

OTTAWA WINDOW PROS

Choosing a Contractor

Vetting Ottawa window installers, references, and
what to ask

8 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

ottawawindowinstall.ca/construction-brain

Table of Contents

1. How long should a window company have been in business before I trust them?
.....
2. How do I check if a window installer in Ontario actually has proper insurance?
.....
3. One quote was way lower than the others - should I be worried about that?
.....
4. What are the red flags in a window quote that should make me walk away?
.....
5. What certifications should I look for when hiring a window installer?
.....
6. How many quotes should I actually get before making a decision?
.....
7. Is it better to buy direct from a manufacturer or go through a dealer?
.....
8. What questions should I ask before signing with a window company?
.....

Q1

How long should a window company have been in business before I trust them?

That's a smart question to ask before hiring anyone to work on your home. **Experience and business longevity are among the most reliable indicators of quality** in the window and door industry.

As a general guideline, look for companies with at least 5 years in business, though 10+ years is a stronger signal of reliability. Here's why longevity matters: window installation involves precise measurements, proper sealing, and structural considerations — mistakes don't always show up immediately. A company that's been around for a decade has had time to stand behind their work, handle warranty claims, and build a real reputation in the community.

Years in business alone isn't enough though. A newer company run by an experienced installer can outperform a long-established company that's coasted on its reputation. Look at the full picture: do they carry liability insurance and WSIB coverage? Do they carry WSIB coverage and liability insurance? Can they provide local references from Ottawa homeowners? Do they offer a workmanship warranty on top of the product warranty?

In Ottawa specifically, the harsh winters mean installation quality is critical. Ice, freeze-thaw cycles, and extreme temperature swings will expose any shortcuts within a few seasons. A company with deep local roots understands these conditions and has a track record of installations that hold up over time.

A few other things worth checking: look them up on the Better Business Bureau, search Google reviews specifically mentioning how the company handled problems (not just happy customers), and ask for proof of liability insurance and a current WSIB clearance certificate. Ottawa Window Pros does not install anything itself - it passes your job to installers who do, so put those questions to whoever quotes you. If you'd like to discuss your project, a free consultation can be arranged so you can get a feel for an installer before committing to anything.

Q2

How do I check if a window installer in Ontario actually has proper insurance?

In Ontario, you should verify both WSIB coverage and general liability insurance before hiring any window installer. This protects you from financial liability if workers are injured or property damage occurs during installation.

WSIB (Workplace Safety and Insurance Board) verification is your first step. Visit wsib.ca and use their "Check Coverage" tool to confirm the contractor has active WSIB coverage. You'll need their business name or WSIB

account number. WSIB protects you from liability if a worker is injured on your property - without it, you could be personally liable for medical costs and lost wages.

General liability insurance covers property damage during the work. Ask the installer for a Certificate of Insurance showing at least \$2 million in general liability coverage. The certificate should be current (not expired) and list your property address if it's a large project. Don't accept just a business card or verbal assurance - legitimate contractors readily provide insurance documentation.

Additional verification steps include checking their Ontario business registration through the government's business registry, confirming any trade licenses if required for your specific project, and asking for recent customer references. In Ottawa's climate, proper installation is critical for energy efficiency and preventing moisture issues, so working with properly insured professionals protects both your investment and your home.

Red flags include contractors who can't immediately provide insurance information, offer significantly below-market pricing, or pressure you to sign contracts immediately. Any professional installer should carry WSIB coverage and liability insurance - ask for both certificates and confirm they are current before work begins.

For peace of mind on your window replacement project, always verify insurance coverage before work begins. Want to compare quotes from local installers? Request a quote from Ottawa Window Pros for your window installation needs.

Q3

One quote was way lower than the others - should I be worried about that?

Yes, you should be cautious about quotes that are significantly lower than others. A quote that's dramatically below the competition often indicates corners being cut somewhere - whether in materials, installation quality, permits, or insurance coverage.

Common reasons for unusually low quotes include:

- Using lower-grade materials or windows with poor energy ratings
- Rushing installation without proper air sealing or finishing work
- Not including necessary permits or inspections
- Lack of proper insurance coverage (WSIB, liability)
- Inexperienced installers who may not understand the full scope
- "Bait and switch" tactics where the price increases once work begins

In Ottawa's climate, poor installation can be costly. Improperly installed windows lead to air leaks, condensation problems, and significantly higher heating bills. The money you save upfront often gets lost in energy costs and potential repairs within a few years.

Red flags to watch for:

- Quote doesn't specify window brands, energy ratings, or installation details
- Contractor can't provide WSIB clearance or liability insurance proof
- Pressure to sign immediately or cash-only payment requests
- No local references or established business address
- Quote seems too good to be true compared to others

Ask the low bidder specific questions: What window brand and model? What's the U-factor rating? Is installation warranty included? Can they provide recent local references? Are permits included if needed? This helps determine if it's genuinely competitive pricing or if quality is being compromised.

Get more than one detailed quote through Ottawa Window Pros and compare them line by line — a quote well under the others usually differs in materials, warranty, or what's included.

Q4

What are the red flags in a window quote that should make me walk away?

Be wary of quotes that seem too good to be true or use high-pressure tactics - legitimate window companies provide detailed, transparent pricing and give you time to make informed decisions.

Door-to-door sales and pressure tactics are major red flags. Reputable window installers don't show up unannounced offering "today only" deals or claiming they have leftover materials from a nearby job. Any company that won't let you think it over or demands immediate signing should be avoided. Similarly, be suspicious of quotes that are significantly lower than others - quality windows and proper installation have real costs, and extremely low bids often mean corners will be cut.

Vague or incomplete quotes are another warning sign. A proper estimate should specify exact window models, glass types, frame materials, and installation details. If the quote just says "vinyl windows" without mentioning energy ratings, glass specifications, or warranty details, walk away. You should also see clear pricing breakdowns for materials versus labor, and the company should be able to explain exactly what's included.

Lack of proper licensing and insurance is critical in Ontario. Any window installer should readily provide their WSIB number, liability insurance proof, and business license. If they can't or won't provide this documentation, or if they suggest working "under the table" to avoid permits when permits are actually required, find another contractor. In Ottawa's climate, improper installation can lead to serious moisture and energy efficiency problems.

Unrealistic warranties or payment demands should also raise concerns. Be suspicious of lifetime warranties that seem too broad, or companies demanding large upfront payments or full payment before work begins. Legitimate installers typically require minimal deposits and offer reasonable payment schedules tied to project milestones.

For a transparent quote with detailed specifications and proper licensing documentation, request a consultation from Ottawa Window Pros - we believe informed homeowners make the best decisions.

Q5

What certifications should I look for when hiring a window installer?

When hiring a window installer in Ottawa, you should verify several key certifications and credentials to ensure quality work and proper protection. **A contractor with proper insurance and manufacturer certifications** offers the best combination of expertise and accountability.

Essential certifications include WSIB coverage and liability insurance - these protect you if someone gets injured on your property or if damage occurs during installation. In Ontario, window installers should carry at least \$2 million in general liability insurance. WSIB coverage ensures workers are protected and you won't be liable for workplace injuries.

Look for ENERGY STAR certification from the installer or their supplier, which ensures they understand current energy efficiency standards for Ottawa's Climate Zone 6. Quality installers often have manufacturer certifications from major window brands like Pella, Andersen, or Milgard, demonstrating they've received proper training on installation techniques and warranty requirements.

Professional associations matter too - membership in organizations like the Fenestration Association of Ontario or Better Business Bureau indicates commitment to industry standards. Some installers also hold Red Seal certification in glazing or carpentry, which represents advanced trade skills.

In Ottawa's climate, experience with proper air sealing and thermal bridging prevention is crucial for preventing ice dams and energy loss. Ask potential contractors about their experience with Canada Greener Homes Grant requirements if you're planning to claim rebates.

Always verify that your installer can pull permits when needed for structural changes or new openings. While most window replacements don't require permits, enlarging openings or installing bay windows often do.

For a free consultation with insured window installers, request a quote through Ottawa Window Pros and ask what manufacturer certifications they hold and how they meet Ontario Building Code requirements.

Q6

How many quotes should I actually get before making a decision?

Getting 3-4 quotes is the sweet spot for most window and door projects. This gives you enough comparison data to make an informed decision without getting overwhelmed by too many options.

Why three to four quotes work best: You'll get a good sense of the market price range and can identify any outliers - quotes that are suspiciously low (often indicating corners being cut) or unusually high (potentially overpriced). With multiple quotes, you can also compare different product recommendations, installation approaches, and warranty offerings. Most importantly, you'll get a feel for which contractors communicate clearly and seem most knowledgeable about your specific needs.

What to look for beyond just price: make sure each contractor carries insurance and WSIB coverage in Ontario, provides detailed written estimates that specify exact products and installation methods, and offers clear warranties on both materials and labour. In Ottawa's climate, pay special attention to contractors who emphasize proper air sealing and understand local building requirements. The cheapest quote isn't always the best value if it means lower-quality materials or rushed installation.

Red flags to avoid: Be wary of door-to-door salespeople, contractors demanding large upfront payments, or anyone pressuring you to sign immediately. Quality window installers understand that replacing windows is a significant investment and will give you time to make your decision. Also avoid quotes that seem too good to be true - proper window installation requires skilled labor and quality materials, both of which cost money.

****For a free estimate on your window replacement project, request a quote from Ottawa Window Pros. Insist on detailed written estimates, and treat pressure to decide on the spot as a reason to keep looking.**

Is it better to buy direct from a manufacturer or go through a dealer?

For most homeowners, working with a local dealer like Ottawa Window Pros is typically the better choice than buying direct from manufacturers. While direct purchasing might seem like it saves money, it often creates more complications and costs in the long run.

Local dealers provide crucial value beyond just product supply. They handle the entire process from initial consultation and proper measurements to coordinating installation and warranty service. When you buy direct from a manufacturer, you're responsible for ensuring accurate measurements, arranging delivery, finding qualified installers, and managing any issues that arise. In Ottawa's climate where proper installation is critical for energy efficiency, having experienced local professionals manage this process is invaluable.

The cost difference is often smaller than expected when you factor in all the services included with dealer pricing. Local dealers get volume pricing from manufacturers and can often match or come close to direct pricing while providing installation, warranty coordination, and local support. They also understand Ottawa's specific climate requirements and building practices, ensuring you get windows rated for our Climate Zone 6 conditions.

Dealers also provide accountability and recourse if something goes wrong. If there's a problem with your windows or installation, you have a local business to contact rather than trying to navigate a manufacturer's customer service system. A reputable dealer should carry WSIB insurance and liability coverage, so ask to see both before the installation starts.

The main exception might be if you're a contractor buying multiple units or have extensive experience with window installation. For most homeowners replacing a few windows, the expertise, convenience, and local support provided by established dealers makes them the smarter choice.

For help weighing product choice against installation quality, request a free quote through Ottawa Window Pros and put the question to the installer directly.

What questions should I ask before signing with a window company?

Before signing with any window company, ask about their licensing, insurance, warranty coverage, and get detailed written estimates. The right questions upfront can save you thousands and prevent major headaches down the road.

Licensing and Insurance Verification is your first priority. Ask to see their WSIB coverage and general liability insurance certificates - legitimate contractors carry both and will readily provide proof. Verify they carry liability insurance and WSIB coverage, and ask how long they have been installing windows in Ottawa - there is no provincial installer's licence to check. Don't just take their word for it; ask for documentation you can verify independently.

Product and Installation Details require specific questions about materials and methods. Ask what brand of windows they install, the glass specifications (double vs triple-pane, Low-E coatings, gas fills), and frame materials. Get details about their installation process - do they remove old trim carefully for reuse, how do they handle insulation and air sealing, and what's included in cleanup? Quality installers will explain their process thoroughly and highlight energy efficiency features relevant to Ottawa's climate.

Warranty and Service Coverage varies dramatically between companies. Ask about manufacturer warranties on the windows themselves versus installation warranties from the contractor. Find out who handles warranty service calls - some companies disappear after installation, leaving you to deal with manufacturers directly. Get specific timeframes: how long do they warranty their installation work, and what exactly does it cover? Quality window companies in Ottawa typically offer 2-10 years on installation workmanship.

Financial and Timeline Questions protect your investment. Never pay large amounts upfront - reputable contractors typically ask for minimal deposits. Get a detailed written estimate breaking down materials, labor, permits (if needed), and cleanup. Ask about their timeline, how weather delays are handled, and their policy on change orders. For Ottawa installations, understand their winter work limitations and seasonal scheduling.

References and Local Reputation matter significantly for major home improvements. Ask for recent local references you can contact, and check online reviews on multiple platforms. Find out how long they've been serving the Ottawa area and whether they're part of local trade associations. A company with deep Ottawa roots is more likely to stand behind their work long-term.

For a free consultation where all these questions get answered upfront, request a quote from Ottawa Window Pros - we believe informed homeowners make the best decisions.

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.