from the **same thickness and type of drywall** as the surrounding wall — if the old panel was on a garage-to-house wall, this must be 5/8-inch Type X fire-rated drywall to maintain the fire separation required by the Ontario Building Code.

The patch gets screwed into place at 16-inch maximum spacing on walls, with screws placed at least 3/8 inch from the board edges. The joints are then taped — **paper tape bedded in setting compound** is the professional choice for patch work because setting compound does not shrink and provides a strong first coat. Two additional coats of all-purpose or topping compound follow, with sanding between coats using 120–150 grit paper. A raking work light is essential to check for imperfections before priming.

For the **new panel location**, the drywall work is simpler but still requires precision. The drywall contractor cuts a clean opening to match the new panel's rough-in dimensions, ensuring tight gaps around the panel trim. The gap

between the drywall edge and the panel trim should be minimal — typically 1/8 inch or less — so the panel cover plate sits flush against the wall. Any fire-rated assembly requirements apply here as well.

Cost-wise in the GTA, patching the old panel location and finishing around the new one typically runs **$400–$900** for the drywall scope alone, assuming straightforward conditions. If the wall requires texture matching (knockdown, orange peel, or stipple), add $150–$300. If the old panel was in a finished basement and the surrounding drywall needs to be extended or replaced to create a clean result, costs can reach $1,000–$1,500. The electrical relocation itself is a separate cost — typically $2,000–$5,000 depending on the complexity and distance of the move.

A key point that homeowners managing a renovation should understand: **schedule the drywall repair as a distinct step after the electrical inspection passes.** Rushing to close up the wall before inspection means the electrician may need to cut open the fresh drywall repair if the inspector requires changes. This is a common and expensive mistake on GTA renovation projects. The proper sequence is demolition, rough-in electrical, ESA inspection, insulation and vapour barrier (if applicable), then drywall.

This type of repair — matching existing wall finishes seamlessly around a structural change — is firmly professional territory. Find a drywall contractor experienced with renovation patchwork through the Toronto Construction Network directory.

Q11

What is the best way to fix sagging drywall on a basement ceiling caused by moisture in a Mississauga home?

Sagging drywall on a basement ceiling caused by moisture must be removed and replaced — there is no way to repair or re-secure drywall once the gypsum core has absorbed water and lost its structural integrity. Attempting to push the sagging drywall back up and add screws will not work because the saturated gypsum has expanded and weakened permanently. The proper fix involves removing the damaged drywall, identifying and resolving the moisture source, allowing the framing to dry completely, and installing new drywall.

Mississauga homes, particularly those built in the 1970s through 1990s in subdivisions like Meadowvale, Erin Mills, Streetsville, and Churchill Meadows, are among the most common candidates for this repair. Basement ceiling moisture in these homes typically comes from one of several sources: **condensation on cold water pipes** running through the floor joists above, **a bathroom leak from the floor above** (toilet wax ring, shower pan, supply lines), **inadequate bathroom exhaust ventilation** allowing humid air to penetrate into the joist cavity, or **high ambient humidity** in a basement without proper dehumidification during GTA summers when outdoor humidity regularly pushes above 70%.

Identifying the Moisture Source

Before any drywall work begins, a professional will determine exactly what caused the sagging. This is the most important step — replacing the drywall without fixing the moisture source means the new ceiling will sag again within months. Common diagnostic steps include checking all plumbing above the affected area for leaks, verifying that bathroom exhaust fans vent to the exterior (not into the attic or joist cavity, which is a surprisingly common builder shortcut), inspecting for condensation on cold water pipes and HVAC ductwork, and checking basement humidity levels with a hygrometer. Basement humidity above 60% is a problem that must be addressed with a dehumidifier before new drywall installation.

Once the moisture source is identified and corrected, the repair process begins. **Remove all sagging and water-damaged drywall** — do not stop at the visibly damaged area. Cut back to at least 12 inches beyond any staining or softness, and ideally cut back to the nearest joist on each side so the new drywall edges land on solid framing for proper screw attachment. If the home was built before 1990, **test the existing drywall or any texture for asbestos** before disturbance — this is required under Ontario Regulation 278/05.

Inspect the exposed floor joists carefully. Look for **mould growth on the wood** — dark staining or fuzzy growth on the bottom or sides of joists indicates that moisture has been present for an extended period. Minor surface mould on wood framing can be cleaned with a borax solution and allowed to dry, but extensive mould may require professional remediation. Also check for any rot or structural softening in the joists themselves.

Allow the framing to **dry completely** before installing new drywall. In a Mississauga basement, this typically takes 5–10 days with a dehumidifier running and good air circulation. You can verify dryness with a moisture metre — wood framing should read below 15% moisture content before drywall installation.

For the replacement, use **5/8-inch drywall for the ceiling** — this is standard practice because it resists sagging significantly better than 1/2-inch board over typical 16-inch joist spacing. In a basement with known moisture challenges, consider using **mould-resistant drywall (purple board)** at $24–$32 per 4x8 sheet instead of standard board at $18–$26. The additional cost of $6–$10 per sheet is excellent insurance against recurrence. Screw spacing on ceilings must be every 12 inches along each joist, with screws placed at least 3/8 inch from board edges.

After hanging, tape all joints with paper tape bedded in setting compound, apply two finishing coats of topping compound, sand smooth, and prime with a PVA drywall primer before painting. For basements, a **mould-resistant paint** adds another layer of protection.

Costs in the Mississauga area for this repair typically run $500–$1,200 for a contained area (one room section), or $2,000–$5,000 if the entire basement ceiling needs replacement. Add $200–$500 if plumbing repairs are needed above, and $300–$800 for a quality dehumidifier if you do not already have one — consider this a permanent fixture in any finished Mississauga basement.

This is a professional job from start to finish — the diagnostic work, mould inspection, proper board selection, and ceiling installation all require experience. Get matched with a drywall contractor through Toronto Drywall Installers for a free assessment of your basement ceiling.

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Q12

How do I repair drywall seams that have cracked due to foundation settling in a Brampton subdivision home?

Drywall seam cracks caused by foundation settling are extremely common in Brampton subdivision homes, especially those built in the last 10–20 years on the clay-heavy soils typical of the Brampton–Caledon corridor, and the repair approach depends on whether the settling has stabilized or is still active. If your home is less than 5 years old, some degree of settling is normal and expected — most builders include a note about this in the warranty package. However, cracks wider than 1/8 inch, cracks that grow visibly over months, or cracks accompanied by sticking doors and windows may indicate ongoing structural movement that should be assessed by a structural engineer before any cosmetic drywall repair.

Brampton's rapidly developed subdivisions in areas like Mount Pleasant, Heritage Heights, Vales of Castlemore, and Sandalwood have expansive clay soils that swell when wet and shrink when dry. This seasonal soil movement causes minor foundation shifts that stress drywall joints, particularly at the **weakest points in the drywall system**: ceiling-to-wall transitions, above door and window headers, and at the corners of rooms. Toronto's 50+ freeze-thaw cycles per year make this worse, as the soil alternately expands and contracts with each cycle.

For cracks along taped seams where the settling has stabilized (the cracks have not grown in the past 6–12 months), here is the professional repair approach. **Score along both sides of the cracked tape** with a sharp utility knife, cutting about 2 inches wider than the crack on each side. Carefully peel away the loose or cracked tape and any flaking compound. Do not simply skim over the old cracked tape — this is the most common DIY mistake, and the crack will telegraph through the new compound within weeks.

Once the old tape is removed, lightly sand the exposed area to create a clean, flat surface. Apply a thin bed coat of **setting compound (hot mud, 45 or 90-minute)** along the joint. Setting compound is essential for this repair because it sets by chemical reaction rather than air drying, does not shrink, and creates a much stronger bond than pre-mixed all-purpose compound. Embed **paper tape** into the wet compound, pressing firmly with a 6-inch taping knife to squeeze out excess compound and eliminate air bubbles. Paper tape is significantly stronger than mesh tape for this application — mesh tape does not resist the lateral stress from structural movement and will crack again.

Allow the setting compound to cure fully, then apply a second coat with all-purpose or topping compound using an 8-inch knife, feathering the edges 6–8 inches beyond the tape on each side. After drying (typically overnight in a heated GTA home during winter, faster in summer), apply a light third coat with a 10 or 12-inch knife, feathering even wider to create an invisible transition. Sand with 150-grit paper using a raking work light to check your work, prime with PVA primer, and paint.

For **ceiling-to-wall cracks caused by truss uplift** — where the top-floor ceiling pulls away from the wall during winter as roof trusses arch upward from moisture differentials — the repair is slightly different. These cracks open in winter and close in summer, so a rigid tape-and-compound repair will simply crack again each year. The proper solution is to **float the ceiling drywall** at the perimeter: remove screws or nails from the ceiling drywall within 16

inches of the wall, attach the ceiling drywall to floating clips or allow it to move independently, and cover the joint with a flexible caulk or crown moulding rather than a rigid mud joint. This allows the seasonal movement to occur without cracking.

A capable homeowner can tackle individual seam crack repairs as a DIY project — the materials cost is minimal ($15–$25 for setting compound, tape, and sandpaper) and the techniques are learnable. However, if you have **cracks in multiple rooms**, cracks that keep returning after repair, or cracks wider than 1/8 inch, it is worth having a professional assess the scope. Professional crack repair in the GTA runs **$150–$400 per crack** for individual repairs, or **$800–$2,000 for a whole-house crack repair** where a drywall finisher addresses all settling cracks in a single visit — this is more cost-effective than paying per-crack.

If your Brampton home is still under the Tarion warranty (7 years for major structural defects, 2 years for drywall cracks from settling), **document the cracks with dated photos and submit a warranty claim** before paying for repairs yourself. Many Brampton builders will send their drywall subcontractor back to address settling cracks at no charge during the warranty period. For homes past warranty, find a drywall professional experienced with settling crack repair through the Toronto Construction Network directory.

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Q13

What should I do about drywall nail pops that appeared after my first winter in a newly built Vaughan home?

Nail pops after the first winter in a new Vaughan home are completely normal and expected — they are caused by the lumber framing shrinking as it dries out during its first heating season, and they are one of the most common drywall issues in newly built GTA homes. This is not a defect in the drywall installation or a structural concern. It happens because modern framing lumber, even kiln-dried material, still contains moisture that escapes when the home's furnace runs continuously through a Toronto winter, causing the studs and joists to shrink slightly and release the fasteners.

Here is what actually happens. During construction, drywall is screwed (or occasionally nailed) into wood framing that contains 15–19% moisture content. Over the first fall and winter as the furnace runs, indoor humidity drops to 15–25% and the wood framing dries to 8–12% moisture content. As the wood shrinks, it pulls away from the drywall fastener heads, pushing the compound cap off the screw or nail and creating a small bump or crescent-shaped crack on the wall surface. This is purely cosmetic, and it typically happens most noticeably during and after the first winter.

Vaughan's new subdivisions in Kleinburg, Maple, Woodbridge, and the rapidly developing areas along Highway 427 see this constantly. Many homeowners panic when they notice dozens of small bumps appearing across their walls and ceilings, but it is a normal part of a new home "settling in."

The proper repair technique is straightforward and something a handy homeowner can tackle as a DIY project. For each nail pop, use a utility knife to scrape away the raised compound around the popped fastener. If the original fastener is a nail, it will likely be loose — drive a new drywall screw about 1.5 inches above and 1.5 inches below the popped nail, sinking each screw so the head dimples the paper surface without breaking through it. Then either remove the old nail with pliers or drive it below the surface with a nail set. If the original fastener is a screw that has popped, tighten it back down and add a second screw 2 inches away as reinforcement.

Once the fasteners are secure, apply a thin coat of **setting compound (20 or 45-minute hot mud)** over each screw head, feathering it out 3–4 inches in all directions. Setting compound is preferable for this repair because it does not shrink and you can apply the second coat the same day. After the first coat sets, apply a second coat with a 6-inch knife, feathering slightly wider. Let it dry, sand lightly with 150-grit paper, prime with a drywall primer or PVA primer, and touch up with paint.

The challenge with DIY nail pop repair is not the technique — it is **matching the paint**. If your home is less than a year old, you should have leftover paint from the builder (check your garage or storage room). If not, bring a small chip from an inconspicuous area to a paint store for colour matching. Even with a perfect colour match, touch-ups

may be slightly visible because the sheen and absorption differ between the original paint and the fresh spot. For a truly invisible result, repaint the entire wall from corner to corner.

Regarding your Tarion warranty: new homes in Ontario are covered by the Tarion Warranty Corporation. Drywall nail pops fall under the **Year One form** warranty items, and most builders will address them if you submit a claim within the appropriate window. The standard practice for Vaughan builders is to have their drywall subcontractor return at the one-year mark to fix all nail pops, settling cracks, and shrinkage imperfections in a single visit. **Document every nail pop with photos and submit them on your 30-day, Year One, and Year Two warranty forms as applicable.** Do not fix them yourself before the warranty visit — the builder should see and address them.

If your warranty period has passed, or if you prefer not to wait, the cost for a professional to repair nail pops throughout a typical new Vaughan home runs **$300–$800 depending on how many there are.** Most drywall contractors can complete a whole-house nail pop repair in a single day. For the painting touch-up portion, you may want to handle that yourself or hire a painter separately.

Materials for a DIY repair of 20–30 nail pops will run about **$30–$50** — a small bag of 45-minute setting compound, a box of 1-5/8 inch drywall screws, 150-grit sandpaper, and a small container of PVA primer. You will need a drill/driver with a Phillips bit, a 4-inch and 6-inch drywall knife, and a utility knife. It is a satisfying weekend project for a patient homeowner.

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Q14

How much does it cost to have a Toronto drywall contractor fix multiple small holes and scuffs before selling a home?

Having a professional drywall contractor repair multiple small holes and scuffs before listing a Toronto home typically costs $300–$800 for a standard home with 10–25 repairs, though extensive damage across many rooms can push the total to $1,000–$1,500. This is one of the highest-return pre-sale investments you can make — buyers notice wall imperfections immediately during showings, and damaged drywall signals deferred maintenance that makes buyers nervous about what else might be neglected.

Most pre-sale drywall touch-ups fall into a few categories. **Small nail and screw holes** from picture frames, shelves, and wall-mounted accessories are the most common — filling these with spackling compound, sanding smooth, priming, and painting runs about **$5–$15 per hole** when done as part of a batch job. **Larger holes from towel bars, curtain rod anchors, TV mounts, and doorknob strikes** that need a proper patch (butterfly patch or California patch technique) run **$75–$200 each**. **Drywall scuffs, dents, and gouges** from furniture, moving damage, or everyday wear cost **$50–$150 per repair** depending on size and depth. **Corner bead damage** — dented or cracked metal edges on outside corners, extremely common in high-traffic hallways — runs **$150–$350 per corner** to replace.

The most cost-effective approach is to **schedule all repairs in a single contractor visit**. A drywall professional working through a batch of repairs can complete 15–25 small to medium fixes in one day, and the per-repair cost drops significantly compared to individual service calls. Most GTA drywall contractors charge a **minimum service call of $200–$350**, so grouping everything together makes the economics much better. A typical pre-sale scope for a 3-bedroom Toronto home might look like this: 8–12 nail holes ($50–$100 total), 3–4 larger holes from TV mounts or shelving ($300–$600), 2–3 scuffed or dented areas ($150–$300), and 1–2 damaged corners ($200–$400) — totalling **$500–$1,000** for the drywall work before painting.

One critical point: **drywall repair and painting are two separate scopes** that are often best handled together. Some drywall contractors include primer but not finish paint; others offer a full patch-and-paint service. For pre-sale preparation, the ideal approach is to have the drywall contractor complete all patches, apply primer to each repair, and then either have them or a dedicated painter do touch-ups or full wall repaints. Touch-up painting over individual patches often leaves visible marks because the fresh paint's sheen differs from the aged surrounding paint — for the best result, repaint entire walls from corner to corner in rooms with multiple repairs.

If you are a handy homeowner looking to save money before listing, **small nail holes are easy to DIY**. Use lightweight spackling compound (DAP DryDex or similar), apply with a putty knife, let dry, sand flush with 150-grit, prime with a small roller, and paint. The entire process takes about 10 minutes per hole once you get into a rhythm, and a tub of spackling costs $8–$12. However, **larger patches, corner bead replacement, and ceiling repairs** are best left to a professional — poorly executed drywall repairs are arguably worse than the original damage because they signal to buyers that amateur work has been done throughout the home.

For Toronto's competitive real estate market, real estate agents consistently recommend drywall repair and fresh paint as the two highest-ROI pre-sale upgrades. A $500–$800 investment in professional drywall repairs, combined with $1,500–$3,000 in fresh neutral paint throughout, can increase a home's perceived value by $5,000–$15,000. Clean, smooth walls make every room photograph better, show better, and create the impression of a well-maintained home.

Timing matters for the GTA market. Spring is Toronto's busiest real estate season, which means drywall contractors and painters are also in high demand from March through May. Book your pre-sale repairs at least 2–3 weeks before your planned listing date, or earlier during peak season. Need help finding a drywall contractor for pre-sale repairs? Toronto Drywall Installers can match you with a local professional for a free estimate.

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Q15

What is the correct way to patch drywall after removing a wall-mounted TV bracket in a GTA condo?

Patching drywall after removing a TV bracket depends on how the bracket was mounted — toggle bolt anchors leave holes about 1/2 to 3/4 inch in diameter that need a proper patching technique, while screws driven directly into studs leave small holes that are simpler to fill. Most wall-mounted TV brackets use a combination of both, with lag bolts or screws into one or two studs and toggle anchors or snap toggles into the drywall between studs.

Start by **removing all hardware completely** — pull out any remaining toggle bolt sleeves, plastic anchors, and screws. If toggle bolts were used, the toggle wings will have fallen inside the wall cavity when you removed the bolts, which is fine — leave them there. Use a utility knife to clean up any torn or raised paper around each hole,

cutting away loose material to create a clean edge.

For **small screw holes** (from screws driven into studs), the repair is simple. Fill each hole with lightweight spackling compound, pressing it in firmly with a putty knife and scraping the surface flush. Let it dry (most spackling compounds dry in 15–30 minutes), apply a second thin coat if there is any shrinkage, sand smooth with 150-grit sandpaper, prime with PVA primer, and paint. This is a straightforward DIY repair that most homeowners can handle.

For **larger anchor holes** (1/2 inch or bigger from toggle bolts or snap toggles), spackling alone will not work — it will shrink and crack in holes this size. The proper technique is a **butterfly patch** (also called a California patch or hot patch). Cut a piece of drywall slightly larger than the hole — about 2 inches bigger in each direction. Score the back paper and snap off the gypsum from the edges, leaving the front paper face intact as a flange. Apply a thin layer of setting compound around the hole, press the patch into place with the paper flange overlapping the surrounding wall, and embed the flange into the compound. Apply a second coat of compound with a 6-inch knife, feathering the edges outward. After it sets, apply a final thin coat with an 8-inch knife, feathering 6–8 inches beyond the patch in all directions. Sand smooth, prime, and paint.

For **multiple large holes close together** (common with TV brackets that use a 4-point mounting plate), it is often cleaner to cut out a rectangular section of drywall encompassing all the holes, install horizontal backing blocks (1x3 or 1x4 lumber inserted through the opening and screwed to the existing drywall from the front as nailers), and then screw in a single rectangular patch of new drywall. Tape the joints with paper tape and setting compound, finish with two coats, sand, prime, and paint.

There is an important **condo-specific consideration** to be aware of. If the TV was mounted on a **party wall** (the wall shared with an adjacent unit), that wall is almost certainly a fire-rated assembly with 5/8-inch Type X drywall. If toggle bolts penetrated through the drywall into the wall cavity, the fire rating of the assembly has technically been compromised. The proper repair uses the same 5/8-inch Type X board for any patch material, and the patch should be taped and finished to restore the continuous fire barrier. While a few small holes from a TV mount are unlikely to trigger a fire inspection issue, it is good practice to use the correct material — especially if you are selling the condo and the buyer's inspector is thorough.

Also check your condo's rules before patching — some Toronto condo corporations require that **any wall modifications be restored to original condition** upon unit sale, and some have preferred contractors or specific restoration requirements for party walls.

Cost-wise, if you hire a professional drywall contractor for a TV bracket patch in a GTA condo, expect to pay **$200–$450** for a complete repair including patching all holes, taping, finishing, priming, and basic paint touch-up. The minimum service call for most GTA drywall contractors is $200–$350, so this type of single-location repair often

falls near the minimum. If you have other small repairs to combine (nail holes, scuffs, corner dings), bundling them into the same visit is much more cost-effective.

For a **DIY approach**, the materials cost is under $30 — a small bag of 45-minute setting compound, a scrap piece of drywall for patches, 150-grit sandpaper, PVA primer, and paint. The biggest challenge is achieving an invisible result. Use a work light held at a low raking angle against the wall to check for imperfections before priming — bumps and ridges that are invisible under overhead lighting become glaringly obvious when sunlight rakes across the wall from a window.

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Q16

How do professionals repair drywall around a window that has condensation damage in a cold Toronto winter?

Window condensation damage is one of the most common drywall repair calls during Toronto winters, and professional repair involves not just replacing the damaged drywall but addressing the underlying moisture problem — otherwise the new drywall will be damaged again by the next heating season. The damage typically appears as bubbling paint, soft or crumbling drywall, dark mould staining, and peeling or flaking compound on the wall immediately below and beside the window frame, and on the window sill or returns (the drywall sections that wrap into the window opening).

The root cause is straightforward: during Toronto's cold winters, when outdoor temperatures drop to -10 to -20 degrees Celsius, the interior surface of older or poorly insulated windows falls below the dew point of the warm, humid indoor air. Moisture condenses on the glass and window frame, runs down onto the drywall sill and returns, and saturates the gypsum over weeks and months of continuous condensation. Homes in older Toronto neighbourhoods — the Danforth, Scarborough, East York, and North York — that still have original single-pane or early double-pane windows from the 1970s and 1980s are particularly affected. Even newer windows with failed seals (visible fog between panes) can cause this problem.

The Professional Repair Process

A professional drywall contractor will start by **assessing the full extent of the damage**, which is often worse than what is visible on the surface. They will probe the drywall around the entire window opening with a utility knife or moisture metre. Saturated drywall will be soft and crumbly, and it is common to find that the damage extends 6–12 inches beyond the visible staining, particularly below the window sill where water has been running for months.

All damaged drywall is **removed completely** — cutting back to dry, solid material on all sides. This means removing the window returns (the narrow drywall strips on the sides and top of the window opening), the sill, and any portion of the wall below the window that has been affected. Once the drywall is removed, the contractor inspects the underlying framing for mould and rot. It is very common to find **mould growth on the rough window framing** and the jack studs beside the window in cases where condensation has been occurring for multiple winters. Surface mould on wood is cleaned with a borax solution, and any rotted framing is sistered or replaced.

The contractor also checks the **insulation around the window frame**. Many Toronto homes have gaps between the window frame and the rough opening that are either uninsulated or stuffed with fibreglass batts that have become wet and compacted. The proper insulation for this space is **low-expansion spray foam** (use only low-expansion around windows — high-expansion foam can bow the frame and prevent the window from operating). This both insulates and air-seals the rough opening, reducing the temperature differential that causes

condensation.

New drywall is then installed to match the existing thickness — typically 1/2-inch regular drywall for interior walls. For the window returns and sill, **moisture-resistant drywall (green board or purple board)** is an excellent upgrade at minimal additional cost ($20–$32 per sheet versus $14–$20 for regular) and provides significantly better performance in this chronically moisture-exposed location. The returns are cut to fit tightly against the window frame, with a small gap sealed with paintable caulk where the drywall meets the window frame. This caulk joint is critical — it prevents future condensation from wicking behind the drywall.

All joints are taped and finished with setting compound for the first coat (it resists moisture better than pre-mixed compound), followed by topping compound for finish coats. The entire repair area is primed with a **mould-resistant primer** and painted with a semi-gloss or satin finish paint, which resists moisture better than flat or eggshell finishes.

Preventing recurrence is equally important. If the windows are old and inefficient, replacement with modern double- or triple-pane windows is the definitive solution but costs $800–$1,500 per window installed. Short of window replacement, managing indoor humidity during winter with your furnace humidifier set no higher than 30–35% relative humidity, running bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans diligently, and improving air circulation near windows (keep blinds slightly open to allow warm air to reach the glass) can significantly reduce condensation.

Costs for professional condensation damage repair around a single window in the GTA typically run **$400–$900** including drywall removal, mould cleaning if needed, insulation upgrade, new moisture-resistant drywall, taping, finishing, and primer. Multiple windows bring the per-window cost down to **$300–$600 each**. If the damage is extensive — multiple windows with mould throughout the framing — expect $1,500–$4,000 for a comprehensive repair across the affected areas.

This is definitively a professional repair. The combination of mould assessment, proper insulation, moisture-resistant materials, and finished drywall work around the complex geometry of a window opening requires experience. Find a qualified drywall contractor through Toronto Drywall Installers for a free estimate on your window condensation repair.

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Q17

What is the best patch repair method for drywall damaged by pet scratching near doorways in a Toronto home?

The best repair method for pet-scratched drywall depends on the depth of the damage — surface scratches need only skim coating, while deep gouges or torn-through paper require a more involved patch using setting compound and proper re-papering of the damaged area. Most pet damage around doorways falls somewhere between these two extremes, and the repair approach needs to account for both the cosmetic result and long-term durability, since pets tend to revisit the same spots.

For **surface-level scratches** where the paper face is scuffed but not torn through, the repair is straightforward. Lightly sand the area with 120-grit sandpaper to remove any loose paper fibres, then apply a coat of PVA drywall primer to seal the exposed gypsum and remaining paper. Once the primer dries, apply two to three thin coats of lightweight all-purpose joint compound, feathering each coat outward by several inches to blend with the surrounding wall. Sand lightly between coats with 150-grit paper. This type of repair costs very little in materials — a small tub of compound and some sandpaper — and is well within DIY ability.

When the damage goes deeper — **paper torn away, gypsum core exposed or gouged out** — the repair requires a different approach. Torn paper edges will bubble and lift if you simply skim over them. Cut away all loose and torn paper with a sharp utility knife, being careful to cut cleanly without pulling more paper off the wall. Apply a coat of PVA primer or oil-based primer (like KILZ Original) to the exposed gypsum to seal it — this is critical because raw gypsum absorbs moisture from the compound unevenly and causes bubbling. Once sealed, apply your first coat of **setting compound (hot mud)** rather than pre-mixed — a 45-minute or 90-minute setting compound provides a harder, more durable base coat that resists future scratching better than pre-mixed all-purpose. Build up the gouged area in thin layers, letting each set before applying the next. Finish with one or two coats of pre-mixed topping compound for a smooth, sandable surface.

For **severe damage** where the drywall is actually punctured through or the gypsum core is crumbling, you will need to cut out the damaged section and install a patch. The standard approach for doorway areas is a **California patch** (also called a hot patch or butterfly patch) for holes up to about 15 centimetres, or a **backing board patch** for larger areas. Cut a clean rectangular opening, fit a new piece of drywall with a backing support (a piece of plywood

or furring strip secured behind the opening), screw the patch in place, tape the joints with paper tape embedded in setting compound, and finish with two coats of topping compound.

Preventing Future Damage

Since pet scratching near doorways is a recurring problem in many GTA homes, consider installing a **corner guard or chair rail moulding** at pet height after completing the repair. Clear polycarbonate corner guards are nearly invisible and protect the wall surface effectively. Another option is installing a sheet of **FRP (fibre-reinforced plastic) panel** or a piece of tempered hardboard on the lower portion of the wall — common in high-traffic commercial spaces and increasingly used in Toronto homes with large dogs.

For the repair itself, expect to pay **$150 to $300** if you hire a professional drywall contractor for a single pet-damage patch, including materials, compound, sanding, and primer. If you have multiple damaged doorways — which is common — a contractor can typically address three to five patches in a single visit for **$300 to $600 total**, making it more cost-effective to batch the work. The repair typically takes one visit for the patching and compound application, then a second visit the next day for sanding and priming, though some contractors will complete small repairs in a single visit by using fast-setting compound.

This is a repair that a handy homeowner can absolutely tackle as a DIY project, especially for surface scratches and shallow gouges. The key is proper surface preparation — sealing exposed gypsum before applying compound — and using setting compound for the base coat on deeper damage. If the damage is extensive or you want an invisible result in a high-visibility area like a main hallway, a professional drywall finisher will get a cleaner result. Toronto Drywall Installers can match you with a local professional for a free estimate if the damage is beyond what you are comfortable tackling yourself.

Q18

How long does a professional drywall patch repair take and when can I paint over it in GTA humidity?

A professional drywall patch repair typically takes one to two days from start to paint-ready, but the timeline depends heavily on the season — GTA humidity in summer can add a full extra day of drying time, while winter's dry furnace air speeds things up but introduces its own risks. Understanding the drying process helps you plan your painting timeline and avoid the most common mistake homeowners make: painting too soon over compound that looks dry on the surface but is still wet underneath.

The **repair work itself** — cutting out damaged drywall, fitting a patch, taping the joints, and applying the first coat of compound — usually takes a professional about one to three hours depending on the size and complexity. A small hole patch might take 30 minutes of active work. A larger section replacement with multiple tape joints could take two to three hours. The actual hands-on time is a small fraction of the total project duration; the rest is **drying time between coats**.

A standard patch repair requires **three coats of compound**: a bedding coat (embedding the tape), a fill coat, and a finishing coat. Each coat must dry completely before the next is applied. Here is where Toronto's seasonal conditions become critical. **In summer**, when GTA humidity regularly hits 60-80% and temperatures are in the high 20s to mid-30s, each coat of pre-mixed all-purpose compound can take **12 to 24 hours** to fully dry. Joint compound dries by evaporation — high humidity slows that process dramatically. You will see the compound turn from dark to light as it dries, but in humid conditions the centre of a thick application can remain damp even when the surface appears dry. Applying the next coat over damp compound traps moisture and leads to bubbling, cracking, and poor adhesion.

In winter, Toronto's furnace-dried indoor air (often 15-25% relative humidity) accelerates drying to **4 to 8 hours per coat**, which means a skilled professional can potentially complete all three coats in a single day. However, excessively fast drying causes its own problems — the compound can crack as it dries too quickly, especially on the first bedding coat. Experienced GTA drywall contractors manage this by applying thinner coats in winter and sometimes using a light mist of water to slow the drying slightly.

Many professional drywall contractors in the GTA use **setting compound (hot mud)** for the first coat on patch repairs, specifically because it sets by chemical reaction rather than air drying. A 45-minute or 90-minute setting compound will harden regardless of humidity, allowing the contractor to apply the second coat the same day. This is the standard approach for professionals who want to complete a patch repair efficiently. The final coat is typically pre-mixed topping compound for its superior sandability.

When You Can Paint

After the final sanding, you must prime before painting. Apply a PVA drywall primer over the entire repaired area, extending several inches beyond the feathered edges of the compound. The primer seals the porous compound and ensures even paint absorption — without it, the repaired area will flash (appear as a dull or shiny spot) through the paint, especially under side lighting.

As a general timeline for the GTA:

Summer (June-September, high humidity): Expect the full repair to take **2 to 3 days** — day one for the patch and first coat, day two for the second and possibly third coat, day three for final sanding, priming, and painting. In particularly humid stretches, add an extra day.

Fall/Spring (moderate conditions): Plan for **1.5 to 2 days**. Most professionals can complete the compound work in 1.5 days and have you painting by end of day two.

Winter (December-March, dry indoor air): A professional using setting compound for the base coat can often have the repair **paint-ready in 24 hours**. This is the fastest season for drywall repairs in Toronto.

A professional patch repair in the GTA typically costs **$150 to $500** depending on size and complexity, not including painting. The contractor's time is split across two visits in most cases — one for the patch and initial coats, one for finishing and sanding. If you need the repair done faster, ask your contractor about using setting compound for all coats — it eliminates weather-dependent drying but is harder to sand, so the finish may require more skill.

If you are tackling a small patch yourself, the same drying rules apply. Use a fan to improve air circulation (but do not point it directly at the compound), and test dryness by touching the compound — it should feel uniformly cool and dry, with no soft or dark spots. When in doubt, wait longer. Painting over damp compound is the single most common DIY mistake and always requires redoing the work.

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Q19

Can I repair drywall that was damaged during a Toronto bathroom renovation without redoing the entire wall?

Yes, in most cases you can repair localized drywall damage from a bathroom renovation without replacing the entire wall — but the repair approach depends on the type of damage and whether the affected area will be exposed to moisture in its final location. Bathroom renovations are one of the most common sources of drywall damage in GTA homes, from accidental impacts during fixture removal to intentional cuts for plumbing access that need to be patched afterward.

The most common types of damage during a bathroom renovation include **holes cut for plumbing access** (typically behind the toilet or under the vanity), **areas where tile was removed and the drywall face paper came off with it**, **impact damage from removing old fixtures**, and **sections that were cut away to address mould or water damage discovered during the renovation**. Each of these has a different repair approach, and the critical factor is **where on the wall the damage is located relative to moisture exposure**.

For damage on walls that will **not be in the wet zone** — meaning they will not be directly exposed to water spray from the shower or tub — standard drywall patching techniques work perfectly. Cut the damaged area back to a clean rectangle, install a backing board (a piece of plywood or furring strip screwed behind the opening), fit a new piece of drywall, tape the joints with paper tape embedded in setting compound, and apply two finishing coats. For smaller holes, a California patch works well. This is a straightforward repair that costs **$150 to $400** if you hire a professional, depending on the number and size of patches.

For damage in the **wet zone** — the area directly around the tub, shower, or above the tub/shower surround — you cannot simply patch with regular drywall. The Ontario Building Code requires **moisture-resistant materials** in these areas. If the existing wall is standard drywall and it was damaged during renovation, this is actually an opportunity to upgrade. The section behind a shower or tub surround should be **cement board** (Durock, HardieBacker, or equivalent), not drywall — regular drywall, even moisture-resistant green board, is not an appropriate tile substrate in direct wet areas. If you are patching a section that will receive tile, install cement board for the patch. If the area will be painted (such as the upper wall above a tub surround), use **moisture-resistant green board or mould-resistant purple board** for the patch.

When **tile removal has torn the paper face off the drywall**, the extent of the damage determines whether you repair or replace that section. If the paper is torn but the gypsum core is intact and the area is small (under a few square feet), you can seal the exposed gypsum with a PVA primer, then skim coat with setting compound to rebuild a smooth surface. If the paper damage is extensive — which is common when old mastic adhesive was used to attach tiles directly to drywall — the gypsum core is usually too compromised for a skim-coat repair. In this case,

cut out the damaged section and install a new piece. In GTA homes built in the 1970s through 1990s, this type of damage is extremely common during bathroom renovations.

Mould is the wildcard. If the renovation uncovered mould behind the drywall — common in Toronto bathrooms with inadequate ventilation, especially in older Scarborough, North York, and Etobicoke homes — you cannot simply patch over it. The mouldy drywall must be removed beyond the visible mould boundary (at least 30 centimetres past visible growth), the framing must be cleaned and treated, and the source of moisture must be addressed before new drywall is installed. This might mean installing or upgrading the bathroom exhaust fan, fixing a leaking supply line, or improving the vapour barrier. Mould remediation adds **$500 to $2,000** to the project depending on the extent, but ignoring it and patching over it guarantees the mould will return and spread inside the wall cavity.

A practical consideration for Toronto homeowners: if the drywall damage from the renovation affects **more than 30-40% of a single wall**, it is often more cost-effective and produces a better result to replace the entire wall section rather than attempting multiple patches. Multiple patches on one wall create multiple tape joints, each of which must be finished to an invisible level — and each joint is a potential crack or visible line. Replacing the full wall section means fewer joints and a cleaner result. For a typical bathroom wall, full replacement of the drywall on one wall costs **$300 to $700** including materials, hanging, taping, and finishing.

For small, localized repairs — a couple of plumbing access holes and a few impact dings — this is well within professional patch-repair territory and does not require redoing the whole wall. A drywall contractor can typically handle these repairs in a single visit. If you need help finding a drywall professional for your bathroom renovation repairs, Toronto Drywall Installers can match you with a local contractor for a free estimate.

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Q20

What causes drywall corner bead to crack or separate and how is it properly repaired in Toronto homes?

Drywall corner bead cracks and separates primarily due to structural movement — Toronto's extreme freeze-thaw cycles cause foundation settling and framing shifts that stress outside corners, which are the most rigid and vulnerable points on any drywall surface. Impact damage from everyday life is the other major cause, but the seasonal movement problem is far more common and explains why corner bead failures appear in waves during spring across GTA homes.

Toronto experiences over **50 freeze-thaw cycles per year**, and each cycle causes subtle shifts in the foundation and framing. Outside corners are where two sheets of drywall meet at a rigid metal or vinyl bead, creating a stress concentration point. As the framing moves even slightly, the compound over the corner bead cracks along the edge, or the bead itself pulls away from the drywall surface. This is most visible in homes built between the **1960s and 1990s** across Scarborough, North York, Etobicoke, Mississauga, and Brampton, where standard nail-on metal corner bead was the norm. The nails work loose over decades of seasonal movement, allowing the bead to shift and the compound to crack.

Impact damage is the second most common cause. Door frames, furniture being moved through hallways, vacuum cleaners hitting baseboards — outside corners in high-traffic areas take a beating. Metal corner bead dents on impact, creating a visible bulge or crease in the compound that cannot be sanded flat. This is especially common in Toronto's post-war homes where hallways are narrow and corners are exposed.

Other causes include **improper original installation** — corner bead that was not fastened tightly to the framing, not enough compound applied over the bead flanges, or nails placed too far apart. If the bead was installed with drywall nails instead of screws, it is far more likely to work loose over time. In newer GTA homes, some installers use adhesive-applied vinyl beads (No-Coat or Trim-Tex), which flex with building movement and resist cracking better than rigid metal.

Proper Repair Method

For a **cracked but still firmly attached** metal corner bead, the repair is relatively simple. Scrape away all loose and cracked compound along the bead edge using a 6-inch drywall knife. Check that the bead is still tight to the wall — press on it firmly. If it does not move, simply recoat. Apply a coat of **setting compound (45 or 90-minute hot mud)** over the exposed bead flange, feathering outward 10-15 centimetres on each side of the corner. Setting compound is preferred for corner bead repairs because it is harder and more crack-resistant than pre-mixed compound, and it bonds better to the metal flange. Once set, apply a second coat of pre-mixed topping compound

for a smooth, sandable finish. Sand lightly with 150-grit, prime with PVA primer, and paint.

For a **loose or separated** corner bead, you need to resecure it before applying compound. Remove any nails that have backed out. Resecure the bead with **drywall screws** (not nails — screws hold far better against seasonal movement) placed every 20-25 centimetres along both flanges, driving the screws into the underlying framing. Make sure the bead is pressed firmly against the corner as you screw it down. Then apply compound as described above.

For a **dented or bent** metal corner bead, the damaged section needs to be removed and replaced. Use tin snips to cut the bead above and below the damaged area, pry it away from the corner, and install a new section of bead. Many GTA drywall professionals now use **vinyl corner bead (No-Coat)** as a replacement in these situations — it is embedded in compound rather than nailed, it flexes with building movement rather than cracking, and it does not dent from impacts. A vinyl bead repair on a single corner costs slightly more in materials ($5-$8 versus $3-$5 for metal) but lasts significantly longer in Toronto's movement-prone housing stock.

Professional corner bead repair in the GTA typically costs **$150 to $350 per corner**, including removal of old compound, resecuring or replacing the bead, compound application, sanding, and priming. If you have multiple corners that need attention — which is common in older homes where all the original corner beads are failing simultaneously — a contractor can often do four to six corners in a day for **$400 to $800 total**.

A capable homeowner can tackle corner bead repair as a DIY project, especially if the bead is still firmly attached and just needs recoating. The key is using setting compound for the base coat (not pre-mixed), feathering the compound well beyond the bead edge, and sanding carefully without exposing the bead flanges. If the bead needs to be replaced, the job requires more skill — getting a new bead perfectly straight and plumb is fiddly work, and a crooked corner bead is very visible. For visible corners in main living areas, a professional drywall contractor will deliver a noticeably better result.

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