

OTTAWA WINDOW PROS

Home Types

Windows in century homes, bungalows,
townhouses, and new builds

9 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

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Table of Contents

1. I have a split-level - are there special considerations for windows at different heights?
.....
2. Do townhouse windows have different requirements than freestanding houses?
.....
3. We're building a passive house in Ottawa - what window specs do I actually need?
.....
4. Are there windows designed specifically for log homes in the Ottawa Valley area?
.....
5. What window challenges should I expect in a 1960s bungalow?
.....
6. I'm building a laneway suite - what window requirements apply to those?
.....
7. My house is over 100 years old - what should I know about replacing those original windows?
.....
8. I want to replace windows in my condo - do I even have the right to do that?
.....
9. Do mobile homes take standard window sizes or do I need special ones?
.....

Q1

I have a split-level - are there special considerations for windows at different heights?

Yes, split-level homes have unique window considerations due to varying heights, exposure levels, and structural differences between floors. The different elevations create distinct challenges for both installation and performance.

Ground-level and basement windows in split-levels face different moisture and security concerns than upper-level windows. Lower windows need enhanced weatherproofing and proper grading around the foundation to prevent water infiltration. These windows often benefit from egress considerations for safety - bedroom windows at or below grade must meet minimum opening sizes for emergency exit. The soil contact and reduced air circulation around lower windows also means they're more prone to condensation issues, making quality frames and proper installation critical.

Upper-level windows in split-levels are more exposed to wind and weather, requiring attention to wind load ratings and thermal performance. The height difference means these windows experience greater temperature swings and wind pressure. **Ottawa's climate zone 6 requirements** make triple-pane windows particularly valuable for upper levels where heat loss is most significant. The varying exposures also mean different sides of your split-level may benefit from different Low-E coatings - northern exposures need maximum heat retention while southern windows might benefit from solar heat gain control.

Installation complexity increases with split-levels due to access challenges and the need for different equipment at various heights. Professional installers need proper scaffolding or lift equipment for upper windows, while lower-level installations may require excavation considerations. The structural differences between levels also mean window rough openings may vary in their framing requirements.

For split-level window replacement in Ottawa, a comprehensive assessment of each level's specific needs ensures optimal performance and energy efficiency. **Want to discuss your specific split-level project? Request a free quote through Ottawa Window Pros and an installer can assess what each opening needs.**

Q2

Do townhouse windows have different requirements than freestanding houses?

Townhouse windows generally follow the same building code requirements as detached homes, but there are some important differences related to shared walls and condo corporation rules that can affect your window

replacement project.

Building Code Requirements are essentially the same for townhouses and detached homes in Ottawa. The Ontario Building Code applies equally to both housing types for window specifications, energy efficiency standards, and safety requirements. You'll need the same ENERGY STAR certified windows with proper U-factor ratings, and most window replacements in existing openings won't require building permits regardless of housing type.

Condo Corporation Approval is where townhouses often differ significantly. If your townhouse is part of a condominium corporation, you'll likely need approval from the condo board before replacing windows, even if you're replacing them in existing openings. Many condo corporations have specific requirements about window styles, colors, and materials to maintain a uniform exterior appearance. Some require all owners to use the same window manufacturer or specific approved models.

Shared Wall Considerations can also impact window installation in townhouses. Windows near party walls (the shared walls between units) may require extra care during installation to avoid disturbing your neighbors. Additionally, if your townhouse shares structural elements, any work that could affect the building envelope may need additional engineering review, even for standard replacements.

Fire Safety Requirements are typically the same, but townhouses may have specific egress window requirements for basement bedrooms that differ slightly from detached homes due to the attached nature of the building.

Before starting any window replacement project in a townhouse, check with your condo corporation (if applicable) about approval requirements and any architectural guidelines. For a townhouse replacement, request a free quote through Ottawa Window Pros and ask the installer how they have handled condo corporation approvals before.

Q3

We're building a passive house in Ottawa - what window specs do I actually need?

For a passive house in Ottawa, you'll need windows that significantly exceed standard ENERGY STAR requirements - typically triple-pane with U-factors around 0.8 W/m²K (0.14 Btu/hr·ft²·°F) or better, which is nearly twice as efficient as standard energy-efficient windows.

Passive House window specifications require extremely low heat transfer rates to meet the rigorous energy standards. In Ottawa's Climate Zone 6, your windows need a U-factor of 0.8 W/m²K or lower, with some projects targeting 0.6 W/m²K for optimal performance. The Solar Heat Gain Coefficient (SHGC) should typically be between 0.45-0.55 to balance winter solar gain with summer overheating prevention. You'll also need exceptional air

tightness - the entire building envelope must achieve 0.6 air changes per hour at 50 pascals pressure difference.

Triple-pane construction is mandatory for passive house certification, featuring Low-E coatings on multiple surfaces, krypton or xenon gas fills (which insulate better than argon), and thermally broken frames made from materials like fiberglass, wood, or specialized vinyl. The spacer systems between panes must be warm-edge technology to minimize thermal bridging. Frame materials become critical - standard vinyl frames often can't achieve passive house performance due to thermal bridging.

Installation quality is absolutely crucial for passive house standards. Even the best windows will fail certification if improperly installed. The installation must create a continuous air barrier and thermal bridge-free connection to the wall assembly. This typically requires specialized tapes, gaskets, and installation techniques that go far beyond standard window replacement practices.

Ottawa's climate considerations mean your passive house windows need to handle temperature swings from -30°C to +35°C while maintaining consistent performance. The windows must integrate perfectly with your continuous insulation strategy and vapor barrier system. Most passive house projects in Ottawa use European window manufacturers like Zola, Intus, or Optiwin, though some North American manufacturers like Cascadia Windows are achieving certification.

For a passive house project, you'll need certified passive house components and specialized installation expertise. This goes well beyond standard window replacement and requires contractors experienced with passive house construction standards.

Q4

Are there windows designed specifically for log homes in the Ottawa Valley area?

Yes, there are windows specifically designed for log homes that work exceptionally well in the Ottawa Valley's climate. Log home windows must accommodate the unique structural movement and settling that occurs in log construction while providing superior insulation for our harsh winters.

Log home windows feature several specialized design elements that make them ideal for timber construction. They typically include **adjustable mounting systems** that allow for the natural settling and movement of logs over time - this is crucial because log homes can settle several inches in their first few years. The windows also feature **extended mounting flanges** and **flexible flashing systems** that maintain weatherproofing as the structure moves.

For Ottawa Valley log homes, **triple-pane windows with Low-E coatings** are essential given our Climate Zone 6 requirements. Many log home window manufacturers offer **custom sizing** to accommodate the non-standard openings common in log construction, and they often feature **deeper frames** to work with the thick log walls typical in our region. Popular materials include **vinyl-clad wood** and **fiberglass frames** that can handle temperature fluctuations while maintaining the rustic aesthetic.

Installation considerations are particularly important for log homes in our area. The windows must be installed with **proper chinking and sealing** around the frame, and many installations require **custom trim work** to bridge the gap between the window frame and the irregular log surfaces. Professional installation is strongly recommended because improper installation can lead to significant air leakage and moisture problems.

Energy efficiency is especially critical in log home windows since the thermal mass of logs works differently than conventional framing. Look for windows with **U-factors of 1.22 or lower** to meet ENERGY STAR requirements and potentially qualify for Canada Greener Homes Grant rebates.

For a free consultation on log home windows specific to your Ottawa Valley property, request a quote from Ottawa Window Pros - we have experience with the unique requirements of timber construction in our climate.

Q5

What window challenges should I expect in a 1960s bungalow?

1960s bungalows typically have single-pane aluminum windows that are drafty, inefficient, and often have failing seals or hardware. You'll likely face condensation issues, high energy bills, and difficulty opening or closing windows properly.

Window Frame and Seal Problems are the most common issues in homes from this era. The original aluminum frames conduct cold directly into your home, creating condensation that can lead to mold and rot around window openings. The glazing compound and weatherstripping have likely deteriorated after 60+ years, allowing air and moisture infiltration. You might notice frost buildup on windows during Ottawa's cold winters or feel cold drafts even when windows appear closed.

Energy Efficiency Challenges will be significant with original 1960s windows. Single-pane glass provides minimal insulation value, and aluminum frames act like thermal bridges, transferring outdoor temperatures directly inside. This means your heating system works overtime during Ottawa's harsh winters, leading to energy bills that can be 30-40% higher than with modern windows. The lack of Low-E coatings also means you're losing heat through radiation.

Structural and Operational Issues often develop as these windows age. Aluminum frames can corrode, especially around the sill area where water collects. Window hardware may be seized or broken, making windows difficult or impossible to open - a safety concern for emergency egress. The window openings themselves are typically smaller than modern standards, which can limit your replacement options.

Ottawa-Specific Considerations make these problems worse due to our climate extremes. The freeze-thaw cycles cause additional stress on aging seals and frames. Snow and ice buildup can damage exterior trim and create ice dams if windows aren't properly sealed.

Replacement Strategy should focus on upgrading to triple-pane, Low-E windows with insulated frames to maximize energy savings. Most 1960s windows can be replaced without permits since you're using existing openings. For a free assessment of your specific window challenges and energy-saving potential, request a quote from Ottawa Window Pros.

Q6

I'm building a laneway suite - what window requirements apply to those?

Laneway suites in Ottawa have specific window requirements under the Ontario Building Code and City of Ottawa zoning bylaws, including minimum window sizes for bedrooms, egress requirements for safety, and energy efficiency standards for new construction.

For **bedroom windows** in your laneway suite, the Ontario Building Code requires a minimum window area equal to 10% of the floor area, with at least 5% being openable for ventilation. Every bedroom also needs an **emergency egress window** - typically a minimum opening of 0.35 square meters (about 3.8 square feet) with no dimension smaller than 380mm (15 inches), and the sill height can't exceed 1.5 meters from the floor.

Living areas need windows totaling at least 10% of the floor area for natural light, though this can include fixed windows. The City of Ottawa's laneway suite guidelines also specify that windows should be compatible with the neighborhood character while meeting privacy requirements - you'll typically need frosted or obscured glass for windows facing neighboring properties within 7.5 meters.

Since laneway suites are **new construction**, you'll need building permits and must meet current energy efficiency standards. This means **triple-pane windows** with Low-E coatings and a maximum U-factor of 1.22 to meet Ontario's energy code. In Ottawa's Climate Zone 6, this is essential for comfort and energy costs. Windows must also be properly flashed and sealed during installation to prevent air leakage.

Installation timing is critical - windows typically go in after framing and sheathing but before insulation and drywall. Your contractor will coordinate this with other trades and building inspections.

For a project this complex, work with experienced professionals who understand both the building code requirements and Ottawa's specific laneway suite regulations. Want to discuss window options for your laneway suite project? An installer can help you pick code-compliant, energy-efficient windows that meet the requirements for a secondary suite.

Q7

My house is over 100 years old - what should I know about replacing those original windows?

Replacing windows in a century-old home requires special consideration for heritage character, structural integrity, and modern energy efficiency standards. Your original windows likely have unique sizing, thick sills, and may be load-bearing elements that need careful handling.

Heritage and Character Preservation Most 100+ year old Ottawa homes feature beautiful architectural details that contribute significantly to property value. The original windows likely have specific proportions, mullion patterns, or decorative elements that define your home's character. When selecting replacement windows, consider options that maintain the original sight lines and visual appeal - many modern windows can replicate heritage styling while providing contemporary performance. If your home is in a heritage district, check with the City of Ottawa about any restrictions on exterior modifications.

Structural and Sizing Challenges Century homes often have non-standard window openings that don't match today's typical sizes. The original frames may be integrated into the structural system, and removal could reveal issues with the surrounding framing, insulation, or exterior cladding. Professional assessment is crucial to determine if openings need modification, structural support, or if custom-sized windows are required. Many older homes also have settling issues that create out-of-square openings.

Energy Efficiency Opportunities Your original single-pane windows are likely responsible for significant heat loss during Ottawa's harsh winters. Upgrading to **triple-pane, Low-E coated windows with argon fill** can dramatically reduce your heating costs and improve comfort. However, the installation must include proper air sealing and insulation around the frames - older homes often lack adequate insulation in wall cavities. This upgrade may qualify for Canada Greener Homes Grant rebates, making the investment more affordable.

Installation Considerations Professional installation is essential for heritage homes due to potential complications with lead paint (common pre-1978), asbestos, or structural surprises. The installation team needs experience with older construction methods and may need to rebuild portions of the window opening or add structural support.

For a comprehensive assessment of your heritage home's window replacement needs, request a consultation from experienced installers who understand the unique challenges of century-old Ottawa homes.

Q8

I want to replace windows in my condo - do I even have the right to do that?

Yes, you typically have the right to replace windows in your condo, but you'll need approval from your condo corporation first. This is one of the most common questions we get from Ottawa condo owners, and the process is more straightforward than most people think.

Condo corporation approval is mandatory because windows are usually considered part of the building's exterior envelope, even though they're inside your unit. Your condo's declaration and bylaws will specify whether windows are common elements or part of your unit, but either way, you'll need written approval before starting any replacement project. Most condo boards are supportive of window upgrades since they improve the building's overall energy efficiency and appearance.

The approval process typically involves submitting specifications for the new windows, including style, color, and energy ratings. Ottawa condo corporations often require that replacement windows match the building's exterior appearance and meet specific performance standards. Many buildings have approved window suppliers or specific requirements for Low-E coatings, grid patterns, or frame colors to maintain architectural consistency.

In Ottawa's climate, condo window replacement is particularly valuable because older condo buildings often have original windows from the 1980s or 1990s that are significantly less energy efficient than today's standards. Modern triple-pane windows can dramatically reduce your heating costs and eliminate condensation issues common in high-rise units. The Canada Greener Homes Grant may also apply to condo window replacements, potentially saving you \$250-\$5,000.

Your next step should be contacting your property management company to get the specific approval process and any architectural guidelines for your building. Once you have approval, an experienced installer can ensure the work meets both your condo's requirements and Ontario Building Code standards. For condo window replacement, request a free quote through Ottawa Window Pros and ask the installer how they have handled the approval process and board specifications before.

Q9

Do mobile homes take standard window sizes or do I need special ones?

Mobile homes typically require special windows that are different from standard residential windows. Most mobile homes use windows that are shorter in height and have specific mounting requirements designed for the thinner walls and different framing systems used in manufactured housing.

Standard mobile home windows are usually around 14 inches tall compared to standard residential windows that are often 24+ inches in height. The width dimensions can vary more widely, but common sizes include 24", 30",

36", and 48" wide. Mobile home windows also typically have a different mounting flange system - they're designed to mount from the exterior and seal against the thin wall construction rather than being installed within a traditional window frame opening.

The frame depth is another key difference. Mobile home walls are typically 2-4 inches thick compared to standard residential construction that's usually 4-6 inches thick. This means standard residential windows won't fit properly in mobile home openings without significant modification to either the window or the wall structure.

In Ottawa's climate, if you're replacing mobile home windows, you'll want to look for mobile home-specific windows that still offer good energy efficiency features like double-pane glass and proper weatherstripping. Some manufacturers make mobile home windows with Low-E coatings and improved insulation properties, which is important given that mobile homes can be more challenging to heat efficiently.

Before ordering replacement windows, carefully measure your existing windows including the frame depth and mounting style. Mobile home window replacement often requires specific expertise since the installation method and structural considerations are different from standard residential work. For the best results and proper weatherproofing in Ottawa's harsh winters, consider having a professional assess your specific mobile home's window requirements.

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