

OTTAWA WINDOW PROS

Warranties

Manufacturer and labour warranties, transfers, and
making a claim

8 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

ottawawindowinstall.ca/construction-brain

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What does a window warranty actually cover and what's usually excluded?

Window warranties can be confusing because manufacturers often make them sound comprehensive when they actually have significant limitations. Understanding what's covered before you buy can save you a lot of frustration down the road.

What's Typically Covered

Most quality window warranties include two separate components: a **glass unit warranty** and a **frame/hardware warranty**. The glass unit warranty (usually 10-20 years, sometimes "lifetime") covers **seal failure** — when the inert gas (argon or krypton) escapes and you see fogging or condensation between the panes. The frame warranty covers defects in materials and workmanship, meaning warping, cracking, or delamination that isn't caused by external damage or misuse.

Hardware coverage (locks, handles, hinges, operators) is typically covered for a shorter period — often 1-5 years — since these are mechanical parts that wear with use. Some premium manufacturers like Andersen or Pella offer more robust hardware coverage, so it's worth comparing.

What's Almost Always Excluded

This is where homeowners get surprised. Most warranties **exclude labour costs** for replacement, meaning even if the glass unit is covered, you may pay \$150-\$300+ per window just to have it swapped out. Other common exclusions include damage from **improper installation**, condensation on the *exterior* or *interior* surface (which is a humidity issue, not a defect), acts of nature, paint or finish damage from cleaning products, and normal wear.

Transferability is another important factor. Some warranties are non-transferable, which affects your home's resale value. If you're selling your Ottawa home, a transferable lifetime warranty is a meaningful selling point.

The Installation Warranty Matters Just as Much

A window is only as good as its installation. Even a perfect product will fail prematurely if it's improperly flashed, shimmed, or air-sealed. Always ask your installer for a **separate installation warranty** — reputable Ottawa installers typically offer 1-5 years on their workmanship. Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycles are particularly hard on poorly installed windows, so this coverage matters more here than in milder climates.

When comparing quotes, ask each supplier to hand you the actual warranty document — not just a summary card. Look specifically for the labour reimbursement clause, the transferability terms, and the list of exclusions. If you want help weighing warranty options, request quotes through Ottawa Window Pros and ask each installer which manufacturers they stand behind and what their own workmanship warranty covers.

Q2

Is the installation warranty separate from the window warranty or the same thing?

Installation warranty and window warranty are typically separate coverages - the window manufacturer covers the product itself, while the installer provides warranty on the workmanship and installation.

Window Product Warranty covers defects in the window itself - things like seal failures in double-pane glass, hardware malfunctions, frame warping, or coating deterioration. These warranties typically run 10-20 years for quality windows and are provided directly by the manufacturer like Jeld-Wen, Pella, or Marvin. The warranty follows the window regardless of who installed it.

Installation Warranty covers the actual installation work - proper fitting, air sealing, flashing, trim work, and ensuring the window operates correctly in the opening. This includes issues like air leaks around the frame, water infiltration due to improper flashing, or operational problems caused by installation errors. Installers in Ottawa typically provide 1-2 years of installation warranty coverage.

Why separate warranties matter is that installation problems often show up in the first year or two, while product defects may not appear until years later. Poor installation can actually void your window warranty if moisture damage occurs due to improper sealing or flashing. That's why choosing an insured installer with a track record is crucial - they'll stand behind their work and know how to maintain your product warranty.

In Ottawa's climate, proper installation is especially critical given our temperature extremes and freeze-thaw cycles. A quality installer will ensure both warranties remain valid and work together to protect your investment.

For peace of mind on both product and installation coverage, request details on warranty terms from your installer before starting the project.

Q3

What happens to my warranty if the window company goes bankrupt?

If your window company goes bankrupt, your warranty protection depends on the type of warranty and the company's structure. Most homeowners have some protection, but it varies significantly.

Manufacturer warranties typically remain valid even if the installing company goes out of business. Window manufacturers like Pella, Andersen, or Vinyl-Pro honor their product warranties regardless of who installed the windows. These warranties cover defects in materials and manufacturing, and you can usually get warranty service

through other authorized dealers or directly from the manufacturer.

Installation warranties are more vulnerable when a company goes bankrupt. These warranties cover workmanship issues like improper installation, air leaks, or water infiltration. If the installer goes out of business, you'll likely lose this coverage and need to pay another contractor to fix installation problems.

A professional contractor will carry liability insurance, which provides some protection during the warranty period - ask to see the certificate. WSIB coverage also protects you from liability if workers are injured on your property. However, these don't replace warranty coverage once they expire.

To protect yourself, verify the company is established and financially stable before signing contracts. Check their Better Business Bureau rating, ask for local references, and confirm they carry insurance and WSIB coverage. Companies that have been operating locally for many years with good reputations are less likely to suddenly disappear.

For peace of mind on your window replacement project, choose installers who are part of established networks and have strong manufacturer relationships. Want to discuss warranty protection for your specific window project? Ask any installer what happens to the workmanship warranty if they cease trading, and whether the product warranty is registered directly with the manufacturer.

If I sell my house can the new owner use my window warranty?

Most window warranties are not transferable to new homeowners, but this varies significantly by manufacturer and warranty type.

Manufacturer warranties typically fall into two categories. Product warranties that cover defects in materials and manufacturing are sometimes transferable, but often require specific steps like registering the transfer with the manufacturer within a certain timeframe. Installation warranties, however, are almost always tied to the original homeowner and contractor relationship and cannot be transferred.

What affects transferability includes the specific manufacturer's policy, whether the windows were professionally installed, if proper documentation exists, and the age of the windows. Some premium window brands offer limited transferable warranties as a selling feature, while others void all coverage upon sale of the property.

For Ottawa homeowners, having professionally installed windows with proper documentation can be a selling point even if warranties aren't transferable. Quality installations by established contractors like those in the Ottawa Construction Network demonstrate that the work was done to code and industry standards. This gives buyers confidence in the windows' longevity and performance, especially important in our harsh Ottawa climate.

Before listing your home, gather all window documentation including manufacturer warranties, installation receipts, and any service records. Even non-transferable warranties show buyers that quality products were installed. If you're planning to sell within a few years, ask your installer about manufacturers that offer transferable warranties - this can be a valuable selling feature.

For buyers, always ask sellers for window documentation and consider having windows inspected as part of your home inspection, regardless of warranty status.

I heard using the wrong cleaner can void my warranty - is that actually true?

Yes, using harsh or abrasive cleaners can absolutely void your window warranty - this is a legitimate concern that many homeowners overlook until it's too late.

Most window manufacturers specifically exclude damage from improper cleaning products in their warranty terms.

Ammonia-based cleaners, abrasive compounds, razor blades, and acidic solutions can permanently damage window glass coatings, vinyl frames, and weatherstripping. Low-E coatings on energy-efficient windows are

particularly vulnerable - once scratched or chemically damaged, they can't be repaired and the window loses its energy performance.

Safe cleaning approach for Ottawa windows: Use mild dish soap mixed with water, or cleaners specifically labeled as safe for windows and vinyl. Avoid anything containing ammonia, bleach, or abrasives. For stubborn spots, try white vinegar diluted with water. Always use soft cloths or squeegees - never steel wool, razor blades, or abrasive pads.

The warranty risk is especially important with **premium triple-pane windows** common in Ottawa's climate. These windows often have multiple coatings and specialized gas fills that can be compromised by harsh chemicals. Given Ottawa's temperature extremes, damaged seals or coatings can lead to condensation between panes, which typically isn't covered under warranty if caused by improper maintenance.

Check your specific warranty documentation for the approved cleaning methods - most manufacturers provide detailed care instructions. When in doubt, contact your installer or the manufacturer directly. It's worth spending a few extra dollars on proper cleaning products to protect a multi-thousand dollar window investment.

For guidance on maintaining your specific windows, consult with your installer about manufacturer-approved cleaning products and techniques.

Q6

The seal failed on one of my windows - how do I actually make a warranty claim?

Start by locating your original purchase documentation and warranty paperwork - this will have the manufacturer information and warranty terms you'll need for your claim.

Most window seal failures are covered under manufacturer warranties, typically ranging from 10-20 years for insulated glass units. The warranty usually covers the sealed glass unit replacement, though labor costs may or may not be included depending on your specific warranty terms. You'll need to identify the window manufacturer (often found on a label in the window frame corner or spacer bar between glass panes) and contact them directly or through your original installer.

If you know who installed your windows, start with them - the installer who did the work is normally the one who files the claim with the manufacturer on your behalf. For windows installed by other contractors, you can either contact the installer who should facilitate the warranty process, or reach out to the manufacturer directly through their customer service department.

The warranty claim process typically involves submitting photos of the failed seal (showing fogging or condensation between panes), providing proof of purchase, and scheduling an inspection if required. Most manufacturers will send a replacement sealed glass unit to your installer rather than directly to homeowners, since proper installation requires specific tools and techniques.

In Ottawa's climate, seal failures often occur due to extreme temperature fluctuations, and quality manufacturers understand this is a common warranty issue. Keep in mind that if your windows are beyond the warranty period, replacement of just the sealed glass unit is usually more cost-effective than full window replacement.

If you cannot locate your warranty paperwork, or the original installer is no longer trading, request a quote through Ottawa Window Pros and ask an installer what your options are and what the most cost-effective repair would be.

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Can the company refuse my warranty claim if I cleaned the windows the wrong way?

Most reputable window manufacturers won't void your warranty for using incorrect cleaning products, but they can refuse claims for damage directly caused by improper cleaning methods or harsh chemicals.

Window warranties typically cover manufacturing defects, seal failures, and hardware malfunctions - not damage from maintenance issues. However, if you use abrasive cleaners, razor blades, or harsh chemicals that damage the glass surface, Low-E coating, or frame finish, that damage won't be covered under warranty. The key distinction is whether the problem existed due to a manufacturing defect or was caused by external factors.

In Ottawa's climate, proper window cleaning is especially important because our freeze-thaw cycles can make small scratches or coating damage worse over time. Most manufacturers recommend using mild soap and water, avoiding ammonia-based cleaners on Low-E coated glass, and never using abrasive materials. Some specific no-nos include razor blades on coated glass, pressure washers too close to seals, and acidic cleaners that can etch glass or damage vinyl frames.

The good news is that normal household cleaning mistakes rarely void warranties entirely. Manufacturers understand that homeowners aren't professional cleaners. They're more concerned with obvious abuse or using industrial-strength chemicals. If you're unsure about cleaning products, stick to manufacturer recommendations - most suggest simple dish soap and water for regular cleaning.

If you're dealing with a warranty claim, document everything including what cleaning products you've used and when the problem first appeared. A good installer will go through proper maintenance with you at handover, which is worth asking about - it protects both your investment and the warranty coverage.

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Does seal failure count as a manufacturer defect for warranty purposes?

Seal failure can count as a manufacturer defect for warranty purposes, but it depends on the specific warranty terms and the age of the windows. Most quality window manufacturers will cover seal failure under warranty if it occurs within the specified timeframe and meets their criteria.

Manufacturer warranties typically cover seal failure when it results in permanent fogging or condensation between glass panes that cannot be cleared. This is considered a defect in the insulated glass unit (IGU) construction. However, warranties usually specify that the seal failure must be visible and affect the window's performance or appearance - minor condensation that clears up doesn't typically qualify.

The warranty coverage period varies significantly between manufacturers and product lines. Standard warranties might cover seal failure for 10-15 years, while premium windows often include 20-year or even lifetime seal warranties. Some manufacturers offer prorated coverage, meaning they'll cover a percentage of replacement costs based on the window's age.

In Ottawa's climate, seal failure is more common due to extreme temperature fluctuations that stress the seals over time. Quality manufacturers understand this and typically honor legitimate seal failure claims. However, damage from improper installation, structural settling, or impact damage usually voids warranty coverage.

To make a warranty claim, you'll need proof of purchase, installation date, and clear documentation of the seal failure. Take photos showing the permanent fogging between panes. The manufacturer may require inspection by an authorized dealer or installer to verify the defect and determine if it's covered under warranty terms.

For questions about your specific window warranty coverage, check your original warranty documentation or contact the manufacturer directly with your model and purchase information.

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