The first time you replace a roof in Winnipeg feels a bit like planning a polar expedition. There is weather to watch, gear to choose, and a small army of people who show up at dawn with nail guns. The good news is that a well-run roof replacement is more choreography than chaos, and a little local knowledge keeps the project from drifting off course the moment a north wind picks up.

Winnipeg roofs work hard. We ask them to bake through 30-degree summers, then hold a metre of snow through long cold snaps. If a roof performs here, it performs anywhere. The trade-offs you make, the details you insist on, and the questions you ask will all show up in how that roof handles its first spring melt and its tenth January.

When a repair stops making sense

Homeowners tend to hang on to roofs a season too long. The signs that it is time are less subtle than people think. Shingles that have curled so far they cast their own shadows do not recover. Granules that used to live on your shingles now live in your gutters. Stains on second-floor ceilings after a mild thaw mean more than a missing nail; water has found a weak spot and is working it wider. If you can lift shingles by hand at the eaves, the tar strip has let go. On older bungalows in River Heights and St. James, I have pulled off three-tab shingles to find the original plank deck gapped wide enough to see daylight in places. A patch might stop a drip for a week, but wood that moves that much underfoot will keep tearing nails through asphalt until you give it a stable base.

Winnipeg’s big hail events muddy the waters. After a storm, you may see divots in shingles without leaks. Hail damage is largely about fractures you cannot see easily. If your insurer sends an adjuster, push for a proper lift and inspection on the worst slopes. I have watched many homeowners try to nurse a hail-bruised roof for two more winters only to meet the same deductible again after the next squall line.

The money question you actually want answered

People ask for a single number. It is more honest to explain the handful of numbers that matter. For an average Winnipeg detached home, a straightforward asphalt shingle tear-off and replacement commonly lands in the range of 5 to 9 dollars per square foot of roof area. A small, simple 800 square foot footprint with a low slope may cost around 8,000 to 11,000 dollars. A larger two-storey with hips, valleys, skylights, and a steep pitch can float into the mid to high teens. Swap shingles for steel, and you may double that envelope.

The wild cards **winnipeg roofing** are deck condition and details. If half your plank decking needs overlay with 7/16 inch OSB, add 1,200 to 2,400 dollars on a typical house. Replace rotten fascia at the eaves and budget a few hundred more. Custom flashing around an older chimney or a bow window is slower work than slapping on new shingles, so your labour line inches up.

Good estimates break the job into parts you can understand: tear-off and disposal, deck repairs at a per-sheet rate, underlayment and ice protection, shingles and vents, flashings, and final cleanup. A clear scope makes it easy to compare bids and avoids the awkward driveway huddle on day two where someone says, “We did not price for that.” Keep a 10 percent contingency on hand for deck surprises. Winnipeg’s older housing stock likes to keep a few secrets until the roof is off.

Permits, code, and the Winnipeg reality

In Winnipeg, a straightforward re-roof where you replace shingles over existing decking typically does not require a building permit. Change the roof structure, add a skylight, expand a dormer, or reroute mechanical vents, and you enter permit territory. Always confirm with the City of Winnipeg before you start, because the line can shift if your project touches structural or energy code items.

What matters more day to day is that your contractor follows the Manitoba Building Code and manufacturer instructions. Eave protection is not just a suggestion in our climate. Code requires an ice barrier beginning at the eaves and extending up the roof to a point at least 900 millimetres inside the exterior wall line. That usually means two full courses of ice and water membrane at the eaves on a typical overhang. Valleys need the same attention. If you have lived through one January thaw, you know why.

Ventilation gets less attention than it deserves. A safe rule of thumb is to aim for net free vent area of roughly one square foot for every 300 square feet of attic space, with a good balance between intake at the soffits and exhaust at the ridge or roof vents. Starved intake is a silent ice dam factory. If your soffit vents are painted shut or packed with insulation, you are pushing warm moist air against the roof deck all winter, then wondering why the shingles age fast.

The materials that hold up here

Architectural fiberglass shingles are the Winnipeg workhorse. The laminated profile handles wind better than the old three-tabs, and most carry limited lifetime marketing language with a non-prorated period in the 10 to 15 year range. Ignore the lifetime talk and ask about wind rating and the actual non-prorated term. If your home sits on an open corner in Sage Creek or South Pointe, insist on six nails per shingle and a rated system that handles 180 km/h gusts. High wind days are not theoretical here.

Rubberized or SBS-modified shingles add impact resistance and stay more flexible in cold weather. They cost more, but if your neighbourhood has a hail history, that extra layer of forgiveness pays back.

Metal roofing has grown steadily. It sheds snow more quickly, which some folks like and others do not. I have seen a clean February thaw drop a roof’s snow load onto a walkway in one thump. Plan snow guards where people move. Steel or aluminum panels can last several decades if installed with proper underlayment and ventilation. The upfront hit is the issue for many budgets.

Under the shingles, choose a synthetic underlayment rather than traditional felt. It resists tearing in wind, lies flatter, and gives your crew safer footing. At the eaves, valleys, and around penetrations, use a self-adhering ice and water membrane. Drip edge at eaves and rakes is not just tidy, it protects the edges of your deck from wind-driven rain and helps with shingle alignment. Good crews make drip edge look like part of the house, not an aftermarket accessory.

ROOFING & RENOVATIONS

Flashing separates a lasting roof from a pretty one that leaks in five years. Replace step flashing along sidewalls instead of trying to slide new shingles under old metal. Chimney flashing is not caulking. It is sheets bent to fit, with counterflashing chased into the brick. I have watched three buckets of sealant do less than one hour of proper metalwork.

Choosing a contractor in a crowded field

Ask who actually shows up. Many winnipeg roofing companies sell with an estimator and build with subcontracted crews. That model can work well, but you want to know who will be on your roof and how the company controls quality. Look for Manitoba COR or equivalent safety certification, active WCB coverage, and liability insurance with limits that make sense for your property value. Manufacturer certifications are useful if they expand your warranty eligibility, but they are not a guarantee of craftsmanship on their own.

References help when they are hyper local. A finished job on a 1950s strip-bungalow in Windsor Park is a better match for your 1950s strip-bungalow than a custom metal roof on a show home. Ask to see photos of valley details, not just pretty ridge lines at sunset. Push gently on process. Do they strip to the deck every time, or do they lay over? Do they replace all flashings? Where do they place the bin, and how do they protect driveways and landscaping? The best crews answer these questions so often they barely blink.

One quick note on workmanship warranties. Five years is common here, ten is not rare, and anything longer usually comes with maintenance conditions. Read for exclusions. If a crew refuses to cover ice dam leaks at the eaves after a known failure in underlayment, you are inheriting their shortcuts.

The five-step Winnipeg roof replacement

Here is the simple backbone that holds almost every good project together.

1) Pre-job inspection and setup A site visit verifies access, deck condition where visible, attic ventilation, and the state of soffits and fascia. Materials are ordered with Winnipeg timing in mind, which means watching the forecast for adhesive-friendly temperatures. The bin arrives, tarps go down on gardens and driveways, and a safety plan goes up with anchors set before tear-off.

2) Tear-off and deck repair Shingles, underlayment, and flashings come off to bare wood. This is where truth shows up. On older homes with plank decking, gaps that **flat roof Winnipeg** have widened to more than a few millimetres call for an OSB overlay to give the nails consistent bite. Soft spots at eaves often mean past ice dam damage. Good crews replace what is rotten without drama and only after walking the homeowner through what they found.

3) Waterproofing and metal Ice and water membrane is installed at eaves far enough up the slope to reach at least 900 millimetres past the warm wall line, then again in valleys and around penetrations. Synthetic underlayment covers the rest of the deck. Drip edge runs the eaves and rakes, fastened snug and straight. New flashings go on at walls and chimneys, with counterflashing cut into mortar joints rather than glued to brick.

4) Shingles and ventilation Starter course, then shingles, nailed to manufacturer spec, which usually means six nails per shingle in Winnipeg winds. Vents are upgraded or redistributed to balance with actual soffit intake. Many homes benefit from a continuous ridge vent if the ridge is long enough, otherwise quality box vents do the job.

5) Cleanup and handover Magnets sweep the lawn and driveway again and again. Offcuts and wrappers disappear into the bin. The crew photographs critical details for your records. You get a walkthrough, a packet with warranty info and proof of material registration if required, and notes on maintenance.

If your project does not feel like this sequence, pause and ask why.

A day on site, without the varnish

Replace enough roofs and you learn what a normal day sounds like. The morning begins a few ticks after 7, coffee and compressor going at the same time. Tear-off is louder than you expect, a rain of old nails rattling down tarps into the bin. If you work from home, consider a library day. By mid-morning the deck is exposed and everyone is on their knees tapping the wood. Nine times out of ten, that is when a homeowner learns a corner is soft or a valley has been wicking. The foreman calls you over, shows you the exact board with his boot heel on it, quotes the per-sheet cost that was already spelled out in your estimate, and waits for your nod.

Waterproofing is deliberate. It looks slow because it is right. Valleys are either woven or flashed with open metal. I prefer open metal valleys for durability, especially where snowmelt concentrates, but woven can work if executed well and backed by ice membrane. The crew starts shingling on the leeward side if the wind is up. They will stick to strips if the temperature is below 10 degrees, and on cold fall days a good crew hand-seals tabs that need it rather than trusting the sun.

By late afternoon, the ridge caps go on, vents get flashed, and someone with a magnet is already circling the bin. The crew will make a second pass for nails the next morning after the grass dries, because the first sweep misses what sticks to wet blades.

Timing it against Prairie weather

Every season has a shape. Spring is busy and forgiving, but meltwater finds any detail you missed in a hurry. Summer gives you the best adhesion for asphalt shingles, but brutal heat bakes crews and can make fresh shingles scuff-prone if walked on carelessly. Fall is a sweet spot for comfort as long as you watch night temperatures. Once daytime highs sit in the single digits, manufacturers ask for extra caution and, in some cases, hand-sealing of shingles to ensure bonding. Winter work happens, but you should want a crew that can explain exactly how they handle cold adhesives, snow removal from decks, and the shorter daylight window. If I had my pick for a first roof replacement, I would circle May, June, September, or early October.

Keep an eye on wind. Winnipeg can throw 50 km/h gusts on a blue-sky day. On exposed lots in Bridgwater or Amber Trails, a crew may shut down tear-off on the windward slope until conditions calm. That prudence saves you felt flapping like a kite at midnight.

Prepare your home like a pro

A few hours of homeowner prep keeps the day smooth and your nerves steady.

- Clear a 10-foot zone around the house so tarps and ladders can land, and the bin can sit without blocking the neighbour's driveway.
- Park cars on the street the night before so the bin and crew trucks have room, and your windshield avoids shingle grit.
- Take fragile items off walls and upper shelves. Vibration from tear-off finds weak hooks.
- Move patio furniture and cover hot tubs and grills. Nails have a homing instinct for cushions.
- Warn pets and neighbours. Roof days are loud. Dogs do not negotiate with compressors.

Ice dams, attic breath, and the myth of heat cables

When a homeowner says the roof leaked in February, I think ventilation before shingles. Ice dams happen when warm attic air melts the bottom layer of the snowpack near the ridge, which runs to the cold eaves and freezes. After a few cycles, that lip of ice backs up water under shingles. Yes, eave protection fights it, but the right fix is stopping the attic from acting like a greenhouse.

Check soffits for clear airflow. You can have brand new perforated aluminum and still be blocked by insulation jammed into the corners. Baffles that guide air from soffit to attic are cheap and quick to install while the crew has the roof open. Pair that with a ridge vent or quality box vents, and you have an attic that exhales. Heat cables can help in the short term on a problem eave or above a troublesome gutter, but think of them as crutches while you deal with the root cause.

What you approve that no one else sees

Most of the roof is hidden by the time you get your camera out. There are a few details worth insisting on up front.

- Nail placement and count, specifically six nails per shingle in windy zones. Nails should sit just below the tar strip, flush, not overdriven or angled.
- New flashing everywhere, not just where the old stuff looks bad. Reusing metal is a favorite shortcut that turns into a call-back two winters later.
- Starter shingles at all eaves and rakes, so you do not rely on flipping full shingles to fake a starter course.
- Proper valley approach chosen for your layout, with ice and water beneath. Ask to see one valley mid-install.
- Intake and exhaust balance verified rather than guessed. If intake is starved, more roof vents will not fix the physics.

These take ten minutes to discuss at the estimate stage and save ten days of frustration down the line.

Warranties that mean something

Manufacturer warranties read like a novel most people do not finish. Pair the paper with what the contractor controls. A registered system warranty can extend the non-prorated period and cover more than just shingles if the installer uses the full family of components. That value evaporates if the crew mixes brands or substitutes unknown underlayments to save a few dollars.

Workmanship warranties matter just as much. Five to ten years is standard here. Watch for language that excludes leaks tied to poor ventilation, missing drip edge, or reused flashing. If the installer controls those details,

they should stand behind them. Ask what service looks like. The best companies have a small-service crew that handles punch-list items and storm follow-ups, not a promise that a production crew will “swing by when they can.”

Aftercare without the paranoia

Your new roof should not feel needy. A light touch goes a long way.

- Expect a sprinkle of granules in the gutters the first season. That is manufacturing surplus, not your shingles dissolving.
- Keep gutters clear, especially before freeze-up. Full gutters feed ice dams.
- Look up after major storms. Missing caps or a lifted shingle along a ridge are easy early fixes.
- Treat moss early if you see it start on shaded north slopes. Winnipeg is not coastal, but a mature elm canopy can hold dew for long stretches.
- Do not pressure wash shingles. If a contractor suggests it, find another contractor.

If you are the type who sleeps better with documentation, snap a few photos of each slope after completion. They make quick reference checks after a wind event and help future appraisers and buyers see what you paid for.

Two Winnipeg stories that taught me something

A 1953 bungalow in Riverview looked easy on paper. Low slope, single chimney, simple gables. Tear-off changed the mood. The plank deck had gaps wide enough to drop a pencil through, and the eaves had soft spots from old ice damming. The homeowner had a clear per-sheet price in the estimate, so we added nine OSB sheets and replaced a strip of fascia. It added about 1,100 dollars and half a day. That roof handled a March melt two weeks later without a drop inside, and the homeowner told me the upstairs was finally cooler in July thanks to new soffit intake and a ridge vent. Sometimes the win hides in the part the street never sees.

A two-storey in St. Vital took a hail hit in late summer. The insurer was ready to approve a partial replacement on the west slope only. We lifted a few shingles on the south slope, found fractures along the nail-line, and documented it. That changed the claim from partial to full. We upgraded to an impact-resistant shingle, added two more intake vents after finding the soffits choked with insulation, and hand-sealed caps as the temperature dipped in October. That roof has sailed through two hailstorms since. The lesson was not about fighting an adjuster; it was about doing the unglamorous checks that make the right argument obvious.

Where winnipeg roofing earns its reputation

People sometimes treat roofing as a commodity until a January thaw decides to run a lab test on their installer’s decisions. The companies that get called back year after year in this city are the ones that obsess over eave protection, flash every joint like water is hunting them, and talk honestly about timing and wind. If you hear a bid that is much lower than the pack, ask which details are missing. If you hear a bid that is higher, ask what it protects that the others ignore.

Your first roof replacement in Winnipeg does not have to be dramatic. It should be a week of crisp logistics, a day or two of controlled noise, a clean driveway, and a package of photos that makes you feel like you bought something solid. Watch the forecast, ask for the details that keep water moving out and air moving through, and

work with a crew proud enough to explain their craft. Come the first melt, you will hear nothing but drip, drip, drip off the eaves, and that is the sound of a job done right.

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