

OTTAWA WINDOW PROS

Buying & Selling

How window condition affects an Ottawa home sale
or purchase

9 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

ottawawindowinstall.ca/construction-brain

Table of Contents

1. I'm buying a house - what should I check about the windows before closing?
.....
2. I'm selling in 3 years - is it worth upgrading windows now or not?
.....
3. Do home inspectors actually test if windows work properly or just look at them?
.....
4. Do I have to tell buyers about the foggy windows in my house?
.....
5. Should I replace windows before we move in or after we're living there?
.....
6. Do appraisers take window quality into account when valuing a house?
.....
7. Can I ask the seller to replace the windows as part of my house offer?
.....
8. What window features do Ottawa home buyers actually care about?
.....
9. How much does replacing all the windows actually add to my home's resale value?
.....

I'm buying a house - what should I check about the windows before closing?

Buying a house is exciting, and windows are one of the most important things to evaluate before you close — they're expensive to replace and have a huge impact on comfort and energy bills. Here's what to look for during your walkthrough.

Start with the glass itself. Look for any fogging, condensation, or a hazy film *between* the panes. This is called **seal failure** (or "blown seals"), and it means the insulating gas has escaped and the window is no longer performing efficiently. It won't get better on its own — the sealed unit needs to be replaced. On a sunny day, look at the glass from an angle to spot this more easily.

Check the frames and operation. Every window should open, close, and lock smoothly. Stiff or painted-shut windows are a red flag — they may indicate deferred maintenance or, worse, that someone painted over them to hide rot or damage. On wood or wood-clad frames, press gently on the corners and sill with your finger. Soft or spongy wood means rot, which can spread and affect the surrounding wall structure.

Look at the seals around the frame. Check the caulking and weatherstripping where the window meets the wall, both inside and outside. Cracked, missing, or peeling caulk lets in air and moisture. In Ottawa's climate, even small gaps cause significant heat loss and can lead to ice damming and interior moisture problems over winter.

Consider the age and energy performance. Most windows have a manufacturing date stamped on the frame or between the glass panes. Windows older than 20-25 years are likely single or early double-pane, and won't meet modern **ENERGY STAR** standards for Ottawa's Climate Zone 6. Ask the seller for any records on past replacements. If the house still has original 1990s or earlier windows, budget for replacement — it's a strong negotiating point.

In Ottawa specifically, the combination of -30°C winters and hot humid summers is brutal on windows. Watch for **frost or ice on the interior glass** in winter photos (sometimes visible in listing photos), which signals poor insulation value. Also check basement windows carefully — they're often the oldest and most neglected, and frequently have moisture or rot issues.

On the practical side, count the windows and note any specialty shapes — bay windows, skylights, or oversized picture windows. These cost significantly more to replace than standard sizes. A full house replacement in Ottawa typically runs **\$8,000–\$15,000** for 10–15 standard windows, so knowing what you're working with helps you negotiate or plan your budget.

If you spot concerns during your walkthrough, it's worth having a **home inspector** specifically note window conditions in their report. That gives you documentation to negotiate a price reduction or ask the seller to address

issues before closing.

Once you take possession, you can request a walkthrough quote through Ottawa Window Pros — an installer can go room by room, identify what needs replacing and help you prioritise by budget.

Q2

I'm selling in 3 years - is it worth upgrading windows now or not?

Great question, and the honest answer is: **it depends on your current windows and how bad they are.**

If your windows are drafty, foggy, or visibly deteriorating, replacing them before selling is likely worth it. If they're in decent shape, you may want to wait. Here's how to think through the decision.

The ROI Reality on Window Replacement

Windows rarely return 100% of their cost at resale. In the Ottawa market, you can typically expect to recover **60-80% of your investment** through increased sale price. So a \$10,000 window replacement might add \$6,000-\$8,000 to your sale price. That sounds like a loss — but the calculation changes when you factor in **3 years of energy savings** and the difference between a house that shows well versus one buyers immediately flag for negotiation.

When Replacing NOW Makes Sense

If your windows are single-pane, visibly fogged between panes (failed seal), or causing noticeable drafts, buyers and home inspectors will flag them. In Ottawa's competitive market, buyers will either walk away or use bad windows as leverage to negotiate \$10,000-\$15,000 off your asking price — often more than the windows actually cost to fix. Replacing them now also means **3 years of lower heating bills**, which in Ottawa's climate can run \$300-\$600/year in savings on a typical home.

When Waiting Makes More Sense

If your windows are functional double-pane units from the last 10-15 years, they'll likely pass inspection without issue. In that case, a fresh coat of paint on the frames and good weatherstripping may be all you need before listing.

The Ottawa-Specific Angle

Ottawa's Climate Zone 6 winters mean buyers here are genuinely attuned to energy efficiency. **ENERGY STAR certified windows** are a legitimate selling feature you can advertise, and if you qualify for the **Canada Greener**

Homes Grant (up to \$5,000 back), your out-of-pocket cost drops significantly — improving your ROI considerably.

The smartest move is a quick professional assessment of your current windows before deciding. Request a quote through Ottawa Window Pros and ask the installer straight out whether replacement makes financial sense on your timeline — a good one will tell you if it doesn't.

Q3

Do home inspectors actually test if windows work properly or just look at them?

Home inspectors typically perform basic operational tests on windows, not just visual inspections. Most qualified inspectors will open and close accessible windows to check basic functionality, though the extent varies by inspector and accessibility.

Standard window testing during inspections includes checking if windows open and close smoothly, testing lock mechanisms, examining weatherstripping condition, and looking for obvious air leaks or water damage. Inspectors will note windows that are painted shut, have broken sash cords, or show signs of seal failure in double-pane units. They'll also check for proper drainage in window wells and look for gaps in caulking around the frame.

However, **home inspectors have limitations** in their window assessments. They won't perform energy efficiency testing, measure air leakage rates, or test windows during weather events. Upper-story windows may only get visual inspection if they're not safely accessible. Inspectors also won't typically test every single window in a large home due to time constraints.

In Ottawa's climate, inspectors often pay special attention to signs of ice damming around windows, condensation issues that suggest poor insulation, and frost buildup patterns that indicate air leaks. They'll note obvious energy efficiency concerns but won't provide detailed thermal performance assessments.

If you're buying a home, consider the inspection a starting point for window evaluation. Older windows that "work" during inspection might still benefit from replacement for energy efficiency. Windows over 15-20 years old in Ottawa often need upgrading to meet current energy standards, even if they open and close properly.

For a comprehensive window assessment beyond a basic home inspection, consider having a qualified window installer evaluate energy efficiency and long-term performance needs.

Q4

Do I have to tell buyers about the foggy windows in my house?

Yes, you're legally required to disclose known defects like foggy windows when selling your home in Ontario. This falls under your duty to provide honest disclosure about the property's condition.

Foggy windows indicate failed window seals, which means the insulating gas between the panes has escaped and moisture has entered. This significantly reduces the window's energy efficiency and is considered a material defect that affects the property's value and performance. Under Ontario's real estate disclosure requirements, sellers must reveal known issues that could influence a buyer's decision or affect the property's habitability and energy costs.

From a practical standpoint, buyers will likely notice foggy windows during their inspection anyway. Being upfront about the issue builds trust and allows you to control the narrative. You can explain what you know about the problem, when it started, and whether you've obtained any repair estimates. This transparency often works better than having buyers discover the issue themselves and wonder what else might be hidden.

In Ottawa's climate, failed window seals are a significant concern because they drastically reduce insulation value during our cold winters. Energy-conscious buyers will definitely want to know about this issue since window replacement can cost \$400-800 per window for standard vinyl units, or \$600-1,200 for premium triple-pane replacements.

Consider getting a professional assessment before listing to understand the full scope of the problem and potential costs. This information helps you price appropriately and shows buyers you're being thorough. You might even choose to replace the most visible foggy windows before listing to improve your home's appeal.

For a professional evaluation of your window condition and replacement options, request a quote from Ottawa Window Pros to understand your options and costs.

Q5

Should I replace windows before we move in or after we're living there?

Replace windows before moving in if possible - it's significantly easier, cleaner, and less disruptive when the house is empty.

Why before is better: Window replacement creates substantial dust, debris, and requires moving furniture away from all window areas. When you're not living there yet, installers have full access to every window without

navigating around your belongings. There's no need to protect furniture, artwork, or electronics from construction dust. You also won't have to deal with temporary plastic sheeting over windows or the inconvenience of limited access to rooms during installation.

Timing considerations for Ottawa homes: If you're buying in fall or winter, replacing windows before move-in is especially valuable since you'll immediately benefit from improved energy efficiency during Ottawa's cold months. However, if you're purchasing in spring or summer, you have more flexibility since heating costs aren't immediately critical.

The practical reality: Many homeowners end up replacing windows after moving in due to budget constraints or not realizing the windows need replacement until they've lived through a heating season. This is completely manageable - professional installers work around occupied homes regularly. The job just takes a bit more coordination and preparation.

Financial planning: If budget is tight, prioritize the most problematic windows first (north-facing, bedroom windows, or those with obvious drafts or damage). You can phase the replacement over time, though you'll lose some cost savings from bulk pricing.

For a read on your windows and the timing around your move, request a free quote through Ottawa Window Pros and an installer can help you plan the most cost-effective approach.

Q6

Do appraisers take window quality into account when valuing a house?

Yes, appraisers do consider window quality when valuing a house, though it's typically not a major value driver unless the windows are exceptionally poor or exceptionally high-end.

How Window Quality Affects Appraisals

Appraisers evaluate windows as part of the overall condition and energy efficiency of the home. They look for factors like age, condition, style, and energy performance. Newer, energy-efficient windows with features like triple-pane glass, Low-E coatings, and quality frames signal a well-maintained property and can contribute to higher valuations. Conversely, old single-pane windows, visible condensation between panes, or rotting frames can negatively impact the appraisal.

The impact is usually reflected in the overall condition rating rather than as a specific line item. For example, a home with all new triple-pane windows might receive a "good" or "excellent" condition rating, while a home with

failing windows might be rated as "fair" or "poor." This condition rating directly affects the comparable sales analysis that determines your home's value.

Ottawa Market Considerations

In Ottawa's climate, energy efficiency is particularly important to buyers and appraisers. Homes with quality windows that can handle our harsh winters and reduce heating costs are viewed more favorably. ENERGY STAR certified windows meeting Ontario's Climate Zone 6 requirements (U-factor 1.22 or lower) demonstrate the home's energy performance, which is increasingly important in today's market.

Return on Investment

While window replacement typically recovers 60-80% of its cost in added home value, the real benefit often comes from improved marketability. Homes with quality windows sell faster and attract more serious buyers. The energy savings and comfort improvements also make the home more appealing during showings.

For a professional assessment of how window upgrades might benefit your specific property value, request a consultation with Ottawa Window Pros to discuss energy-efficient options that align with current market expectations.

Q7

Can I ask the seller to replace the windows as part of my house offer?

Yes, you can absolutely ask the seller to replace windows as part of your house offer, but success depends on market conditions, the home's condition, and how you structure the request.

Negotiating window replacement works best when you can demonstrate legitimate need - such as single-pane windows, visible damage, poor energy efficiency, or failed seals in double-pane units. In Ottawa's climate, outdated windows represent a significant ongoing cost for heating and cooling, which gives you solid ground for negotiation. You can request either that the seller complete the work before closing, or ask for a credit toward window replacement costs.

Market conditions heavily influence your negotiating power. In a buyer's market with longer listing times, sellers are more likely to agree to window replacement requests. In competitive markets, such requests might make your offer less attractive compared to others. Consider the overall home price and whether window replacement fits within reasonable negotiation parameters - asking for \$15,000 in window upgrades on a modestly-priced home may not be realistic.

Structure your request strategically by getting quotes through Ottawa Window Pros to demonstrate actual costs. You might request specific upgrades like triple-pane, ENERGY STAR certified windows suitable for Ottawa's Climate Zone 6 requirements. Alternatively, ask for a credit equal to replacement costs, which gives you control over contractor selection and timing while potentially being more appealing to sellers who prefer not to manage renovation work.

Consider timing and logistics carefully. Window replacement typically takes 2-4 weeks from order to installation, which could delay closing. A credit arrangement often works better, allowing you to schedule the work after taking possession. For a professional assessment of your potential window replacement needs and costs, request a consultation from Ottawa Window Pros to strengthen your negotiating position with accurate pricing information.

Q8

What window features do Ottawa home buyers actually care about?

Ottawa home buyers prioritize energy efficiency above all else, with triple-pane windows and low heating bills being major selling points in our harsh winter climate. Beyond energy performance, buyers focus on low maintenance features and overall home comfort.

Energy efficiency dominates buyer priorities because heating costs are a major concern in Ottawa's Climate Zone 6. Buyers specifically look for triple-pane windows with Low-E coatings and quality frames that will keep energy bills manageable. Windows with ENERGY STAR certification (U-factor 1.22 or lower) are increasingly expected rather than optional. Many buyers also ask about Canada Greener Homes Grant eligibility, as energy-efficient windows can qualify for rebates up to \$5,000.

Low maintenance features rank second in buyer priorities. Vinyl and fiberglass windows appeal to buyers who want to avoid the ongoing maintenance of wood frames in Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycles. Tilt-in sashes for easy cleaning are particularly valued in two-story homes. Quality hardware that operates smoothly year-round matters too - buyers test window operation during home tours and notice when windows stick or don't seal properly.

Comfort and functionality features that buyers notice include effective condensation control (especially important in humid Ottawa summers), good sound insulation from traffic noise, and proper ventilation options. Bay and bow windows add visual appeal and can be selling features, but buyers are practical - they want to know these specialty windows are properly insulated and won't create cold spots.

Style and curb appeal matter but rank lower than performance. Buyers prefer windows that complement the home's architecture, with grid patterns and colors that look current rather than dated. However, they'll choose energy-efficient windows in a neutral style over attractive but inefficient options.

For homeowners considering window replacement before selling, focus on energy efficiency first - it's the feature that actually influences buying decisions and home value in the Ottawa market.

Q9

How much does replacing all the windows actually add to my home's resale value?

Window replacement typically adds 60-80% of the project cost to your home's resale value, making it one of the better home improvement investments you can make. For a typical Ottawa home spending \$10,000-15,000 on full window replacement, you can expect to recoup \$6,000-12,000 in increased home value.

The actual return depends heavily on your current windows and the local market. If you're replacing single-pane windows from the 1970s with modern triple-pane units, you'll see stronger returns than upgrading decent double-pane windows from the 1990s. **Energy-efficient windows are particularly valuable in Ottawa's climate** - buyers understand the heating cost savings and comfort improvements that quality windows provide during our harsh winters.

Beyond the direct resale value, new windows offer immediate benefits that make your home more marketable.

Energy savings of 15-25% on heating bills are attractive to buyers, especially with rising energy costs. Modern windows also improve curb appeal, reduce outside noise, and eliminate drafts - all factors that help homes sell faster and for asking price.

In Ottawa's competitive real estate market, homes with recent window upgrades often stand out from comparable properties. Real estate agents frequently highlight new windows as a key selling feature, particularly when they're ENERGY STAR certified triple-pane units that meet or exceed Ontario's energy efficiency standards.

The timing of your sale matters too. If you're planning to sell within 2-3 years, window replacement makes strong financial sense. If you're staying longer than 5 years, you'll also enjoy the comfort and energy savings while building equity. For the best return on investment, focus on quality vinyl or fiberglass windows with triple-pane glass and Low-E coatings - these features resonate most with Ottawa buyers who understand our climate demands.

For a free estimate on window replacement that maximizes both comfort and resale value, request a quote from Ottawa Window Pros.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Window Pros. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any construction or renovation project. Information is current as of October 11, 2026 and may change. Visit ottawawindowinstall.ca for the latest answers.