



Heritage Foundation

Newfoundland & Labrador

WINDOW GUIDELINES

Introduction

Windows provide light, ventilation, and views of the outside. But windows also present the most obvious sense of pattern and character on the facade of a historic building. The windows are the feature of the facade that are most often changed, and in doing so, the face of the building is changed with them.

As a general guideline, do not change the size, location or number of openings on the main facade, unless you are restoring the property to its original appearance. Replacing windows with ones smaller or larger than what was there originally will cause a change in the proportions of your facade, and the window pattern will look "unnatural" when compared to its neighbours.

In Newfoundland, traditional window designs were almost exclusively the "double-hung" or "single-hung" type, where the upper and lower sash (or just the lower sash in a single-hung window) move vertically. Traditionally, windows were constructed of wood and glass, with metal for the hardware.

Repair vs. Replace

Most older windows are in good enough condition to be repaired rather than replaced, and it is always the goal of the Heritage Foundation to preserve as much of the original fabric of a Registered Heritage Structure as much as possible. Modern methods of weather stripping can substantially improve the operation and the insulating value of the original sash and frame at a cost which is usually lower than that of a complete replacement. Regular maintenance of older windows will ensure that they function properly and will preserve them in good condition.

Replica windows

If you are replacing a window in a Registered Heritage Structure, the structure owner must use windows made of traditional materials in the original style of the building. The owner shall base new windows on existing windows, or shall work from historic photographs where original windows do not remain. If no windows or photos exist for the particular structure, the structure owner shall, in co-operation with the Heritage Foundation, decide upon a window based upon known, local historical examples, either in extant properties or from historical photos. If replacing the original windows, replace them with windows which have the same number of panes.

The bulk, size, design and external appearance of windows in the Registered Heritage Structure must be compatible with existing windows and the historical context of the structure. This means that casement windows or horizontal sliding windows cannot be used. Modern materials such as vinyl, aluminum or fiberglass are not permitted in Registered Heritage Structures.

Storm Windows

Wooden storm windows, usually removable, are the traditional way to improve thermal performance in an older home. A traditional double-hung wooden window with a properly installed wooden storm window can provide a similar insulation value as a modern double-glazed thermal pane window unit. Exterior metal or vinyl storm windows do not look acceptable on heritage buildings. The materials, style and proportions are not traditional. Directly fastening the metal frames to the wood frame and sill can create condensation problems and can have a negative visual effect. With a wooden storm, add weep holes from the air space to the outdoors through the lower rail or stiles, with a rotating wooden cover. To ensure a tight fit, add weather stripping to the inside of the storm, and even consider caulking some of your storms in place.

In some municipalities, fixed storm windows in a bedroom may be in violation of the health and safety code, as a person must be able to exit the bedroom in case of a fire. If you wish to maintain your wooden storms in place, they can be hinged at the top with exterior or marine grade hinges, which allow the storm to swing outwards at the bottom. The storm can still be weather stripped, and interior latches allow it to be hooked into place. Another option with storm windows is to use an easily removable interior storm window.

NOTE ON BEDROOMS: Bedroom windows must meet the egress requirements of the National Building Code of Canada. The City of St. John's (based on technical advice and interpretation from National Codes Centre Staff) no longer accepts windows or storms hinged at top or bottom for egress as they can hinder safe exiting. Only side-hinged are acceptable. Check with your local authorities for requirements for windows or storms in bedrooms.

Note: The reader of the information provided by this site assumes all risks from using the information provided herein. Property owners are encouraged to seek the advice of professionals, reputable contractors or carpenters as the specific project requires.