

OTTAWA WINDOW PROS

Windows & Doors

Combined window and door projects and how they
are quoted together

8 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

ottawawindowinstall.ca/construction-brain

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How can I tell if a window is good quality before buying?

Look for specific certifications and construction details - quality windows will have ENERGY STAR certification, proper weatherstripping, and multi-pane glass with Low-E coatings.

When evaluating window quality, start with the **frame construction**. Quality vinyl frames should feel substantial and have reinforced corners with fusion welding rather than mechanical fasteners. Wood frames should show tight grain with proper moisture treatment, while fiberglass frames offer the best durability but at a higher cost. Avoid frames that feel flimsy or show visible gaps at joints.

Glass specifications tell the real story about energy performance. In Ottawa's climate, look for triple-pane glass with Low-E coatings and argon gas fill between panes. The ENERGY STAR label should show a U-factor of 1.22 or lower for our Climate Zone 6. Quality windows will also have warm-edge spacers (usually black or gray) rather than aluminum spacers that create thermal bridging.

Hardware and weatherstripping quality separate good windows from cheap ones. Test the window operation - it should open and close smoothly without binding. Look for multi-point locking systems on casement windows and quality weatherstripping that compresses evenly when closed. The weatherstripping should be replaceable, not permanently attached to the frame.

Manufacturer reputation and warranty coverage provide long-term confidence. Established brands like Jeld-Wen, Pella, or Marvin offer comprehensive warranties covering glass seal failure, frame defects, and hardware. A quality window should come with at least a 10-year warranty on the glass seal and 20+ years on the frame. **For Ottawa homeowners, choosing ENERGY STAR certified windows also qualifies you for up to \$5,000 in Greener Homes Grant rebates.**

For a professional assessment of window options for your specific home, request a quote through Ottawa Window Pros and ask the installer to show you quality products in person.

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How do I stop cold air from coming in around my windows?

Cold air infiltration around windows is typically caused by worn weatherstripping, gaps in the window frame, or poor installation. The most effective solutions range from simple DIY fixes to professional window replacement, depending on the severity of the problem.

Start by **identifying where the cold air is entering**. On a windy day, hold a lit candle or incense stick around the window perimeter - the flame will flicker where air is leaking in. Common problem areas include the bottom sash, where the window meets the frame, and around the window trim.

For **immediate DIY solutions**, check your weatherstripping first. Window weatherstripping should compress when the window closes but spring back when opened. If it's cracked, compressed flat, or missing entirely, replace it with new foam, rubber, or brush-style weatherstripping from any hardware store. You can also apply removable window film or use rope caulk as temporary winter solutions.

Caulking gaps between the window frame and wall is another effective fix. Remove old, cracked caulk and apply new exterior-grade caulk around the outside perimeter. Inside, use paintable acrylic caulk between the trim and wall. However, avoid caulking the weep holes at the bottom of the exterior frame - these allow moisture to drain out.

In Ottawa's harsh winters, **older windows often have fundamental issues** that weatherstripping can't solve. Single-pane windows, loose-fitting sashes, or windows with broken seals in double-pane glass will continue losing energy despite your best efforts. If you're spending significant money on heating bills and constantly fighting drafts, replacement with modern triple-pane windows typically pays for itself through energy savings.

Modern replacement windows feature multiple weatherstripping systems, insulated frames, and proper installation techniques that eliminate air infiltration. In Ottawa's Climate Zone 6, triple-pane windows with Low-E coatings can reduce heat loss by 40-50% compared to older windows.

For persistent air leakage issues or if multiple windows need attention, consider having a professional assessment. A good installer can identify whether the problem is fixable with maintenance or if window replacement would be more cost-effective long-term.

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Q3

How do I choose between a sliding patio door and French doors?

Sliding patio doors and French doors each offer distinct advantages - your choice depends on your space constraints, usage patterns, and design preferences.

Space and Layout Considerations

Sliding patio doors are ideal when you have limited interior space, as they don't require any clearance for door swing. The panels slide parallel to the wall, making them perfect for tight spaces or when furniture is positioned near the door opening. French doors, however, need adequate clearance for both panels to swing open - typically 6-8 feet of unobstructed space. This swing-out design does provide a completely unobstructed opening when both doors are open, creating a seamless indoor-outdoor flow.

Functionality and Access

French doors excel when you frequently carry large items in and out, as they can provide a much wider opening than sliding doors. The dual-swing design also allows for better ventilation control - you can open just one panel for a breeze or both for maximum airflow. Sliding doors typically have one fixed panel and one operable panel, limiting your opening to about half the total width. However, sliding doors are often easier for daily use, especially for children or elderly family members, as they require less physical effort to operate.

Energy Efficiency and Weather Performance

In Ottawa's climate, both door types can achieve excellent energy efficiency with proper installation and quality materials. French doors have more potential air leakage points due to the center meeting rail and dual weatherstripping, but modern designs with compression seals perform very well. Sliding doors have fewer sealing points but rely heavily on proper track alignment and weatherstripping maintenance. For maximum energy efficiency in either style, look for triple-pane glass, Low-E coatings, and ENERGY STAR certification.

Cost and Installation Factors

Sliding patio doors typically cost \$2,000 - \$4,000 installed, while French doors range from \$3,000 - \$6,000 installed in the Ottawa market. The higher cost for French doors reflects the more complex hardware, dual-panel

construction, and often more detailed installation requirements. French doors may also require additional structural considerations if you're replacing a sliding door, as the swing mechanism puts different stresses on the frame.

For a view on which suits your space, request a free quote through Ottawa Window Pros and have an installer look at the layout and how the room actually gets used.

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How do I choose between picture windows and casement windows for my living room?

Picture windows are ideal for maximizing views and natural light, while casement windows offer ventilation and easier cleaning - your choice depends on whether you prioritize unobstructed views or functional airflow in your living room.

Picture windows create a stunning focal point with their large, uninterrupted glass surface that frames your outdoor view like artwork. They're perfect for living rooms where you want maximum natural light and an expansive feel. Since they don't open, picture windows typically offer better energy efficiency due to fewer moving parts and potential air leaks. They're also more cost-effective, usually running \$400-700 per window installed in Ottawa. However, you'll need other windows or ventilation sources for fresh air circulation.

Casement windows swing outward on hinges, providing excellent ventilation control and easier cleaning from inside your home. They seal tightly when closed, making them very energy efficient, and their crank operation allows you to catch breezes from multiple angles. In Ottawa's climate, this ventilation can be valuable during spring and fall months. Casement windows typically cost \$500-900 installed, slightly more due to their hardware mechanisms.

For Ottawa homes, consider your living room's orientation and size. South-facing rooms benefit from picture windows to capture winter sunlight, while east or west-facing rooms might appreciate casement windows for cross-ventilation during hot summer afternoons. Many homeowners combine both - a large picture window as the centerpiece with flanking casement windows for ventilation.

Energy efficiency is excellent with both options when you choose triple-pane glass with Low-E coatings, which is recommended for Ottawa's Climate Zone 6. Both styles qualify for Canada's Greener Homes Grant when they meet ENERGY STAR requirements.

For a personalized recommendation based on your living room's specific layout and orientation, request a free consultation from Ottawa Window Pros to explore both options in detail.

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Q5

How do I know if my window seals have failed?

Failed window seals are most commonly identified by condensation or fogging between the glass panes - this is the clearest sign that the insulating gas has escaped and moisture has entered the sealed unit.

Visual signs of seal failure include persistent fog, water droplets, or a milky haze between the glass panes that you can't wipe away from either side. You might also notice mineral deposits or water stains on the interior surfaces of the glass. In winter, you may see frost or ice crystals forming between the panes, and in summer, the condensation becomes more apparent during temperature changes.

Performance indicators that suggest seal failure include increased energy bills, drafts around the window even when it's closed, and difficulty maintaining consistent indoor temperatures. Failed seals mean your window has lost its insulating properties - the argon or krypton gas that provides thermal efficiency has escaped and been replaced by regular air and moisture.

In Ottawa's climate, seal failure becomes more noticeable during our temperature extremes. The freeze-thaw cycles put additional stress on window seals, and the significant temperature differences between indoors and outdoors make condensation more visible. Double-pane windows typically show seal failure more obviously than triple-pane units, which may continue to provide some insulation even with one failed seal.

Age and quality factors play a role - most quality windows have seals that last 15-20 years, though cheaper units may fail sooner. South-facing windows often experience seal failure first due to UV exposure and thermal cycling. Once seals fail, the window unit needs replacement rather than repair, as re-sealing is typically not cost-effective.

If you're seeing these signs in multiple windows, it may be time to consider a full window replacement project. For a professional assessment of your window seals and energy efficiency, request a quote from Ottawa Window Pros.

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Q6

How do I know if the installation was done properly?

A properly installed window or door should have no drafts, operate smoothly, and show no signs of water infiltration or structural issues. Here are the key indicators to check after your installation is complete.

Visual inspection is your first step. Look for even gaps around the entire perimeter of the window or door frame - these should be consistent and properly sealed with caulking or weatherstripping. The unit should sit square and level in the opening, with no visible bowing or warping of the frame. All hardware should be properly aligned, and moving parts like sashes or door panels should operate smoothly without binding or excessive force.

Test the seal and insulation by running your hand around the perimeter on a windy day - you shouldn't feel any air movement. Check that all weatherstripping makes proper contact when the window or door is closed. For windows, both sashes should lock securely and create a tight seal. The glass should be clean and properly seated in the frame without any gaps or loose glazing compound.

Water management is critical in Ottawa's climate. Exterior caulking should be continuous and properly tooled, with no gaps or cracks. The installation should include proper flashing and a moisture barrier behind the trim. After heavy rain, check for any signs of water infiltration around the frame or on interior walls and sills.

Energy efficiency indicators include no condensation between glass panes (which would indicate seal failure), consistent interior temperatures near the window, and no ice buildup on the interior frame during winter. Quality installations in Ottawa should eliminate cold spots and drafts that were present with old windows.

Professional installation standards require proper shimming, insulation in the rough opening, and code-compliant fastening. A good installer should provide warranty documentation and leave you with operating instructions for your new windows or doors.

For peace of mind with your window or door installation, work with contractors who stand behind their installation work and belong to established networks like the Ottawa Construction Network.

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How do I apply for the Greener Homes grant for new windows?

The **Canada Greener Homes Grant** can provide up to \$5,000 in rebates for energy-efficient window replacements, making it an excellent way to offset the cost of upgrading your Ottawa home's windows.

The application process involves three main steps. First, you'll need a pre-retrofit EnerGuide evaluation of your home, which costs around \$300-400 but is partially reimbursed. The evaluator will assess your current windows and provide recommendations for eligible upgrades. You must complete this evaluation before purchasing or installing any windows to qualify for the grant.

After your evaluation, you can proceed with your window installation using ENERGY STAR certified windows that meet the program requirements - typically windows with a U-factor of 1.22 or lower and specific Energy Rating (ER) thresholds. In Ottawa's climate zone, triple-pane windows with Low-E coatings and argon fill usually qualify and provide the best rebate amounts. Keep all receipts and ensure your contractor provides proper documentation of the installed products.

The final step is a post-retrofit evaluation to verify the improvements were completed according to the recommendations. This second evaluation, also around \$300-400, confirms your eligibility for the rebate. The government then processes your rebate payment, which can take several months.

Ottawa homeowners should also check for additional local incentives like Enbridge's Home Efficiency Rebate Program, which can stack with the federal grant for even greater savings. The combined rebates can often cover 30-40% of your window replacement costs.

For a free estimate on ENERGY STAR certified windows that qualify for the Greener Homes Grant, request a quote from Ottawa Window Pros. Confirm with your installer that the units they are quoting carry the certification the grant requires, before the order goes in.

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How do I know when it's time to replace my windows?

Most Ottawa homeowners should consider window replacement when their windows are 15-20 years old or showing clear signs of energy loss and functionality issues. The key indicators include drafts, condensation between glass panes, difficulty opening or closing, and noticeably higher heating bills during our harsh winters.

Energy efficiency problems are often the first sign your windows need replacement. If you feel cold air coming through your windows during Ottawa's winter months, or notice frost buildup on the interior glass, your windows are likely losing significant heat. Condensation or fogging between double-pane glass indicates seal failure, which means the insulating gas has escaped and the window's thermal performance is compromised. These issues become especially costly during Ottawa's long heating season from October through April.

Operational issues also signal replacement time. Windows that stick, won't stay open, or require force to operate have likely experienced frame warping or hardware failure. Visible damage like rotting wood frames, cracked glass, or gaps around the frame allow air infiltration that drives up energy costs. If you're painting window frames frequently or dealing with water damage around windows, replacement is often more cost-effective than ongoing repairs.

In Ottawa's climate, windows face extreme temperature swings from -30°C winters to +30°C summers, which accelerates wear on seals and frames. Windows installed before 2000 typically lack modern energy efficiency features like Low-E coatings and argon gas fills that are essential for our Climate Zone 6 requirements. If your heating bills have increased significantly or certain rooms feel consistently cold near windows, it's likely time for an upgrade to triple-pane, ENERGY STAR certified windows.

Consider replacement when repair costs exceed 50% of new window costs, or when you're planning other exterior renovations. Modern windows can reduce heating costs by 15-25% and may qualify for up to \$5,000 in Greener Homes Grant rebates. For a professional assessment of your windows' condition and energy performance, request a free consultation from Ottawa Window Pros to determine the best timing for your replacement project.

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