OTTAWA WINDOW PROS

General Windows & Doors

General window and door questions, home improvement, and installation advice

13 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

ottawawindowinstall.ca/construction-brain

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Q1

Why do some window companies charge way more than others for the same size window?

Window pricing varies dramatically because companies offer different quality levels, service packages, and business models - what looks like the "same size window" often involves significant differences in materials, installation quality, and warranty coverage.

The biggest price differences come from **window quality and materials**. A basic vinyl window with standard double-pane glass might cost $400 installed, while a premium triple-pane window with advanced Low-E coatings, reinforced frames, and superior weatherstripping can cost $1,200 for the same opening. The cheaper window might last 15-20 years, while the premium option could perform well for 30+ years with much better energy efficiency.

Installation quality and service level create another major cost variation. Some companies focus on volume and speed, while others provide comprehensive service including proper insulation, trim work, interior finishing, and thorough cleanup. A rushed installation might save $100 per window upfront but cost thousands in energy losses and premature failure. Licensed, insured installers with 20+ years experience command higher prices because they deliver lasting results.

Business overhead and warranty coverage also impact pricing significantly. Companies offering extensive warranties, WSIB coverage, liability insurance, and professional certifications have higher operating costs but provide much better protection for homeowners. In Ottawa's climate zone 6, proper installation is critical - a poorly installed window can lose 30-40% of its efficiency regardless of the glass quality.

Sales approach makes a huge difference too. High-pressure companies often inflate prices initially, then offer "today only" discounts to create urgency. Transparent contractors provide consistent, fair pricing based on actual project requirements.

For a free estimate with clear pricing breakdown and no sales pressure, request a quote from Ottawa Window Pros - we focus on matching the right window quality to your budget and performance needs.

Q2

How far in advance should I order custom-size windows?

Custom-size windows typically require 6-12 weeks lead time, depending on the manufacturer, materials, and complexity of your specifications. Standard vinyl windows usually fall on the shorter end, while wood or specialty

configurations can take longer.

Manufacturing and delivery timelines vary significantly by season and supplier capacity. During peak renovation season (spring through early fall), lead times often extend to the longer end of this range. Winter orders may process faster, but installation scheduling becomes the limiting factor due to weather constraints in Ottawa's climate.

Material choice significantly impacts timing. Vinyl custom windows from major manufacturers like Jeld-Wen or Pella typically ship in 6-8 weeks. Wood windows or specialty materials like fiberglass can require 10-16 weeks, especially for complex shapes like bay windows, arches, or oversized units. Triple-pane configurations with specialty glass coatings may add 1-2 weeks to standard timelines.

For Ottawa's climate considerations, ordering during late winter or early spring gives you the best chance of installation during optimal weather. This timing avoids the rush of summer projects while ensuring your new windows are installed before the next heating season. Many homeowners place orders in February or March for May-June installation.

Plan for potential delays by adding 2-4 weeks buffer to manufacturer estimates. Supply chain disruptions, shipping delays, or specification changes can extend timelines. Your installer should provide realistic expectations based on current manufacturer lead times and their installation schedule.

For custom window orders and professional installation scheduling, Ottawa Window Pros can help coordinate timing to ensure your project stays on track with Ottawa's seasonal installation windows.

Q3

My window crank broke - do I need a new window?

No, you likely don't need a new window - a broken crank handle is usually a simple repair that costs much less than window replacement.

Most casement and awning window cranks can be repaired or replaced for **$50 to $150** depending on the window brand and age. The crank mechanism itself (called the operator) may need replacement if the gears are stripped, which typically runs $100 to $200 including labor. This is far more economical than replacing the entire window, which would cost $400 to $800 in the Ottawa market.

Start by identifying your window manufacturer - look for a brand name etched in the glass corner or on the window frame. Common brands like Andersen, Pella, Jeld-Wen, and Canadian manufacturers like Loewen often

have replacement parts available through local suppliers. Take a photo of the broken crank and the window hardware to help identify the correct replacement part.

However, consider the bigger picture when making this decision. If your window is over 20 years old, has other issues like drafts, condensation between panes, or difficulty operating, the crank failure might signal it's time for a complete window upgrade. Ottawa's harsh winters are particularly tough on older window hardware, and multiple repairs can add up quickly.

For a simple crank replacement, many homeowners can handle this as a DIY project with basic tools. For operator replacement or if you're unsure about the repair complexity, a window professional can assess whether repair makes sense or if replacement would be more cost-effective long-term.

Want to discuss whether repair or replacement makes more sense for your specific situation? Ottawa Window Pros can evaluate your windows and provide honest guidance on the most economical solution.

Q4

What size window is required for a basement bedroom in Ottawa?

Basement bedrooms in Ottawa must have an egress window with a minimum opening of 3.77 square feet (0.35 square meters) and no dimension less than 15 inches (380mm) wide. The window sill cannot be more than 44 inches (1.1 meters) above the basement floor.

The **Ontario Building Code** specifically requires that basement bedrooms have a window or exterior door that can serve as an emergency exit. This egress window must open directly to the outside or to an exterior balcony, and the opening must be large enough for occupants to escape and for emergency responders to enter. The window must be operable from the inside without requiring keys, tools, or special knowledge.

In Ottawa's climate, basement egress windows face unique challenges due to our freeze-thaw cycles and heavy snow loads. **Window wells** are typically required for below-grade egress windows, and these must be properly drained and waterproofed to prevent ice buildup that could block the escape route. The window well must extend at least 8 inches beyond the window opening on all sides and be deep enough to accommodate the full window opening.

Energy efficiency is particularly important for basement windows since they're often partially below grade. Look for windows with **triple-pane glass, Low-E coatings, and proper insulation** around the rough opening to prevent condensation and heat loss. In Ottawa's Climate Zone 6, basement windows should meet ENERGY STAR requirements with a U-factor of 1.22 or lower.

City of Ottawa requirements may vary from the provincial code, so **confirm specific requirements with Ottawa Building Services** before installation. A licensed window installer will ensure your basement egress window meets all code requirements while providing proper waterproofing and insulation for Ottawa's climate conditions.

Q5

What windows are best for a sunroom in Ottawa?

For Ottawa sunrooms, you'll want windows that maximize natural light while handling our extreme temperature swings - typically casement or awning windows with triple-pane glass and Low-E coatings.

The best window choice depends on your sunroom's primary use and orientation. **Casement windows** are excellent for sunrooms because they open fully for maximum ventilation during Ottawa's humid summers, and their tight seal performs well in our harsh winters. **Awning windows** work particularly well on south-facing walls where

you want light but need protection from direct sun and rain.

For **glass specifications**, triple-pane windows with Low-E coatings are essential in Ottawa's Climate Zone 6. The Low-E coating reflects heat back into the room during winter while blocking excessive solar heat in summer. **Argon gas fill** between panes adds extra insulation value. Look for windows with a U-factor of 1.22 or lower to qualify for Canada's Greener Homes Grant, which can provide up to $5,000 in rebates for energy-efficient windows.

Window placement strategy matters significantly for Ottawa sunrooms. South-facing windows capture maximum winter sun for passive heating, while east and west windows should be minimized or have additional UV protection to prevent overheating. North-facing windows provide consistent, gentle light without temperature extremes.

Consider **operable windows** on at least two walls to create cross-ventilation during summer months. This is crucial in Ottawa where sunroom temperatures can soar above 40°C without proper airflow. Many homeowners combine large fixed picture windows for views with smaller operable casement or awning windows for ventilation control.

Budget considerations for sunroom windows in Ottawa typically range from $600-$1,200 per window for quality triple-pane units, with specialty shapes or extra-large windows costing $1,000-$2,500 each. The investment pays off through reduced heating costs and year-round comfort.

For a free consultation on your sunroom window project, Ottawa Window Pros can assess your specific orientation, usage needs, and budget to recommend the optimal window configuration for Ottawa's climate.

Q6

What kind of window is best for over the kitchen sink?

Casement windows are typically the best choice for over kitchen sinks because they crank open outward, making them easy to operate even when you're reaching over the sink or countertop.

Casement windows offer several practical advantages for kitchen sink placement. Since they open with a simple crank handle, you don't need to lean over the sink to push them open like you would with double-hung windows. This makes ventilation much more convenient while you're cooking or cleaning. The full opening also provides excellent airflow to help clear cooking odors and steam.

For Ottawa kitchens, consider energy-efficient features that work well in our climate zone. Triple-pane glass with Low-E coating will help maintain comfortable temperatures year-round while reducing condensation issues common in kitchen areas. Vinyl or fiberglass frames resist moisture better than wood, which is important given the humidity from cooking and dishwashing.

Size and style considerations matter for both function and aesthetics. A single large casement window (36-48 inches wide) provides an unobstructed view and maximum light. If you prefer the look of multiple panes, consider a picture window flanked by smaller casement windows. Avoid placing the window too low - standard height is 42-48 inches from the floor to the window sill, allowing for a standard backsplash below.

Garden windows are another popular kitchen option if you want to display plants or decorative items. These project outward from the wall, creating a small shelf space, though they're more expensive ($800-$1,500 installed versus $400-$800 for a standard casement).

For a free estimate on your kitchen window replacement, request a quote from Ottawa Window Pros to discuss the best options for your specific layout and preferences.

Q7

What windows are best for letting in the most light?

Large, unobstructed glass areas with minimal frame interference will maximize natural light in your home. The key is choosing window styles and configurations that prioritize glass surface area over frame components.

Casement windows are excellent for light transmission because they have no center mullion or meeting rail blocking the glass. A single large casement can provide an uninterrupted view and maximum light penetration. **Picture windows** offer even more glass area since they don't open, eliminating the need for operating hardware that can create shadows or visual barriers.

For rooms where you want dramatic light increase, **bay and bow windows** create the biggest impact. These projecting window styles not only provide more glass surface area but also capture light from multiple angles throughout the day. A bay window can increase your glass area by 40-60% compared to a standard flat window of the same width. The angled side panels catch morning and evening light that would otherwise miss a flat window.

In Ottawa's climate, you'll want to balance maximum light with energy efficiency. Triple-pane glass with low-E coatings can actually transmit more visible light than older single-pane windows while providing superior insulation. The low-E coating is designed to block heat-producing infrared rays while allowing visible light to pass through freely. Quality triple-pane windows typically allow 70-80% of visible light transmission.

Window placement and size matter significantly. South-facing windows receive the most consistent light year-round, while east and west windows provide bright morning and evening light respectively. Consider larger window units rather than multiple smaller ones - a single 6-foot wide window will let in more light than two 3-foot windows due to reduced frame area.

For maximum light in your Ottawa home, consider a combination of large casement windows for ventilation areas and picture windows where airflow isn't needed. For a free consultation on optimizing natural light in your specific space, Ottawa Window Pros can assess your home's orientation and recommend the best window configuration for your needs.

Q8

What smart features are available for windows and doors now?

Smart windows and doors have evolved significantly, offering homeowners in Ottawa advanced automation, security, and energy management features that integrate seamlessly with modern home systems.

Smart window features include automated opening and closing systems that can be controlled via smartphone apps or voice commands through Alexa or Google Home. Electrochromic "smart glass" can tint automatically based on sunlight levels, reducing glare and heat gain during Ottawa's bright summer days. Some premium windows now include built-in sensors that monitor indoor air quality and automatically open for ventilation when CO2 levels rise.

Smart door technology has become particularly sophisticated for entry doors. Smart locks eliminate the need for keys, allowing access through smartphone apps, keypads, or biometric scanners. Video doorbells with HD cameras provide real-time monitoring and two-way communication, while smart door sensors can alert you if doors are left open. Some premium entry doors now feature integrated lighting systems and even built-in package delivery compartments that lock automatically.

For patio doors, motorized opening systems are increasingly popular, especially for large sliding doors or French doors leading to decks. These can be programmed to open for natural ventilation during optimal temperature ranges or close automatically when rain sensors detect moisture. Smart patio door locks can integrate with whole-home security systems and provide remote monitoring capabilities.

Energy management integration is where smart features really shine in Ottawa's climate. Smart windows and doors can connect to your home's HVAC system, automatically adjusting based on outdoor temperature and indoor comfort settings. This integration can significantly reduce heating costs during our long winters and cooling costs during hot summers.

Installation considerations for smart features typically require professional installation to ensure proper electrical connections and integration with existing home automation systems. Many smart features can be retrofitted to quality windows and doors, though factory integration often provides the most reliable performance.

For a consultation on incorporating smart features into your window and door upgrade project, Ottawa Window Pros can connect you with experienced installers who specialize in both traditional and smart home integration.

Q9

Do dark-colored window frames cause problems?

Dark-colored window frames can cause some specific issues, but they're manageable with proper material selection and installation techniques. The main concerns are heat absorption and thermal expansion, which affect both performance and longevity.

Heat absorption is the primary challenge with dark frames. Black, dark brown, or charcoal frames absorb significantly more solar radiation than white or light-colored alternatives, causing the frame material to reach higher

temperatures. This is particularly relevant in Ottawa's climate where summer temperatures can reach 30°C+ with intense sunlight. The absorbed heat can make frames uncomfortably hot to touch and potentially affect the window's thermal performance.

Thermal expansion and contraction becomes more pronounced with dark frames due to these temperature swings. In Ottawa's climate with temperature ranges from -30°C in winter to +30°C in summer, dark frames experience greater expansion cycles. This can lead to seal failure, frame warping, or gaps developing around the window if the frame material and installation aren't designed to handle these movements. Vinyl frames are particularly susceptible to this issue, while fiberglass and aluminum frames handle thermal cycling better.

Material choice matters significantly for dark-colored frames. Fiberglass frames perform best with dark colors because they have low thermal expansion rates and excellent structural stability. Quality vinyl frames with proper reinforcement can work, but avoid cheap vinyl in dark colors. Aluminum frames handle heat well but require thermal breaks to prevent heat transfer. Wood frames painted dark colors need regular maintenance to prevent heat damage to the finish.

For Ottawa homeowners considering dark frames, choose high-quality materials designed for thermal cycling, ensure proper installation with adequate expansion gaps, and consider that south and west-facing windows will experience the most stress. **For a free consultation on frame color options and material recommendations for your specific project, Ottawa Window Pros can help you choose the right combination for Ottawa's climate.**

Q10

Why are my new windows harder to open than my old ones?

New windows are often harder to open initially due to tight seals, adjustment periods, and different operating mechanisms compared to older windows. This is usually temporary and can be resolved with proper adjustment and break-in time.

Modern windows are designed with much tighter seals than older windows to improve energy efficiency. These weatherstripping seals create more resistance when opening and closing, especially when the windows are brand new. The rubber and vinyl seals need time to compress and conform to the window frame, which typically happens over the first few weeks of use.

The operating hardware on new windows may also feel different from what you're used to. Modern window cranks, locks, and sash balances are engineered for smooth operation but often require a different technique than older windows. If your old windows were single-hung with traditional sash cords, switching to modern double-hung windows with spring balances will feel quite different initially.

In Ottawa's climate, temperature changes can significantly affect window operation. New vinyl or composite windows expand and contract more noticeably than older wood windows, making them temporarily harder to operate during extreme temperature swings. Cold weather can make seals stiffer, while hot weather can cause slight frame expansion.

Several factors could indicate the need for professional adjustment. If windows remain difficult to operate after 2-3 weeks, the installation may need fine-tuning. Common issues include improper frame squaring, over-tightened hardware, or debris in the tracks. Licensed installers should return to make these adjustments under warranty.

Most window operation issues resolve naturally with use and proper maintenance. Clean the tracks monthly, lubricate moving parts with silicone spray (never oil-based products), and operate windows regularly to keep seals flexible. If problems persist beyond the break-in period, contact your installer for a warranty adjustment - reputable contractors will ensure your windows operate smoothly.

For professional window installation with proper adjustment and warranty support, Ottawa Window Pros connects you with experienced installers who ensure optimal window performance from day one.

Q11

Are floor-to-ceiling windows practical in Ottawa?

Floor-to-ceiling windows can be practical in Ottawa, but they require careful consideration of our harsh climate and specific design choices to maximize benefits while minimizing energy loss.

Floor-to-ceiling windows work well in Ottawa homes when properly specified and installed. The key is choosing **triple-pane, low-E coated glass with argon fill** to handle our extreme temperature swings from -30°C winters to +35°C summers. These large windows can provide excellent natural light during our shorter winter days and create stunning views of Ottawa's natural landscape.

Climate considerations are crucial for floor-to-ceiling installations in Ottawa. You'll want windows with a U-factor of 1.22 or lower to meet ENERGY STAR requirements and qualify for Canada Greener Homes Grant rebates up to $5,000. The larger glass area means more potential heat loss, so premium glazing packages become essential rather than optional. Proper installation with continuous air sealing around the entire perimeter prevents drafts and condensation issues common with large window installations.

Structural requirements often necessitate engineered headers and additional framing support, especially for wide spans. Most floor-to-ceiling window installations require building permits in Ottawa due to structural modifications. The installation typically involves removing existing wall sections and reinforcing the opening, making this a job for experienced professionals rather than a simple window replacement.

Practical benefits include maximizing natural light during Ottawa's darker months, creating seamless indoor-outdoor connections, and potentially increasing home value. However, consider privacy needs, furniture placement limitations, and higher heating costs even with efficient glazing. Window treatments become more expensive and complex with floor-to-ceiling installations.

For a professional assessment of floor-to-ceiling windows in your specific Ottawa home, including structural requirements and energy efficiency options, request a consultation with licensed installers who understand local building requirements and climate challenges.

Q12

Do I need special permission to change window sizes?

Yes, changing window sizes typically requires a building permit if you're enlarging the opening or making structural modifications to your home's framing.

Replacing existing windows in the same size opening generally doesn't require permits in Ottawa - this is considered maintenance work. However, **enlarging a window opening, creating new windows, or making openings smaller** involves structural changes that require building permits and inspections.

When you enlarge a window opening, you're potentially affecting the structural integrity of your home. The wall framing above the window (called the header) needs to be properly sized to carry the load, and the surrounding framing must be reinforced. This work requires engineering calculations and must meet Ontario Building Code requirements for structural loads, insulation, and air sealing.

In Ottawa's climate, proper installation is especially critical when changing window sizes. Any structural modifications create opportunities for air leaks and thermal bridging if not done correctly. The new framing must include proper vapor barriers, insulation, and weatherproofing to maintain your home's energy efficiency in our Zone 6 climate.

The permit process involves submitting plans showing the proposed changes, structural details, and energy compliance. Licensed contractors typically handle permit applications and ensure the work meets all code requirements. City of Ottawa requirements may vary - confirm with your licensed installer about specific permit needs for your project.

Professional installation is essential for window size changes due to the structural complexity and weatherproofing requirements. Improper installation can lead to water damage, energy loss, and structural issues.

For a free consultation on your window modification project, Ottawa Window Pros can assess your specific situation and handle all permit requirements through the Ottawa Construction Network.

Q13

What window features help with noise reduction from traffic?

Sound-dampening windows can significantly reduce traffic noise, with the right combination of glass thickness, air space, and frame design making a noticeable difference in your home's comfort.

Triple-pane windows with varying glass thicknesses are your best option for noise reduction. The key is having different thicknesses of glass in each pane - for example, one pane at 3mm, another at 4mm, and the third at 5mm. This prevents sound waves from resonating through the window assembly. The larger air spaces between panes (typically 16mm or more) also help absorb sound vibrations before they reach your interior.

Laminated glass offers superior sound control compared to standard tempered glass. The plastic interlayer in laminated glass acts as a sound dampener, similar to how your car's windshield reduces road noise. When combined with triple-pane construction, laminated glass can reduce noise transmission by 35-40 decibels - turning busy traffic sounds into a gentle hum.

In Ottawa's urban areas, where traffic noise is common along major routes like the Queensway or Bank Street, homeowners often see dramatic improvements with quality sound-reducing windows. The investment typically ranges from $600-$1,200 per window for premium triple-pane units with laminated glass, but the comfort improvement is substantial.

Proper installation and sealing are equally important as the glass itself. Even the best sound-dampening windows won't perform if there are air gaps around the frame. Quality vinyl or fiberglass frames with multiple weatherstripping layers ensure an airtight seal that prevents sound infiltration.

For maximum noise reduction in high-traffic areas, consider combining sound-dampening windows with the Canada Greener Homes Grant, which can provide up to $5,000 toward energy-efficient window upgrades. **Want to discuss sound-reduction options for your specific location? Ottawa Window Pros offers free consultations** to assess your noise concerns and recommend the most effective window solutions.
