

NEW BRUNSWICK CONCRETE

DIY vs Professional

When to DIY concrete work and when to hire a professional, skill requirements, tool needs, and risk assessment

19 Expert Answers from Concrete IQ

newbrunswickconcrete.com/construction-brain

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Is it realistic for a DIYer to pour a concrete driveway in rural NB or should a contractor always be hired?

Pouring a concrete driveway is one of the most challenging DIY concrete projects and generally should be left to professionals, especially in New Brunswick's demanding climate. While technically possible for an experienced DIYer with help, the combination of timing pressures, material volumes, and NB's specific requirements make professional installation the smart choice for most homeowners.

The Reality of Driveway Concrete Volume

A typical two-car driveway (20x20 feet) requires about 5 cubic yards of concrete — that's roughly 20,000 pounds of material that must be placed, screeded, floated, and finished within a 2-3 hour window before the concrete begins to set. Ready-mix trucks deliver this volume all at once, and there are no second chances. Once the truck leaves, you're committed to finishing what's been poured, regardless of how it's going.

NB-Specific Challenges for DIY Driveways

New Brunswick's freeze-thaw cycles make proper concrete specification critical. Your driveway must use air-entrained concrete (4-7% air content) to survive 150+ annual freeze-thaw cycles, require proper reinforcement with welded wire mesh or rebar, and need control joints every 8-10 feet to control cracking. The concrete must be at least 5-6 inches thick to handle vehicle loads and frost heave, and requires a properly compacted gravel base to prevent settling.

Timing and Weather Windows

In rural NB, you're often dealing with longer truck travel times from the ready-mix plant, which reduces your working time. Spring and fall weather can be unpredictable — a surprise temperature drop below 10°C during curing can compromise the concrete's strength. Professional contractors monitor weather forecasts closely and have contingency plans for temperature protection that most DIYers lack.

Equipment and Skill Requirements

Finishing a driveway requires specialized tools — screeds, floats, edgers, groovers for control joints, and often a power trowel for larger areas. The physical demands are intense — you'll need 3-4 people minimum to handle the volume and timing. Mistakes in finishing create permanent surface defects, poor drainage, or scaling that becomes visible every time you come home.

When DIY Might Work

An experienced DIYer might consider a small, simple driveway (single car width, straight run, good access) if they have concrete experience, adequate help, proper tools, and favorable weather conditions. Even then, budget for potential failure — a botched driveway pour means jackhammering out 20,000 pounds of concrete and starting over.

Professional Advantages

Concrete contractors bring experience with NB conditions, relationships with ready-mix suppliers for proper air-entrained mixes, specialized equipment, trained crews who work as a team, and insurance coverage for problems. A professional driveway installation typically costs \$8-15 per square foot but comes with the confidence of proper execution and often includes a warranty.

The Smart Approach

For most rural NB homeowners, hiring a professional for the concrete pour while potentially handling the excavation and base preparation yourself offers the best balance of cost savings and quality assurance. Get multiple quotes from local contractors who understand Maritime concrete requirements.

Need help finding a professional concrete contractor? New Brunswick Concrete can match you with experienced local professionals who specialize in residential driveways and understand NB's challenging climate conditions.

Q2

Can I pour my own concrete sidewalk as a DIY project in NB?

A short concrete sidewalk or front walkway is one of the more achievable DIY concrete projects in New Brunswick — but it requires realistic preparation, the right materials, and enough crew to handle the pour efficiently. This is not a one-person job, and missteps are permanent.

A standard residential front walkway in NB is typically 3–4 feet wide and 10–20 feet long — somewhere between 30 and 80 square feet. At 4 inches thick, that is 0.4–0.9 cubic metres of concrete, which puts you in bagged-mix or small ready-mix territory. The scale is manageable, the stakes are lower than a driveway, and a DIYer who makes a minor finishing mistake ends up with a functional-if-imperfect walkway rather than a catastrophic failure.

What makes a DIY sidewalk achievable:

- Smaller volume — no race against a large ready-mix load setting up
- Simpler forming — straight lines, no complex shapes
- You can take your time mixing bags or order a small ready-mix load

- Mistakes in finishing (minor surface roughness, slight unevenness) are liveable on a side walkway

What you must get right regardless of DIY or pro:

- **Specify air-entrained concrete.** A concrete sidewalk in NB that is not air-entrained will spall and scale within a few winters. If using bagged mix, understand most bags are not air-entrained — ask your supplier specifically
- **Compact the base.** A minimum of 4–6 inches of compacted granular fill under the slab, with all topsoil and organic material removed. Soil that settles after the pour cracks the slab
- **Cut control joints** every 4–5 feet. Without them, the concrete will crack randomly across the widest visible line
- **Cure properly.** Cover with plastic sheeting or apply a curing compound immediately after finishing, and leave it for a minimum of 7 days
- **Slope for drainage** — a minimum 1% slope (1/8 inch per foot) away from the house so water does not pool against the foundation

Where to draw the line: a front walkway connecting to existing steps — no problem for a capable DIYer. Replacing or building new concrete steps? Call a professional. Steps require precise forming, proper thickness, and finish that is both safe (non-slip) and aesthetically acceptable on a high-visibility surface. New Brunswick Concrete can match you with local contractors for steps and larger walkway projects.

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Q3

Is pouring a concrete slab something a homeowner can do in New Brunswick?

A small concrete slab — a shed pad, a small backyard patio, or a single-car garage apron — is within reach for a capable, well-prepared NB homeowner. A driveway, garage floor, or any slab over 2–3 cubic yards is not —

and trying it without experience is one of the fastest ways to produce expensive, permanent regret.

Concrete flatwork has a narrow, unforgiving window. From the moment ready-mix is ordered and the truck arrives, you are on a clock. The concrete must be placed, screeded, floated, and finished before it sets — a window that varies from 45 minutes in hot summer weather to 90 minutes or more in cool fall conditions. For a 10-yard driveway, that window must accommodate the truck placement, wheelbarrow work or chute pouring, screeding a large area with a long screed, floating, and finishing. This is a job that professional concrete crews manage because they do it daily, understand the timing, and have the right equipment. A first-timer is almost certain to run out of time, leaving a surface that cannot be finished properly.

Small slabs are different. A 10×12 foot shed pad or a small backyard patio using 1.5–2 cubic yards can reasonably be managed by a homeowner with two or three capable helpers and a full day to prepare. The volume is manageable, the clock is less brutal, and finishing errors on a shed pad have no aesthetic consequences.

The honest checklist for DIY slab success:

- You have at least two strong helpers
- The base is properly prepared and compacted before the day of the pour
- You have all tools on hand (screed board, bull float, hand float, edger, jointing tool, broom)
- You have watched multiple concrete finishing videos and understand the stages: plastic, bleed water evaporation, first floating, final troweling, brooming
- You have a plan for curing: curing compound or plastic sheeting ready to apply immediately after finishing
- You are pouring in suitable weather: daytime temps 15–25°C, no rain forecast, no freezing overnight

What always requires a professional in NB: foundations (footings, basement walls, structural slabs), driveways, garage floors, steps, anything requiring precision elevation control or load bearing, and any slab that will carry vehicles. The NB concrete professional community in Moncton, Fredericton, Saint John, and across the province is experienced and competitive — getting 3 quotes through New Brunswick Concrete often produces better results than DIY at similar overall cost once you factor in tools and materials.

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What concrete projects should I always hire a professional for in NB?

In New Brunswick, there is a clear line between concrete work a capable homeowner can tackle and work that should always be handled by a qualified professional. Crossing that line — particularly for structural and foundation work — can result in safety hazards, building code violations, structural failure, and costs far exceeding what the original professional work would have cost.

Always hire a professional for:

Foundation work is at the top of the list, without exception. Footings, foundation walls, grade beams, structural slabs — these are the literal base of your building. NB's frost depth of 4–5 feet means foundation excavations are deep, dangerous, and demanding. Improper footing depth, inadequate reinforcement, incorrect concrete cover, or poor consolidation can compromise a structure for decades. Trench collapse during excavation is a leading cause of construction fatalities. Foundation failures are among the most expensive repairs in residential construction, often requiring complete excavation, demolition, and reconstruction. There is no DIY justification for foundation work.

Concrete driveways are beyond what most homeowners should attempt. A two-car driveway involves 7–9 cubic yards of ready-mix arriving all at once and requiring immediate, coordinated placement and finishing. The crew must work the entire surface before the concrete sets — a race that professional crews manage daily with specialized equipment and practiced technique. A failed driveway pour is a permanent, highly visible, expensive result. The cost of professional installation (\$5,000–\$9,000 in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John) is the cost of certainty.

Stamped and decorative concrete requires specialized tools (stamps, release agents, colouring systems) and — critically — perfect timing. The window between stampable concrete and over-hardened concrete can be as short as 20 minutes per section. Professional decorative concrete installers develop this skill over hundreds of pours. First-timers consistently produce uneven stamp patterns, blurred textures, and colour inconsistencies that are visible permanently.

Retaining walls over 2 feet resist significant soil and water pressure. Walls over 4 feet require engineered drawings under NB Building Code. An under-designed retaining wall can fail catastrophically, causing soil movement, property damage, and potential injury.

Foundation crack repair — if you can see a crack from inside your basement, professional assessment is required before any repair. Some cracks are cosmetic; others indicate active structural movement, hydrostatic pressure, or drainage failure. Filling a structural crack without addressing the cause is a temporary cosmetic fix on a progressing problem.

Concrete lifting and levelling (mudjacking or polyfoam injection) requires specialized equipment and significant experience. Over-lifting can create new cracks; incorrect foam placement can cause differential settlement.

New Brunswick Concrete can match you with qualified local contractors for any of these projects across NB.

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Q5

Can I repair my own foundation crack in New Brunswick?

Whether you can repair a foundation crack yourself depends entirely on the type, cause, and severity of the crack. Some foundation cracks are simple cosmetic issues with low-risk DIY solutions; others are symptoms of active structural movement that require professional engineering assessment before any repair is attempted.

First, understand what type of crack you have:

Hairline cracks (under 1 mm wide) in poured concrete foundations are extremely common and are typically caused by normal concrete shrinkage during curing. They are usually vertical or diagonal in the upper portion of the wall, stable (not growing), and do not leak. If the crack has been stable for years and has no water infiltration, this is the lowest-risk DIY repair: clean the crack, allow it to dry, and fill with a concrete crack filler or polyurethane injection kit available at NB building supply stores. Monitor it — if it continues to grow, something is causing movement.

Horizontal cracks in a foundation wall are a serious warning sign. Horizontal cracking indicates the wall is bending inward under lateral soil pressure — a structural problem. This is not a DIY repair under any circumstances. A structural engineer must assess the wall before any repair is attempted. The cause — poor drainage, high water

table, frost pressure, excessive surcharge — must be addressed or the repair is futile.

Stair-step cracks in masonry (block or stone foundations) indicate differential settlement — the foundation is sinking unevenly. In NB's frost-active soils, this can happen if a footing was originally installed above the frost line. Settlement cracks require professional assessment.

Actively leaking cracks — where water is seeping or running through — indicate hydrostatic pressure from groundwater. Hydraulic cement can be used for a quick DIY patch to stop active water flow (it sets in minutes), but it does not address the water source. The long-term fix requires exterior waterproofing, drainage improvement, or an interior drainage system — all professional work.

DIY repair is reasonable for: stable, hairline, dry cracks in poured foundations that have not changed in size for at least one full NB frost cycle. Polyurethane injection kits from hardware stores work well for this application.

Always call a professional for: horizontal cracks, stair-step cracks, cracks wider than 5 mm, cracks that are growing, any crack accompanied by water infiltration, or any crack in a foundation wall where you are unsure of the cause.

Before any foundation repair, document the crack with photos and a pencil line marking the ends — monitoring crack growth over time tells you whether the problem is stable or active. New Brunswick Concrete can match you with contractors who specialize in foundation assessment and repair across New Brunswick.

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Q6

What tools do I need for a small concrete pour in NB?

For a small DIY concrete pour — a shed pad, sonotube footings, a small pathway section — you need about a dozen tools and supplies that are either already in a typical NB homeowner's garage or readily rentable from local equipment rental shops in Moncton, Fredericton, Saint John, and Bathurst.

Here is the essential toolkit, grouped by stage of the work:

Before the pour:

- **Wheelbarrow** — for mixing bagged concrete or moving ready-mix from the chute to the forms
- **Square-bladed shovel** — for placing and spreading concrete within the forms
- **Hoe or mixing paddle** — for mixing bagged concrete; a mixing paddle attachment for a corded drill speeds this up significantly
- **2x6 or 2x4 lumber** — for building edge forms; straight, dry lumber is important for clean edges
- **Hammer and duplex nails** — for assembling and later stripping forms easily (duplex nails pull out cleanly)
- **Tape measure, string line, level** — for setting form height and ensuring a level pour

During the pour:

- **Screed board** — a straight 2x4 board long enough to span across the forms (usually a 6–8 foot board works for most small pours). Used to level the concrete to the top of the forms immediately after placing
- **Bull float or darby** — a large flat tool pushed across the fresh concrete surface after screeding to embed aggregate, close voids, and smooth the surface. For a pour under 100 sq ft, a darby (a hand-held float, roughly 3 feet long) works well; larger areas benefit from a bull float on a pole
- **Magnesium hand float** — for smoothing and compacting the surface after initial stiffening
- **Edging tool** — rounds the edges of the slab to reduce chipping. An important step for any finished edge that will be visible
- **Jointing tool / grooving tool** — for cutting control joints every 4–5 feet. This is critical for NB pours where thermal movement and frost cycling will otherwise cause uncontrolled cracking

After the pour:

- **Stiff-bristle push broom** — for applying a broom finish to the surface for traction (most exterior concrete in NB should have a broom finish for safety in icy conditions)
- **Plastic sheeting (6 mil) or a curing compound sprayer** — for curing the concrete for a minimum of 7 days after the pour

Optional but helpful: rubber boots (essential — concrete is caustic and prolonged skin contact causes serious burns), nitrile gloves, safety glasses.

Tool rental for a concrete finishing set (bull float, edger, groover) runs \$30–\$60 per day at NB equipment rental shops. This is the economical path for a one-time small pour.

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Is DIY stamped concrete realistic or should I hire a pro in NB?

DIY stamped concrete is not realistic for most New Brunswick homeowners — and attempting it on a high-visibility surface like a front patio or driveway apron is one of the riskiest concrete decisions you can make. The result will either be professional quality or it will be a permanent, expensive disappointment. There is very little middle ground.

Stamped concrete is technically demanding not because the stamping itself is complicated — the stamps are essentially large rubber mats you press into the concrete — but because the **timing is everything and entirely unforgiving**. The concrete must be stamped in a specific, narrow window: after the bleed water has evaporated and the surface has stiffened to the right consistency to accept the stamp without the pattern smearing, but before the concrete has hardened so much that the stamp cannot be pressed in firmly. In NB summer conditions (a warm July day in Moncton or Fredericton), this window can be 20–40 minutes for a section of the slab. Miss it by 15 minutes and the pattern is blurred or barely visible. On a large pour, the first stamps are drying while you are still finishing the far sections — managing this timing across the whole surface is a skill developed over hundreds of pours.

The full stamped concrete process also requires:

- A colour release agent (powder or liquid) applied to the stamp pads or the concrete surface to add colour depth and prevent sticking
- An integral colour added to the concrete mix — which means coordinating with the ready-mix plant on colour loading
- Re-stamping at borders and edges where full stamps do not fit, using smaller hand stamps
- A consistent stamping pressure and alignment across the entire surface — variations are highly visible in the finished product
- Sealing with an acrylic sealer after curing to protect the colour and enhance the appearance

The cost of a failed DIY attempt on a 300 sq ft stamped patio is effectively the full cost of demolition and professional replacement — potentially \$5,000–\$8,000. The concrete cannot be reworked, restamped, or corrected once it has set. What you pour is what you have.

The professional recommendation for NB homeowners: hire an experienced stamped concrete installer. Stamped concrete installed by a professional in Moncton, Fredericton, or Saint John runs \$12–\$20 per square foot — a 300 sq ft patio at \$15 per foot is \$4,500. This reflects genuine skill and experience. Get 3 quotes, ask to see recent local examples of their work, and verify that they are specifying air-entrained mix at 32 MPa —

NB's freeze-thaw cycles will destroy decorative concrete that is not properly specified.

New Brunswick Concrete can match you with stamped concrete professionals who have local NB experience.

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Q8

Can I pour sonotube footings myself for a deck in New Brunswick?

Yes, pouring sonotube footings for a residential deck is one of the more manageable DIY concrete tasks -- but NB's frost depth requirements make getting the depth right absolutely non-negotiable.

Sonotubes are cardboard tube forms available in 8-inch, 10-inch, and 12-inch diameters from NB building supply stores. For a typical deck with 4x4 or 6x6 posts, the process involves digging holes to below the frost line, placing the sonotube, mixing and pouring concrete, and embedding a post base hardware anchor while the concrete is wet. It sounds simple, and for small decks with two to four posts, it genuinely is achievable for a competent DIYer.

The most critical rule in New Brunswick: your sonotube footing holes must reach a minimum of 4 feet below finished grade in southern NB (Moncton, Fredericton, Saint John, Dieppe, Riverview) and up to 4.5-5 feet in northern NB (Bathurst, Miramichi, Edmundston). Frost heave is not theoretical -- a footing that sits above the frost line will move every winter, and after a few cycles your deck will be visibly out of level, with connections pulling apart and boards cracking. There are no shortcuts on depth.

For a deck that requires a building permit (most decks attached to the house do), your local building inspector will specify the footing diameter and depth. In Fredericton and Moncton, the municipality will typically inspect footing holes before you pour, so do not skip that step. For a small freestanding deck under 108 square feet in most NB

municipalities, permits are often not required, but the frost depth requirement still applies.

Materials for a typical deck footing: one or two 30 kg bags of Quikrete or Bomix per tube, plus a post base anchor embedded at the correct height. For eight sonotubes you are looking at \$80-\$150 in materials if you mix by hand. Rent a one-man power auger from a NB equipment rental shop for around \$100-\$150 per day -- digging 4-foot holes in NB's rocky glacial soil by hand is brutal work.

Use the water amount specified on the bag, never more. Wet, sloppy concrete in a footing has reduced strength and is more susceptible to freeze-thaw damage. If you are pouring in May or June (ideal timing), the concrete will cure fully within 7 days before any load is applied.

If your deck is large, elevated, or complex -- or if you are unsure about your soil conditions -- it is worth having a concrete professional assess and pour the footings. The foundation of your deck is not the place to gamble. **New Brunswick Concrete can match you with a local concrete professional for free if you want a quote on the footing work.**

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Q9

How hard is it to pour a small concrete pad for a shed in NB?

Pouring a small concrete pad for a shed is one of the best beginner DIY concrete projects in New Brunswick -- manageable in a weekend with the right preparation and realistic expectations about physical effort.

A standard shed pad of 8x10 feet (80 square feet) at 4 inches thick requires roughly 1 cubic yard of concrete. That is within the range of hand-mixing with bagged concrete (Quikrete 30 kg bags -- you'd need about 50 bags) or

ordering a small ready-mix delivery. For most NB homeowners, ordering ready-mix makes more sense financially once you calculate the cost of 50 bags at \$6-\$8 each (\$300-\$400 in bags alone), plus your time mixing and hauling. A small ready-mix order for 1-1.5 yards costs \$220-\$350 including delivery, though you may pay a short-load surcharge of \$75-\$150 for orders under 3-4 cubic yards.

The physical effort is real. Screed, float, and edge the concrete within about 30-60 minutes of placement before it stiffens. On a warm NB summer day you have less time; on a cool October morning, a bit more. For a first-timer, having an extra set of hands is genuinely important.

For a shed pad, a building permit is typically not required in most NB municipalities if the shed itself is under 108 square feet. Even without a permit, follow the NB Building Code approach: excavate 6-8 inches, lay a 4-inch compacted gravel base, then pour 4 inches of concrete. The gravel base is critical in NB -- it provides drainage under the slab and allows frost to move without heaving the pad as dramatically.

Use air-entrained concrete mix for any outdoor NB concrete, including shed pads. NB's 150+ annual freeze-thaw cycles will attack non-air-entrained concrete within a few years, causing surface scaling and deterioration. If you are ordering ready-mix, specify air-entrained 25 MPa. If using bagged concrete, look for exterior-rated mixes.

The basic process: stake out the area, excavate, compact gravel base, build 2x4 forms, check level, pour, screed with a 2x4 across the tops of the forms, float and edge, cut control joints if the pad is over 6 feet in any direction, and cover with plastic sheeting for 7 days to cure properly. Total material cost for an 80 square foot pad runs \$400-\$700 including ready-mix, gravel, form lumber, and a bag of sealer.

If the shed is large, the ground is uneven or sloped, or you want a particularly level, professional result, hiring a concrete crew for a small pad typically costs \$800-\$1,500 fully installed -- often worth it for the peace of mind and finished quality.

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Can I apply epoxy to my garage floor myself in New Brunswick?

Yes, DIY epoxy floor coating is achievable for an NB homeowner, but surface preparation is where most DIY epoxy projects succeed or fail -- and it is far more work than the application itself.

Epoxy bonds chemically to concrete, so the surface must be porous, clean, and free of any previous coatings, sealers, oil, or curing compounds. New concrete in New Brunswick must cure for a minimum of 30 days before any epoxy application -- ideally 60-90 days for the moisture content to stabilize. Applying epoxy to concrete that is too new or too damp will cause peeling and delamination within the first winter.

Preparation is 80% of the job. The concrete must be mechanically prepared by acid etching or grinding. Acid etching (muriatic acid diluted with water, applied and scrubbed, then thoroughly neutralized and rinsed) opens the pores of the concrete so the epoxy can penetrate. Grinding with a rented floor grinder is more effective and produces more consistent results but adds \$100-\$200 to your rental cost. Either way, any oil stains must be degreased and removed beforehand -- epoxy will not bond over oil contamination.

For the NB garage environment specifically, **moisture vapour transmission is a real concern.** Many NB garage floors are poured on grade with limited vapour barrier protection below. Moisture rising from the soil through the slab will lift epoxy from beneath, causing bubbling and peeling. Test for moisture by taping a plastic sheet to the floor and leaving it for 24 hours -- if condensation forms beneath the plastic, your slab has a moisture problem that needs to be addressed before any coating is applied.

DIY epoxy kits from NB home improvement stores run \$100-\$250 for a two-car garage kit and typically include a base coat, colour flakes, and a topcoat. These water-based epoxy kits are user-friendly but thinner and less durable than 100% solid epoxy products used by professionals. In the NB climate with its temperature swings and road salt tracked in from November through April, a DIY water-based epoxy kit will likely need recoating every 3-5 years.

Apply only when the garage temperature is between 10-25 degrees Celsius -- in NB, that means May through September for most garages. Epoxy will not cure properly in the cold, and NB garage floors drop below acceptable temperatures quickly in fall and spring.

If your floor has significant cracking, spalling, or moisture issues, or if you want a long-lasting result from a professional-grade polyaspartic or 100% solids epoxy, professional application runs \$4-\$8 per square foot -- roughly \$1,600-\$4,000 for a two-car garage floor. The professional result will outlast multiple DIY applications. **New Brunswick Concrete can connect you with local flooring contractors for a free quote.**

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Q11

What are the risks of DIY concrete work in NB?

DIY concrete in New Brunswick carries real risks that are specific to our climate and building code requirements -- and mistakes in concrete work are permanent, not easily undone.

The most costly DIY mistake NB homeowners make is **using the wrong concrete mix for exterior work.**

Standard concrete without air entrainment will begin scaling and spalling within 3-5 years under New Brunswick's 150+ annual freeze-thaw cycles. Once surface deterioration begins, it accelerates. A driveway or patio that looks fine in year three can be badly pitted and deteriorating by year five. Always specify air-entrained concrete (4-7% air content, 25-32 MPa) for any outdoor flatwork -- driveway, patio, steps, or walkway.

Insufficient frost depth on footings is a structural risk. In New Brunswick, all structural footings must reach a minimum of 4 feet below grade in the south and up to 5 feet in the north. A sonotube footing that stops at 2 or 3 feet will heave every winter, gradually pushing your deck, fence post, or structure out of alignment. After a few years, the cumulative movement can make repairs more expensive than starting from scratch. This is one mistake that cannot be patched.

Timing and finishing errors are hard to recover from. Ready-mix concrete begins setting immediately upon delivery. A first-time DIYer who misjudges the timing, runs short of help, or struggles with screeding and floating may end up with a surface that is uneven, rough, or marked with footprints and tool marks -- permanently. Unlike paint or flooring, you cannot simply redo a concrete slab that has already set. Similarly, concrete poured when overnight temperatures will drop below 0 degrees Celsius without cold weather protection will suffer permanent strength loss of 20-40%.

Reinforcement errors affect long-term performance. Wire mesh or rebar placed on the ground instead of elevated to mid-slab height on chairs ends up at the bottom of the slab, where it does nothing structurally. A slab without reinforcement, or with incorrectly placed reinforcement, will crack and pieces will separate over time under NB frost heave forces.

There are also **safety risks** specific to concrete work: freshly mixed concrete is highly alkaline and causes serious chemical burns on unprotected skin. Excavating for deep footings in NB's variable soils creates trench collapse risk. And handling ready-mix trucks on a residential driveway without proper preparation can result in property damage if the truck sinks into soft ground.

The practical guideline: **small flatwork under 1 cubic yard (patios, shed pads, sonotubes, repairs) is reasonable DIY territory with proper mix specification and preparation.** Driveways, foundations, structural footings deeper than 4 feet, retaining walls over 2 feet, and any pour over 2 cubic yards should involve a professional. **New Brunswick Concrete can match you with a local contractor for any project where the risk of DIY is too high.**

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Q12

Should I rent a concrete mixer or order ready-mix for a small job in NB?

For jobs under half a cubic yard (roughly 50 square feet of 4-inch slab), bagged concrete mixed by hand or with a rented mixer is practical. For anything larger, ordering ready-mix from an NB plant is faster, stronger, and often more cost-effective than you might expect.

Here is the math that surprises most NB homeowners: one cubic yard of concrete is 27 cubic feet. A 30 kg bag of Quikrete makes about 0.5 cubic feet. That means one cubic yard requires 54 bags, at \$6-\$8 each -- \$324-\$432 in bags alone, plus hours of mixing labour, plus the rental cost of a small mixer (\$60-\$90/day). Compare that to ready-mix delivered to your site: one cubic yard runs roughly \$220-\$280 including delivery in most NB cities, though a short-load surcharge of \$75-\$150 applies to orders under 3-4 cubic yards, bringing your total to \$295-\$430. The gap between bagged and ready-mix narrows significantly once you factor in your time and labour.

The key advantage of ready-mix for exterior NB concrete is the mix specification. When you call a Moncton, Fredericton, or Saint John ready-mix plant, you can specify air-entrained 25 MPa or 32 MPa concrete -- the correct specification for all exterior flatwork in New Brunswick. Bagged concrete mixes from hardware stores vary in quality, and most consumer-grade bags are not formulated to NB's freeze-thaw specifications the way a properly specified plant-mixed air-entrained concrete is.

Where a rented mixer makes sense: fence posts, sonotubes (1-2 bags each), patching, and repair work where you need to work at your own pace and don't need a large volume. A borrowed or rented mixer lets you mix one batch at a time, useful when you are working alone or filling individual form components over a couple of hours.

Where ready-mix is the better choice: any slab -- shed pad, patio section, garage apron, steps -- where you need consistent quality across the entire pour. Ready-mix is mixed to tight specifications at the plant, arrives at the correct slump, and ensures a uniform product throughout. Trying to achieve a consistent, well-finished slab by mixing 30-40 bags in sequence leads to colour variation and uneven hydration.

If you are ordering ready-mix in NB, book early during the May-September peak season. Plants in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John can be scheduled out days in advance on busy summer weekends. Have your site completely prepared -- forms built, gravel base compacted, reinforcement in place, tools ready -- before the truck arrives, because the driver will not wait long and returning unused concrete costs you money.

For very small pours like a single step repair or a 6-foot sonotube, just buy bagged mix -- the convenience justifies the cost at that scale.

Looking for experienced contractors? The New Brunswick Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

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- alka masonry
- Gionetterenovations
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Can I build my own concrete retaining wall in New Brunswick?

Small retaining walls under 2 feet in height are reasonable DIY territory in New Brunswick. Once you exceed 2 feet of retained height, the structural forces, drainage requirements, and NB's frost heave conditions make professional involvement strongly advisable.

A concrete retaining wall has to resist three forces simultaneously: the lateral pressure of the soil behind it, the hydrostatic pressure of groundwater, and the frost heave forces that New Brunswick winters generate with particular intensity. NB's 150+ annual freeze-thaw cycles create tremendous uplift and lateral pressure as saturated soil freezes and expands. A wall that is not properly designed -- with adequate thickness, reinforcement, footing depth, and drainage -- will crack, tilt, or fail. This happens gradually over years, then suddenly.

For a small decorative wall under 2 feet retaining a garden bed or gentle grade change, DIY using precast concrete blocks or poured concrete with a simple footing is achievable. The footing must still extend below the frost line -- minimum 4 feet below grade in southern NB -- even for a small wall. This is where many DIY retaining walls fail. A beautiful wall sitting on a shallow footing will heave, shift, and crack within the first two winters.

Drainage behind the wall is non-negotiable. Without a gravel drainage layer and perforated drain tile at the base of the wall, water accumulates behind the wall and dramatically increases the hydrostatic pressure it must resist. In spring when NB soils are saturated from snowmelt, a wall without proper drainage is under enormous stress. Install a 12-inch gravel drainage zone behind any retaining wall and direct the drain tile to daylight at the end of the wall.

NB Building Code requires a permit for retaining walls exceeding 4 feet (1.2 metres) in exposed height.

Walls over 4 feet also require engineered drawings in most cases, showing proper reinforcement, footing design, and drainage. In Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John, contact the city's building inspection department before breaking ground on any wall over 3 feet.

For a poured concrete retaining wall between 2 and 4 feet, costs run \$25-\$50 per linear foot per foot of height. A 20-linear-foot wall at 3 feet tall runs \$1,500-\$3,000 in materials for a DIY attempt, not including equipment rental for forming and placing the concrete. For walls in this range, the cost difference between DIY and professional is often narrower than homeowners expect, particularly when you factor in equipment rental, waste, and the risk of a failed pour.

Get professional help for any wall retaining more than 2 feet of earth, any wall near a property line, and any wall where failure could affect a structure, driveway, or neighbouring property. New Brunswick Concrete can match you with an experienced local contractor who understands NB frost and drainage conditions.

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Q14

Is it worth hiring a concrete contractor for a small NB patio?

For a patio under 150 square feet, a skilled DIYer can produce a good result -- but for most NB homeowners without concrete experience, hiring a professional is worth the cost for the quality assurance, correct mix specification, and professional finish.

Here is the honest picture: concrete finishing is a skill that professionals develop over years of daily practice. A concrete contractor knows when to start floating, when to edge, how to produce a consistent broom finish, and how to manage the timing on a warm NB summer day when the concrete is setting faster than expected. A first-time DIYer pours a patio once and learns on their most visible outdoor surface. Mistakes -- footprints, tool drag marks, uneven surface, rough edges -- are permanent.

The NB climate adds stakes to getting it right. A patio poured without proper air entrainment will spall and scale within a few years under NB's freeze-thaw cycles. A patio without proper control joints will crack randomly across the surface. A patio on an improperly compacted gravel base will shift and become uneven as frost heaves the soil beneath it in winter. Each of these mistakes costs as much to fix as the original pour -- and some require complete removal and replacement.

Cost comparison for a typical 200 square foot NB patio:

DIY path: gravel (\$150-\$300), ready-mix concrete (\$400-\$600 including short-load surcharge), form lumber (\$50-\$100), sealer (\$80-\$150), tool rentals (\$100-\$200), plus your weekend. Total: \$780-\$1,350 in materials, not counting your labour.

Professional installation: \$10-\$18 per square foot fully installed, so \$2,000-\$3,600 for a 200 square foot patio. The professional price includes excavation, gravel base, forms, correct air-entrained mix, professional finishing, control joints, and typically the first sealer application.

The gap is real but the professional delivers a finished product with no learning curve risk, correct mix specification, and typically a better finished surface. For a patio that will be a focal point of your backyard -- where guests will see the finish quality and where you will be looking at it for 20-30 years -- the professional result has long-term value.

Where DIY makes more sense: a utilitarian shed or hot tub pad in a less visible location, or if you have previous concrete experience and the confidence to specify the right mix and execute the finishing work. If you are curious about cost, **New Brunswick Concrete can match you with a local contractor for a free estimate** so you can compare it to your DIY budget before deciding.

Looking for experienced contractors? The New Brunswick Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

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Q15

How to find a good concrete contractor in Moncton NB?

Finding a quality concrete contractor in Moncton comes down to doing some basic due diligence: verify their experience with NB-specific concrete work, check references from recent local projects, confirm their insurance and WorkSafeNB status, and get at least three written quotes before making a decision.

Moncton has a reasonably active concrete contractor market — between Moncton proper, Dieppe, Riverview, and the surrounding Westmorland County communities, there is enough residential and commercial concrete work to support numerous contractors ranging from single-operator crews to mid-size companies. But the range in quality,

experience, and pricing is significant. The cheapest quote in Moncton concrete work rarely represents the best value — a poorly executed concrete pour is permanent and expensive to fix.

Start by asking specifically about their experience with NB conditions. A contractor who understands that exterior flatwork in NB requires air-entrained mix (4 to 7% air content), who specifies 25 to 32 MPa mix strength, who knows the appropriate control joint spacing for your slab thickness, and who discusses curing practice demonstrates actual expertise. A contractor who simply says "we pour driveways" without mentioning any of these specifications is either inexperienced or not paying attention to the details that determine whether your concrete lasts 10 years or 30 years.

Ask for references from recent work in the Moncton area — ideally projects completed within the last 2 to 3 years that you can actually visit and evaluate. Look at the concrete surface for signs of scaling, spalling, or widespread cracking. Check that control joints are cleanly cut and properly spaced. Ask the homeowner whether the contractor showed up on time, communicated well, and cleaned up properly.

Verify insurance and WorkSafeNB coverage. Ask the contractor directly: Do you carry general liability insurance? What is the coverage amount? Are you and any workers covered under WorkSafeNB or do you carry private Workers' Compensation coverage? For a project involving excavation — any foundation work, driveway removal, or patio with site grading — this is non-negotiable. An uninsured contractor working on your property creates liability exposure for you.

Get at least three written quotes for any project over \$2,000. Moncton concrete prices vary 30 to 50% between contractors for identical scope. A written quote should specify the area, thickness, mix specification (MPa, air entrainment), reinforcement type, finish, and any specific inclusions or exclusions. Vague quotes that just list a total price without specifications leave you exposed to disputes.

New Brunswick Concrete is a free matching service that connects Moncton homeowners with local concrete contractors. Browse the New Brunswick Construction Network directory at newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com/directory for concrete and masonry professionals serving the Moncton-Dieppe-Riverview area, and get matched for free through New Brunswick Concrete.

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What questions should I ask a concrete contractor in New Brunswick before hiring?

Before hiring any concrete contractor in New Brunswick, ask these specific questions — the answers will quickly separate experienced, professional contractors from those who may cut corners on the specifications and practices that determine whether your concrete lasts decades or fails prematurely in NB conditions.

Technical questions that reveal real expertise:

"What mix specification will you use, and will it be air-entrained?" The correct answer for any exterior concrete in NB (driveways, patios, sidewalks, steps, porches) is air-entrained concrete, 25 to 32 MPa. A contractor who does not know what air entrainment is, or who says it is not necessary, is either inexperienced with NB conditions or planning to use an inferior product. Air entrainment is not optional in New Brunswick — it is what separates concrete that lasts 25 to 40 years from concrete that spalls and scales within 5 to 7 years.

"What thickness will you pour?" For driveways: 5 to 6 inches minimum. Patios: 4 to 5 inches. Sidewalks: 4 inches. If the number is lower than these minimums, ask why.

"What reinforcement will you use and how will it be supported?" Wire mesh or rebar are both appropriate depending on the application — but they must be supported at mid-slab height on chairs, not laid on the ground. A contractor who places mesh on the ground and says "we pull it up during the pour" is telling you the mesh will end up at the bottom of the slab where it provides minimal reinforcement.

"How will you cure the concrete after the pour?" Correct answers: curing compound applied after finishing, plastic sheeting kept wet for 7 days, or wet burlap. "It'll be fine" or "we don't do anything special" is the wrong answer — proper curing is critical to achieving design strength.

"Where will the control joints be cut, and when?" Control joints prevent random cracking by creating planned weak points. They should be cut within 4 to 12 hours of pouring (or tooled during the pour), spaced every 8 to 12 feet for a 4-inch slab, to a depth of 1/4 the slab thickness.

Business and legal questions:

- Are you insured with general liability coverage? For how much?
- Are you and your crew covered under WorkSafeNB?
- Will you provide a written contract specifying scope, materials, and payment schedule?
- What warranty do you offer on your workmanship?

- What is the payment schedule — be very cautious of contractors demanding 50% or more upfront.
- Can you provide three local references from projects completed in the last two years?

Practical project questions:

- What is the start date and estimated completion?
- Will you handle the removal and disposal of my existing concrete (if applicable)?
- Are permits required for my project and who is responsible for obtaining them?
- What happens if it rains on pour day — what is your contingency?

A contractor who answers these questions confidently, specifically, and consistently is demonstrating the professionalism you want managing a permanent installation on your property. New Brunswick Concrete can help you find contractors in your area through the New Brunswick Construction Network.

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Q17

How many quotes should I get for a concrete driveway in NB?

Get at least three quotes for a concrete driveway in New Brunswick — and make sure they are written, itemized quotes, not verbal ballpark estimates. This is not bureaucratic caution; it is practical advice based on the reality of the NB concrete market, where prices for identical scope can vary 30 to 50% between contractors.

Concrete driveway pricing in NB is influenced by factors that are not always visible in a final number: the mix specification (air-entrained 32 MPa versus cheaper 25 MPa without air entrainment), the reinforcement approach (properly supported wire mesh or rebar versus mesh thrown on the ground), the base preparation depth (4 to 6

inches of compacted gravel versus minimal prep), and the curing practice after the pour. A quote of \$5,500 for a 500 square foot driveway using the right mix, proper base, and sound technique is a better value than a quote of \$4,800 that uses a substandard mix and skips proper base compaction — you just cannot see the difference until 5 to 7 years in when the cheaper driveway starts spalling and cracking.

Three quotes gives you several advantages. You get a realistic market range for your specific project in your location (Moncton pricing differs from Bathurst or Miramichi pricing). You can identify outliers — both unusually low quotes that suggest corner-cutting and unusually high quotes that may reflect premium pricing or scheduling availability. And you begin to understand what is and is not included in different contractors' scopes: does the quote include removal and disposal of the existing surface? Grading? Sealer application? These line items vary significantly between bids.

Make sure the quotes are comparing the same thing. Before getting quotes, decide on: approximate dimensions, desired thickness (specify 5 inches minimum for NB vehicle loads), finish type (broom, exposed aggregate, or stamped), whether the existing surface needs removal, and whether a permit is needed. When each contractor quotes the same scope, you can compare meaningfully. If one contractor specifies 25 MPa mix and another specifies 32 MPa air-entrained, ask both to quote on the same specification so you are comparing apples to apples.

Timing matters for quotes in NB. The spring booking rush — April through June — is intense. Contractors in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John book up quickly once the ground thaws and the pouring season opens. If you are flexible on timing, getting quotes in February or March (for a May or June pour) gives you leverage and often better pricing than calling in late May when every crew has a full schedule. Late-season quotes (September, October) can also be competitive as contractors want to fill their calendar before winter.

One important caution: do not choose solely on price. The lowest quote is not automatically the best choice — especially for a project as permanent as a concrete driveway. Review references, verify insurance, and assess how clearly and professionally each contractor communicated during the quoting process. How they treat you during the estimate is how they will treat you during the job.

New Brunswick Concrete is a free matching service — we can connect you with concrete contractors in your area so you can collect the quotes you need without the legwork of tracking down contractors cold.

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Q18

What should a concrete contractor quote include in New Brunswick?

A complete concrete quote in New Brunswick should be a written document that leaves nothing open to interpretation — vague quotes are where disputes and cost overruns begin. Before signing anything, make sure every quote covers the following critical elements so you can compare bids accurately and hold your contractor to what was promised.

Scope of work should be spelled out in plain language: what is being poured, where, and at what dimensions. For a driveway, that means the square footage, thickness (5-6 inches is standard for driveways in NB), and whether the existing concrete or asphalt is being removed. For a foundation, it should specify footing dimensions, wall height, and whether waterproofing is included.

Materials must be explicitly listed. The quote should state the concrete mix strength (25 MPa minimum, 32 MPa for exposed or structural work), confirm that air-entrained concrete will be used for any exterior flatwork, and specify reinforcement — rebar size and spacing or wire mesh grade. In NB's climate, specifying air entrainment in writing is non-negotiable; any quote that doesn't mention it should prompt a direct question.

Site preparation is where surprises hide. A complete quote includes excavation depth, gravel base type and compaction (typically 6 inches of compacted gravel for slabs), and any soil disposal costs. If forms need to be built, formed, stripped, and backfilled, that should be line-itemed.

Finishing and curing should be described: broom finish, exposed aggregate, stamped — and what curing method will be used (curing compound, wet burlap, plastic sheeting). In NB, proper curing is especially important for late-season pours.

Payment schedule and **project timeline** should both be in writing. A reasonable schedule for a driveway might be 30% deposit on start, 40% on pour day, 30% on completion after a walkthrough. Avoid contractors who demand more than 50% upfront.

The quote should also confirm that the contractor carries **general liability insurance and WorkSafeNB coverage**. Ask for proof — not a verbal assurance. Legitimate NB concrete contractors will have this documentation readily available.

Get at least three written quotes. NB concrete prices vary 30-50% between contractors for the same scope, and the lowest bid isn't always the best value — compare materials, scope, and timeline carefully before deciding. New Brunswick Concrete can connect you with local contractors who will provide written quotes at no cost to you.

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How to avoid concrete scams and bad contractors in NB?

The best protection against concrete scams in New Brunswick is doing your homework before anyone shows up with a truck — most bad outcomes are predictable and avoidable. NB homeowners are most vulnerable in spring when the ground thaws and demand surges, and in late fall when unscrupulous operators target homeowners trying to squeeze in last-minute work.

The biggest red flags to watch for include door-to-door solicitation from contractors claiming they have "leftover concrete" from a nearby job. Quality concrete contractors in NB are booked weeks in advance — they don't knock on doors with surplus material. Similarly, be extremely wary of any contractor demanding full payment upfront, asking for cash only, or unable to provide a written contract.

Always request proof of **general liability insurance and WorkSafeNB coverage** before signing anything. A legitimate contractor will have these documents on file and won't hesitate to provide them. If a contractor says they're "covered" but can't produce a certificate of insurance within 24 hours, walk away. If something goes wrong on your property — a worker gets injured, a vehicle damages your neighbour's fence — you could be liable if the contractor was uninsured.

Check references seriously. Ask for two or three recent local jobs in Moncton, Fredericton, Saint John, or wherever you live, and actually call those homeowners. Ask whether the project finished on time, whether the price matched the quote, and whether any issues were resolved professionally. A contractor with no verifiable local references is a contractor to avoid.

Get three written quotes before committing. If one quote is dramatically lower than the others, ask why — the answer usually involves thinner concrete, no air entrainment, inadequate base preparation, or a contractor who plans to cut corners on curing. NB's freeze-thaw climate punishes every shortcut; concrete that doesn't survive its first winter costs far more to replace than to do right the first time.

For any project over \$5,000, have a **clear written contract** that specifies the concrete mix, reinforcement, finishing method, payment schedule, and warranty on workmanship. New Brunswick's Consumer Product Safety Act gives you some recourse for fraud, but enforcement is slow and imperfect — prevention is always better.

New Brunswick Concrete connects homeowners with local concrete professionals through the New Brunswick Construction Network. While we are a matching service rather than a vetting body, getting connected through a structured directory gives you a starting point with contractors who have established a local presence.

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