OTTAWA SIDING CONTRACTORS

Fibre Cement & Engineered Wood

Fibre cement and engineered wood (hardboard and OSB) siding: manufacturer instructions, gaps, edge sealing and ground clearance

4 Expert Answers from Siding IQ

ottawasidingcontractors.ca/construction-brain

Table of Contents

1. What does the Ontario Building Code say about fibre cement siding?
2. How is engineered wood siding different from fibre cement in Ontario?
3. Engineered wood siding next to a deck in Riverside South, clearance?
4. Is fibre cement panel siding face-sealed under Ontario's Code?

Q1

What does the Ontario Building Code say about fibre cement siding?

Fibre cement is named in the 2024 Ontario Building Code (O. Reg. 163/24) in two places: the scope article that sets out which cladding types the cladding section covers (9.27.1.1.), and the face-sealed article (9.27.3.6.). Beyond those two mentions, the Code contains no dedicated fibre cement subsection, no material standard, no minimum thickness, and no gap or clearance rule specific to fibre cement. Installation follows the general cladding articles plus the manufacturer's written instructions.

Here is what the general articles require for any cladding, including fibre cement.

- Two planes of protection: the cladding itself is the first plane; a drainage plane with sheathing membrane and flashing is the second (9.27.2.2.(4), 9.27.2.3., 9.27.3.1.).
- Sheathing membrane: at least one layer of CAN/CGSB-51.32-M breather-type membrane, joints lapped not less than 100 mm, upper sheets over lower where applied horizontally (9.27.3.3.). The membrane may be omitted under face-sealed fibre cement sheets where all edges land on framing and joints are sealed and battened or shiplapped (9.27.3.6.).
- Flashing: required at every horizontal junction between cladding elements and every horizontal offset; over wall openings where the vertical distance from the bottom of the eave to the top of the trim is more than one-quarter of the eave's horizontal overhang (9.27.3.7., 9.27.3.8.). Flashing extends not less than 50 mm up behind the membrane, slopes not less than 6% to the exterior, and has end dams not less than 25 mm high.
- Sealant: between siding and adjacent door and window frames or trim, and at vertical joints between different cladding materials unless lapped or flashed (9.27.4.). Sealant must be a non-hardening exterior type meeting ASTM C834, C920, C1184 or C1311.
- Fastening: cladding is fastened to framing, furring or blocking (9.27.5.1.). Panel or sheet cladding up to 7 mm thick uses 38 mm nails; over 7 mm, 51 mm nails, at 150 mm spacing along edges and 300 mm along intermediate supports (Table 9.27.5.4.-A). Fasteners must be corrosion-resistant and compatible with the cladding (9.27.5.5.), and penetrate not less than 25 mm into framing, the depth the Code sets for cladding other than shakes, shingles and vinyl (9.27.5.7.).
- Ground clearance: the Code's 200 mm clearance rule (9.27.2.4.) applies to cladding adversely affected by moisture, naming untreated wood, plywood, OSB, waferboard and hardboard as examples. Fibre cement is not named in that list. Ask the manufacturer's instructions what clearance they require.

The Code's explanatory notes say a drained space at least 10 mm deep behind siding is recommended for walls other than masonry walls, and that face-sealed assemblies need more intensive, regular and ongoing maintenance. Both are recommendations from the notes, not Code requirements.

Because the Code has no fibre cement subsection, the manufacturer's written instructions govern the details. Ask any contractor quoting this work to show you the manufacturer's installation guide and explain how the flashing, membrane and fastening details in that guide are reflected in their quote.

If you want to hear from Ottawa siding contractors directly, the request form on this page sends your project details to contractors listed in the Ottawa Construction Network directory.

Q2

How is engineered wood siding different from fibre cement in Ontario?

Engineered wood and fibre cement are both named in the 2024 Ontario Building Code (O. Reg. 163/24) as cladding materials, but the Code treats them differently.

What the Code actually says about each

For engineered wood (hardboard and OSB), the Code has dedicated subsections with specific rules. Hardboard siding must conform to ANSI A135.6 and be at least 9.5 mm thick where supports are not more than 400 mm apart or the wall is continuously sheathed, or 11.1 mm where supports are up to 600 mm apart; lapped strips need a gap of at least 5 mm at butted ends (2024 OBC, 9.27.9.). OSB cladding must conform to CSA O437.0, have all panel edges supported and treated with a primer or sealer, and have a 3 mm gap between panels (9.27.10.). The Code's 200 mm clearance above finished ground, and 50 mm above a roof, is for cladding adversely affected by moisture, and it names OSB and hardboard as examples (9.27.2.4.); ask the manufacturer and the City whether a given engineered wood product counts. There is also a 3 mm clearance required between hardboard or OSB cladding and door and window frames (9.27.9.5., 9.27.10.4.).

Fibre cement is named in the Code's scope (9.27.1.1.) and in the face-sealed cladding article (9.27.3.6.), but the Code contains no dedicated subsection for it, no material standard, no minimum thickness, and no specific gap or clearance rule. Its installation follows the general cladding articles plus the manufacturer's written instructions. So the manufacturer's written instructions govern the details.

The Code's 200 mm ground clearance applies to moisture-sensitive cladding such as untreated wood, plywood, OSB, waferboard and hardboard. We found no Code ground clearance rule for fibre cement; for that material, the manufacturer's instructions govern.

On cost, published Ontario contractor price pages from 2025 to 2026 show engineered wood installed at about $9 to $23 per square foot of wall, and fibre cement installed at about $10 to $25 per square foot. What moves either number: removal of old layers, trim, corners, what is found behind the existing siding, access and height, and

disposal.

Both materials require a sheathing membrane (house wrap) conforming to CAN/CGSB-51.32-M beneath them, with joints lapped at least 100 mm and upper sheets overlapping lower sheets where applied horizontally (9.27.3.2., 9.27.3.3.). Both need flashing at horizontal junctions and at wall openings where the vertical distance from the bottom of the eave to the top of the trim is more than one-quarter of the eave's horizontal overhang (9.27.3.7., 9.27.3.8.). Both need sealant between the siding and adjacent door and window frames (9.27.4.).

Whichever you choose, check one quote line in particular: what the contractor will charge if damaged sheathing or framing is found once the old cladding comes off; ask for that rate in writing before the job starts.

Q3

Engineered wood siding next to a deck in Riverside South, clearance?

The 2024 Ontario Building Code (9.27.2.4.) requires at least 200 mm between finished ground and cladding adversely affected by moisture, and it names OSB and hardboard as examples; ask the manufacturer's instructions and the City whether your engineered wood product counts. The Code measures that clearance from finished ground; how it applies where a deck meets the wall is a question for the contractor and, if in doubt, the City.

For engineered wood specifically, the Code (9.27.9.) requires the material to meet ANSI A135.6 and to be at least 9.5 mm thick where supports are no more than 400 mm apart or the wall is continuously sheathed. Lapped strips need a gap of at least 5 mm at butted ends, and the Code (9.27.9.5.) requires at least 3 mm clearance between hardboard siding and door or window frames. Ask the contractor how the bottom course of engineered wood siding will be kept clear of the deck.

Behind the siding, the 2024 Ontario Building Code (9.27.2.2.(4)) requires two planes of protection: the siding itself as the first plane, and a sheathing membrane conforming to CAN/CGSB-51.32-M as the second, lapped at least 100 mm with upper sheets over lower sheets (9.27.3.3.). Flashing is required at every horizontal junction between cladding elements and at horizontal offsets (9.27.3.7., 9.27.3.8.), and sealant goes between the siding and any adjacent door or window frames (9.27.4.). The Code's explanatory notes recommend a drained space at least 10 mm deep behind the siding, though that is not a requirement in Ontario.

A few things to ask the contractor before signing:

- How will the bottom of the engineered wood siding be kept clear where the deck meets the wall?
- What membrane, flashing and drainage detail are planned at the wall-deck junction?
- What happens if damaged sheathing is found behind the old siding once it comes off, and how is that priced?

- Does the written quote include removal and disposal of the old siding, all trim and corner pieces, and any sheathing repairs?

Before a contractor visits, walk around the deck from ground level and note where the existing siding sits relative to the deck boards, whether there are any stains, soft spots or gaps visible at the base of the wall, and whether the deck is attached directly to the house or sits free-standing beside it.

Q4

Is fibre cement panel siding face-sealed under Ontario's Code?

Fibre cement panels can be installed as a face-sealed assembly under the 2024 Ontario Building Code (Div. B, 9.27.3.6.), which allows the sheathing membrane to be omitted under sheets of fibre cement where all edges land on framing and joints are sealed and battened or shiplapped.

That said, the Code's explanatory notes attach a caution to face-sealed assemblies: they need more intensive, regular and ongoing maintenance, and the notes say they are not recommended where the owner may not be aware of that. Where a membrane is used, the notes also say it is not a waterproof material; the Code's second plane is the drainage plane with flashing that sends water getting past the cladding back outside (9.27.3.1.).

The Code has no fibre-cement subsection, no material standard and no thickness rule of its own. Installation follows the general articles in 9.27 plus the manufacturer's written instructions, which govern things the Code leaves open. Flashing is still required at every horizontal junction between cladding elements and at every horizontal offset (9.27.3.7., 9.27.3.8.), and sealant goes between the panels and any adjacent window or door frames (9.27.4.). Those requirements apply whether or not the membrane is omitted.

A few things worth confirming with the contractor before the job starts:

- Whether the manufacturer's instructions call for membrane behind their panels regardless of the Code's face-sealed option, since the manufacturer's instructions govern fibre cement installation.
- What flashing detail is planned at horizontal joints, offsets and openings.
- What sealant product will be used and whether it meets ASTM C834, C920, C1184 or C1311.
- What happens to the quote if damage is found in the sheathing once the old cladding comes off.
- Whether the crew's Working at Heights training is current under O. Reg. 297/13.

Paperwork worth keeping: the written contract, the itemized quote, the manufacturer's warranty card or document, and photos taken of the wall before the new panels went on.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Siding Contractors. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa or your own municipality) before starting any siding project, and have old siding on a house built before 1990 tested before it is disturbed. Siding work in Ontario must meet the 2024 Ontario Building Code (O. Reg. 163/24). Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawasidingcontractors.ca** for the latest answers.