

OTTAWA WINDOW PROS

Doors

Exterior doors, storm doors, and door replacement
alongside window work

9 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

ottawawindowinstall.ca/construction-brain

Table of Contents

1. Can I replace the ugly side door in my garage with a nice entry door?
.....
2. How wide can a sliding patio door be before I need to reinforce the wall?
.....
3. What exactly is a multi-slide door and are they practical for Ottawa winters?
.....
4. My dad uses a walker - what door style is easiest for him to get through?
.....
5. Are those pocket sliding patio doors any good for our climate?
.....
6. What's the difference between a pivot door and a regular door and why would I want one?
.....
7. Can I add a doggy door to my fibreglass entry door without wrecking it?
.....
8. I love the look of Dutch doors - are they practical for Ottawa weather though?
.....
9. What door options should I consider for my walk-out basement?
.....

Q1

Can I replace the ugly side door in my garage with a nice entry door?

Yes, you can absolutely replace a garage side door with a nicer entry door — it's one of the more straightforward door upgrades homeowners do, and it can make a big difference in both curb appeal and security.

What's Involved in the Replacement

If you're swapping a door of the same size into the existing opening, this is generally a straightforward replacement that doesn't require a building permit in Ottawa. You're simply removing the old door and frame and installing a new pre-hung door unit in its place. If you want to change the size of the opening — say, going from a 30" door to a 36" door — that involves structural work and would require a permit since you'd be modifying the framing.

Important Consideration: Garage-to-Living Space Door

If your garage is attached to your home, there's a critical safety requirement to be aware of. The Ontario Building Code requires that the door between an attached garage and the living space must be **fire-rated** — typically a 20-minute fire-rated door. This is a non-negotiable safety requirement, not just a recommendation. A standard decorative entry door won't meet this requirement unless it carries the proper fire rating. Make sure any door you choose is clearly labeled and certified as fire-rated if it connects to your home's interior.

What to Look For in a Garage Side Door

For a garage side door, a **steel or fiberglass entry door** is usually the best choice. Steel doors offer excellent security and durability at a lower price point, while fiberglass doors give you more decorative options (wood-grain finishes, glass inserts) and better insulation. Given Ottawa's winters, look for a door with a **polyurethane foam core** and good weatherstripping — it'll make a noticeable difference in keeping the garage warmer.

Ottawa Market Costs

A quality steel entry door installed typically runs **\$1,500 – \$2,500** in the Ottawa market. Fiberglass doors with decorative finishes run **\$2,000 – \$4,000** installed. If your current door frame is in rough shape or needs resizing, budget a bit more for the additional carpentry work.

For a quote on replacing that door, go through **Ottawa Window Pros** — the installer can check your existing opening and recommend the right fire-rated unit.

Q2

How wide can a sliding patio door be before I need to reinforce the wall?

Most sliding patio doors up to 12 feet wide can be installed in standard wall framing, but anything over 8-10 feet typically requires structural reinforcement. The exact requirements depend on your home's construction, the door weight, and local building codes.

Standard sliding patio doors come in widths from 5 feet up to 12 feet, with 6-8 foot doors being most common. A typical 6-foot sliding door weighs around 150-200 pounds, while a 12-foot door can weigh 400+ pounds. The header beam above the door opening must support not only the door's weight but also the structural load from above - including floors, walls, and roof loads.

For doors over 8 feet wide, you'll likely need an engineered header beam, which could be a steel beam, engineered lumber (LVL), or built-up wood beam. The wider the opening, the stronger the header needs to be. In Ottawa's climate, proper structural support is especially important given our freeze-thaw cycles and snow loads that can stress the building envelope.

City of Ottawa requirements may vary - confirm with your installer, but generally any structural modifications to create or enlarge door openings require building permits. An engineer may need to specify the proper header size and support requirements based on your home's specific load conditions.

Professional assessment is essential for any door over 8 feet wide. The installer needs to evaluate your existing framing, foundation support, and load paths. Improper installation of large doors can lead to sagging, operational problems, or even structural damage.

For a free consultation on your specific patio door project and structural requirements, request a quote from Ottawa Window Pros. The installer will assess your opening and handle any permit requirements for structural modifications.

Q3

What exactly is a multi-slide door and are they practical for Ottawa winters?

Multi-slide doors are large patio door systems with multiple panels that slide horizontally to create expansive openings - typically 3-8 panels that can slide and stack to one or both sides. Unlike traditional sliding doors with just two panels, multi-slide systems can open up entire walls to create seamless indoor-outdoor living spaces.

These systems work differently than standard patio doors. **The panels slide on heavy-duty tracks and can stack or "pocket" to one side**, creating openings anywhere from 12 to 40+ feet wide. Some systems have panels that slide and disappear into wall pockets, while others stack the panels visibly to one side. The result is a dramatic opening that essentially removes the barrier between your interior and exterior spaces.

For Ottawa winters, multi-slide doors can absolutely be practical with the right specifications. The key is choosing systems designed for our Climate Zone 6 requirements. You'll want triple-pane glass with Low-E coatings, thermal breaks in the frames, and proper weatherstripping systems. Quality multi-slide doors from manufacturers like Marvin, Pella, or LaCantina can achieve excellent energy performance when properly installed.

The main considerations for Ottawa are thermal performance and structural integrity. These large glass expanses need robust frames to handle our temperature swings from -30°C to +35°C, plus snow loads on any overhead structure. Proper installation with adequate structural support is critical - this isn't a DIY project. You'll also want to consider the orientation; south-facing installations can actually provide beneficial solar heat gain in winter.

Installation costs typically range from \$5,000 to \$15,000+ depending on size and specifications. Most installations require building permits due to the structural modifications needed. To find out whether a multi-slide system suits your opening and our winters, request a free quote through Ottawa Window Pros and ask an installer what they would specify.

Q4

My dad uses a walker - what door style is easiest for him to get through?

A hinged entry door with a low or no threshold is the easiest option for someone using a walker. Standard hinged doors provide the widest clear opening and don't require the lateral movement that sliding doors demand.

The most important consideration is the **threshold height**. Traditional door thresholds can be 1-2 inches high, creating a significant barrier for walkers. Look for low-profile thresholds (under ½ inch) or adjustable thresholds that can be set nearly flush with the floor. Some manufacturers make **ADA-compliant thresholds** that are specifically designed for mobility aids.

Door width is equally crucial. While standard exterior doors are 36 inches wide, consider upgrading to a 42-inch door if you're replacing anyway. This provides much more maneuvering room for walkers, wheelchairs, or anyone with mobility challenges. The extra 6 inches makes a dramatic difference in ease of use.

For **hardware selection**, choose lever-style handles instead of round knobs - they're much easier to operate with limited hand strength or dexterity. Consider adding a **door closer** that can be adjusted for lighter closing force, so the door doesn't slam shut while he's still navigating through.

In Ottawa's climate, proper weatherstripping is essential, but make sure it doesn't create additional resistance when opening the door. A quality fiberglass or steel door with adjustable weatherstripping can provide both energy efficiency and smooth operation.

Avoid sliding patio doors as primary entrances for walker users - the track can be difficult to navigate, and the doors often require more force to operate smoothly, especially in winter when tracks can freeze.

For accessible door options suited to our climate, request a free quote through Ottawa Window Pros and talk through threshold height and clear opening width with the installer.

Q5

Are those pocket sliding patio doors any good for our climate?

Pocket sliding patio doors can work in Ottawa's climate, but they require careful consideration of insulation and proper installation to handle our extreme temperature swings from -30°C winters to +35°C summers.

The main challenge with pocket doors in our climate is **thermal bridging and air sealing**. When the door panel slides into the wall pocket, it creates potential weak points for heat loss and air infiltration. The pocket cavity itself

can become a cold zone in winter if not properly insulated, leading to condensation issues and energy loss. However, modern pocket sliding systems have improved significantly with better weatherstripping, thermal breaks, and insulated frames.

Quality matters tremendously with pocket patio doors in Ottawa. Look for units with triple-pane glass, Low-E coatings, and argon fill to meet our Climate Zone 6 requirements. The frame material is crucial - fiberglass or thermally-broken aluminum performs better than standard aluminum in our temperature extremes. Vinyl can work but may expand and contract more noticeably with our wide temperature swings.

Installation is critical for pocket doors. The wall pocket must be properly insulated and vapor-barriered to prevent condensation and heat loss. Many installers in Ottawa prefer traditional sliding doors because they're easier to seal properly and maintain over time. The pocket mechanism also has more moving parts that can be affected by seasonal building movement.

For Ottawa homes, consider whether the space-saving benefit justifies the higher cost and potential maintenance. Standard sliding patio doors often perform more reliably in our climate while still providing good energy efficiency. For a professional assessment of whether pocket doors suit your specific situation, request a consultation with experienced local installers who understand Ottawa's climate challenges.

Q6

What's the difference between a pivot door and a regular door and why would I want one?

Pivot doors rotate on a central pivot point rather than traditional hinges mounted on the side, creating a dramatically different opening mechanism and aesthetic appeal compared to regular hinged doors.

Traditional hinged doors swing on hinges attached to the door frame's side jamb, with the door rotating around its edge. The door opens in a standard arc, requiring clearance space equal to the door's width. **Pivot doors** instead rotate on a pivot system typically located about 4-6 inches from the door's edge, creating a more balanced rotation where both sides of the door move as it opens.

This pivot mechanism allows for much larger and heavier doors than traditional hinges can support. While standard entry doors max out around 42 inches wide due to hinge limitations, pivot doors can easily handle 48-60 inch widths or even larger custom sizes. The weight distribution across the pivot system rather than just the hinges means you can install solid wood slabs, thick steel doors, or doors with extensive glass panels that would be impossible with traditional hardware.

In Ottawa's luxury home market, pivot doors create an impressive entrance statement. They're particularly popular for modern and contemporary homes where the oversized door becomes an architectural feature. The smooth, balanced opening motion feels substantial and high-end. Many homeowners choose pivot doors for their main entrance when they want maximum curb appeal and a grand first impression.

However, pivot doors do require more floor and ceiling space for the pivot mechanism, and they're typically 2-3 times more expensive than traditional entry doors due to the specialized hardware and installation requirements. For most Ottawa homes, a high-quality traditional hinged door offers better value, but pivot doors excel when you want maximum visual impact and have the budget for a statement entrance.

For advice on whether a pivot door suits your home's architecture and entrance, request a free quote through Ottawa Window Pros and ask an installer to price both traditional and pivot options.

Can I add a doggy door to my fibreglass entry door without wrecking it?

Yes, you can add a doggy door to a fiberglass entry door, but it requires careful planning and the right tools to avoid damaging the door. The key is using proper techniques for cutting fiberglass and choosing a pet door that's appropriately sized for your door's construction.

Fiberglass doors are more forgiving than steel doors when it comes to modifications, but they still require precision. Unlike steel doors that can crack or rust when cut improperly, fiberglass can be cut cleanly with the right blade, but the material can chip or splinter if you use the wrong technique. You'll need a fine-tooth blade designed for fiberglass, and it's crucial to drill pilot holes at each corner before making your cuts to prevent cracking.

The biggest challenge is maintaining the door's structural integrity and weather resistance. Fiberglass entry doors often have a foam core for insulation, and cutting through this core creates a potential weak point. You'll need to ensure the pet door frame seals completely against both the interior and exterior surfaces. Most quality pet doors come with weatherstripping and mounting hardware designed for this, but proper installation is critical to prevent air leaks and water infiltration.

In Ottawa's climate, weatherproofing is especially important since temperature swings and moisture can cause problems if the installation isn't perfect. Look for pet doors with dual-flap systems and good weatherstripping ratings. The installation should include proper caulking around the frame and potentially adding extra insulation around the cut area.

Consider having this done professionally - while it's technically a DIY project, one mistake can mean replacing an expensive fiberglass door. An experienced installer can ensure clean cuts, proper weatherproofing, and maintain your door's warranty if applicable.

Find a Window Installation Contractor

Ottawa Window Install connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://justynrookcontracting.com>:

- Joe Imerti Contracting ?
- RrenovatioS ?
- Valcor Construction ?

[View all windows-doors contractors ?](#)

I love the look of Dutch doors - are they practical for Ottawa weather though?

Dutch doors can work in Ottawa's climate, but they require careful selection and professional installation to handle our extreme temperature swings and harsh winters effectively.

Climate Considerations for Ottawa

Dutch doors present unique challenges in our Climate Zone 6 conditions. The horizontal split creates an additional seam that must be properly weathersealed to prevent air infiltration and water penetration. During Ottawa's winter months with temperatures dropping to -30°C, any gaps in the weatherstripping can lead to significant heat loss and potential ice buildup. The double-latch system also needs to maintain tight compression seals on both the top and bottom sections.

Material and Construction Requirements

For Ottawa weather, you'll want a **fiberglass or steel Dutch door** rather than wood, as these materials handle our moisture and temperature extremes better. Look for doors with **thermal breaks**, **triple-pane glass** in any window sections, and **adjustable weatherstripping** on both the top and bottom portions. The horizontal rail where the two sections meet is critical - it needs robust weathersealing and proper drainage to prevent water infiltration during spring melts and freezing rain events.

Installation and Maintenance Factors

Professional installation is essential for Dutch doors in Ottawa's climate. The frame must be perfectly square and level to ensure both sections seal properly, and the installer needs to pay special attention to the threshold and sill pan to handle snow and ice. You'll also need to maintain the weatherstripping more frequently than a standard door, as the additional sealing surfaces experience more wear.

Practical Performance

While Dutch doors can work here, they're typically better suited to covered entries or three-season rooms rather than primary exterior doors exposed to driving snow and ice. The convenience of opening just the top section for ventilation is appealing, but the additional maintenance and potential for air leakage makes them less energy-efficient than a quality single-panel entry door.

For Dutch door options suited to our climate, request a free quote through Ottawa Window Pros and ask an installer what they would recommend for that location.

Find a Window Installation Contractor

Ottawa Window Install connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://justynrookcontracting.com>:

- RJ Handyman Renovators ?
- Humble Homes - property maintenance ?
- Diamond renovations ?

View all windows-doors contractors ?

Q9

What door options should I consider for my walk-out basement?

For a walk-out basement, you'll want a door that handles ground-level moisture, temperature changes, and frequent use while providing security and energy efficiency. The most popular and practical options are steel or fiberglass entry doors with proper weatherstripping and a quality threshold system.

Steel entry doors are the most cost-effective choice for basement walk-outs, typically ranging from \$1,500 to \$2,500 installed in Ottawa. They offer excellent security, good insulation when foam-filled, and can handle moisture well with proper finishing. Steel doors are particularly suitable if your basement entrance faces harsh weather exposure or if security is a primary concern. The main drawback is potential for denting and the need for occasional touch-up painting, especially in Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycles.

Fiberglass doors are increasingly popular for basement applications, costing \$2,000 to \$4,000 installed. They won't dent like steel, handle temperature fluctuations better, and many models convincingly mimic wood grain. Fiberglass is naturally resistant to moisture and won't warp or rot, making it ideal for below-grade installations where humidity can be higher. They also provide excellent insulation values, which is crucial since basement doors often lead directly to living spaces.

Patio door options like sliding or French doors work well if your walk-out opens to a deck or patio area. Sliding patio doors (\$2,000 to \$4,000) maximize the opening while taking minimal space, while French doors (\$3,000 to \$6,000) provide a more elegant look and better ventilation options. Both require proper drainage and flashing since they're typically wider openings.

In Ottawa's climate, prioritize **triple-pane glass** if your door has windows, ensure the threshold has thermal breaks, and verify the door meets ENERGY STAR requirements (U-factor 1.22 or lower). Proper installation with vapor barriers and drainage is critical for basement applications to prevent moisture issues.

For a walk-out basement entrance, request a free quote through Ottawa Window Pros and an installer can assess the opening and suggest what suits your budget.

Find a Window Installation Contractor

Ottawa Window Install connects you with experienced contractors through the <https://justynrookcontracting.com>:

- weather stripping pros ?
- MAK Construction and Development Inc ?
- EZ Construction Solutions ?

View all windows-doors contractors ?

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.