NEW BRUNSWICK EXCAVATION

Rock & Blasting

Ledge, boulders, hydraulic breakers and certified blasters

4 Expert Answers from Dig IQ

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Q1

What should the rock clause say in a New Brunswick excavation contract?

What a Rock Clause Should Cover

A quote built on soil can change a lot if the machine hits ledge, and a contract without a clear rock clause leaves both sides arguing over who pays the difference. Get this language sorted before the machine arrives.

A solid rock clause should address four things:

- **How rock is defined.** The clause should say what counts as rock for billing purposes, for example material the excavator's bucket cannot break and move without a hydraulic breaker. Without a definition, a contractor and owner can disagree over whether a large boulder or a layer of hardpan qualifies.
- **How the extra cost is priced.** Hydraulic breaker time runs $200 to $300 per hour based on published price guides read in September 2026, and large machines can run higher. The clause should state the hourly rate for breaker work, whether that rate is separate from the base machine rate, and how hours are tracked and documented.
- **How rock is confirmed and communicated.** The clause should say the contractor notifies the owner in writing (or at minimum on site) before switching to breaker work, so the owner is not handed a surprise invoice. You can ask for a written sign-off before the extra work begins.
- **Where the rock goes.** If broken rock cannot stay on the lot for backfill, trucking and disposal costs apply. The clause should name who arranges haul-away, who pays, and whether a tipping fee is included or billed separately.

A few New Brunswick points shape this. We found no provincial excavation-contractor licence, so you cannot rely on a licensing body to resolve a dispute. The Construction Remedies Act does apply: you must retain a holdback of 10% of the contract price for 60 days after the certificate of substantial performance is signed or the declaration is made. For specifics on how the Act applies to your contract, get legal advice.
If the job is a foundation dig, remember that Regulation 2021-2 under the Building Code Administration Act requires a footing and foundation inspection through your local building department or Regional Service Commission before any backfilling begins. Rock removal does not change that requirement.

Put this question to the contractor in writing: if rock is encountered, what is the per-hour breaker rate, how will you document the hours, and will you notify me before the clock starts?

If you are still gathering quotes, the request form on this site sends your job details to local New Brunswick excavation contractors listed in the New Brunswick Construction Network directory.

Q2

Test holes to find rock before a Rothesay foundation?

Test Holes Before a Rothesay Foundation Dig

Digging a few test holes before committing to a foundation excavation price is a sound move. Published price guides from September 2026 show a standard excavator with operator running $150 to $250 per hour, and a mini excavator at $65 to $150 per hour. A test-hole program is typically billed by machine time, and the hours depend on how many holes you sink and how deep you need to go to get a clear read on conditions.

The reason to do this in Rothesay specifically is that a foundation quote built without knowing what is underground can swing dramatically once the machine hits something hard. If the contractor encounters rock, a hydraulic breaker attachment runs $200 to $300 per hour, and large machines can run higher than that range. A whole-house foundation dig runs $7,500 to $30,000 in national guides, and rock found partway through can push a job up within that range. Getting a test hole or two done first gives both you and the contractor a firmer basis for a fixed or capped price rather than an open-ended hourly arrangement.

Before any machine touches the ground, two separate locate requests go in. Info-Excavation, reached through Click Before You Dig, needs at least three working days notice. NB Power runs its own underground locate service, separate from Info-Excavation, and asks for at least five business days notice; that locate is valid for 60 days from the date on the locate form and covers only NB Power-owned lines. Private lines, such as wiring to a garage or shed, are yours to find and mark before the machine arrives. For anything involving a watercourse or wetland, no machine work happens within 30 metres without a provincial Watercourse and Wetland Alteration permit first.

On the permit side, the Town of Rothesay issues building and development permits, and its building inspector enforces the National Building Code. Under Regulation 2021-2 of the Building Code Administration Act, a footing and foundation inspection is required before any backfilling begins. That means once the full foundation dig follows your test holes, the backfill waits for that inspection. We found no provincial licence or certification specific to excavation contractors, so ask the contractor for a WorkSafeNB clearance certificate to confirm they are in good standing with their workers' compensation account. If the contractor has no workers and operates as a sole proprietor, WorkSafeNB says to discuss insurance with that person directly before work starts.

Under the Construction Remedies Act, hold back 10% of the contract price for 60 days after substantial performance is certified or declared. Get legal advice if you want specifics on how that works for your contract.

Set the written quotes next to each other and look at exactly how each one prices rock: is breaking billed separately at an hourly rate, or is it included up to a stated depth? Then check what each quote says about trucking distance and where the spoil goes, when backfill happens relative to the inspection, and whether site clean-up and any

imported fill are included or extra.

You can submit the details of your Rothesay project through the request form on this page, and local excavation contractors listed in the New Brunswick Construction Network directory can reply by email.

Q3

How is rock removed from a sewer trench in Saint John?

Rock in a Saint John Sewer Trench

When a sewer trench hits rock in Saint John, the contractor may break it with a hydraulic breaker mounted on an excavator and haul the broken material off site. Published price guides from September 2026 put hydraulic breaker work at $200 to $300 per hour, with larger machines running higher, on top of the excavator's own time at $150 to $250 per hour for a standard machine. Few New Brunswick prices are published, so those ranges are the best available starting point, not a firm local figure.

What moves the cost is how much rock is in the trench, how hard and fractured it is, how deep the trench runs, and how far the spoil has to travel to a disposal site. A shallow rock shelf that clears quickly is a different job from continuous ledge running the full length of a sewer run. Haul distance and the number of truck loads matter too, and those are judged on site, not from a quote sheet. If the rock is too confined or too hard for a breaker, blasting may come up; blasting must be carried out by a blaster who holds a certificate of qualification, and you should ask the City of Saint John whether any municipal rules apply before that option goes forward.

For a sewer trench in Saint John, the City requires a Water and Sewerage Permit Package for all new, renewal or repair water, sanitary or storm sewer installations, and it also lists a Street Excavation permit, so ask whether your trench needs it. Ask the City's permit office which permits apply to your specific connection and whether any inspection is required before the trench is backfilled. Under WorkSafeNB's General Regulation 91-191, a trench 1.2 m (about 4 ft) or deeper that workers enter must be shored, sloped or benched, or cut in solid rock, and any shoring must be certified as adequate by an engineer. Excavated material stays at least 1.2 m from the edge of the trench. Before any digging starts, the contractor must determine the location of underground utilities; Info-Excavation, reached through Click Before You Dig, needs three working days' notice, and NB Power runs its own separate underground locate service requiring at least five business days' notice, valid for 60 days from the date on its locate form and covering only NB Power-owned lines.

A fair quote for this work names the machine and breaker rates separately, states how rock is priced (hourly or by volume), identifies where the spoil goes and who pays trucking, and confirms which permits the contractor will pull.

Ask for a WorkSafeNB clearance certificate before work starts, and hold back 10% of the contract price under the Construction Remedies Act for 60 days after substantial performance.

One question to settle in writing: who is responsible for locating and marking any private lines, drains or fuel lines the owner or a past owner installed, and what the plan is if the breaker hits something unmarked underground. Contractors listed in the New Brunswick Construction Network directory can receive your project details through the request form on this page.

Q4

Is blasting allowed near houses in Saint John?

We found no provincial homeowner blasting permit, and we did not find Saint John's own blasting rules, so ask the City of Saint John before anyone plans a blast. What is clear is who may blast: WorkSafeNB's General Regulation 91-191 says a blasting operation must be conducted by a blaster who holds an appropriate certificate of qualification issued under the Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Act. That certificate requirement applies province-wide, and it is not something a general excavation contractor can work around by hiring an uncertified person.

What Shapes a Blasting Job Near a Home

A hydraulic breaker on an excavator is sometimes used instead of or alongside blasting; published price guides read in September 2026 put a hydraulic breaker at $200 to $300 per hour, with larger machines running higher. Blasting costs are not well published for New Brunswick, so the machine-time figure is the best reference point for comparison. Few New Brunswick prices are published, and a quote will be built from equipment hours, crew, trucking and materials.

Before any blasting or rock-breaking begins, locates are mandatory. Info-Excavation, reached through Click Before You Dig, requires three working days' notice; that locate is valid until the end date written on the request. NB Power runs its own separate underground locate service and asks for at least five business days' notice; its locate is valid for 60 days from the date on the locate form and covers only NB Power-owned lines. Those are two separate requests, not one. Under WorkSafeNB's General Regulation 91-191, the employer must determine the location of any underground utility line or piping before beginning, and must notify the operating authority and follow an adequate operating procedure within 600 mm of a line. Private lines, such as wiring run to a garage or shed by a past owner, are the property owner's to find and mark before the crew arrives.

If a gas line, pipeline or power line is struck or damaged at any point during the work, everyone stops immediately, clears the area, and calls emergency services from a safe distance.

For Saint John specifically, the City issues building permits, and a Water and Sewerage Permit Package is required for any new, renewal or repair work on water, sanitary or storm sewer installations. A Street Excavation permit also exists under the City's street and sidewalk permits. For anything beyond those, check directly with the City of Saint John to confirm what approvals apply to your specific job. If the site is within 30 metres of a watercourse or wetland, a provincial Watercourse and Wetland Alteration permit is required before any ground disturbance, including blasting or clearing.

Ask to see the blaster's certificate of qualification before work starts, ask for a WorkSafeNB clearance certificate for the company, and hold back 10% of the contract price as required under New Brunswick's Construction Remedies Act, kept for 60 days after substantial performance.

Before you agree to anything, ask the contractor directly who is responsible for marking private lines on your property, and what their procedure is if the drill or breaker hits something that was not on any locate.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by New Brunswick Excavation. It does not constitute professional advice. Always book your locates, check with your municipality or Regional Service Commission, and follow WorkSafeNB rules before starting any excavation project. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **newbrunswickexcavation.com** for the latest answers.