If you have lived through a Winnipeg winter, you know the roof takes a beating. Freeze, thaw, freeze again, then a March chinook that sends meltwater under the shingle tabs like a pickpocket. April brings wind that treats shingles like playing cards. July bakes the asphalt until it softens, and sudden prairie downpours test every seam and flashing. A typical roof here sees more stress in five years than some coastal roofs get in a decade. That is why the contractor you choose matters as much as the shingle on the pallet.

I have walked more Winnipeg roofs than I can count, from little wartime bungalows in Transcona to sprawling two-storeys in Charleswood and low-slope additions in St. Vital. The good ones share a few traits: tidy sites, straight lines, dry attics, and clients who still wave when you drive by a year later. The bad jobs fail the eye test before they fail the rain test. You are not buying shingles, you are buying judgment. These twelve questions help you tell the difference.

1) Are you local, insured, and registered to work in Winnipeg?

Start with basics you can verify. Winnipeg does not require a special roofing trade ticket, but a legitimate company will have a City of Winnipeg business licence if required by the scope of work, carry Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba coverage, and hold liability insurance that actually covers roofing operations, not just general contracting. Ask for certificates sent directly from the insurer. Two million dollars in liability is a common floor, five million is better for multi-storey work or if skylights and solar arrays are involved. A company with a real address you can find on a map and a Manitoba phone number that answers during business hours is easier to hold accountable when a spring melt tests the work.

Here is a small rule of thumb: if they hesitate to email proof of WCB clearance and insurance within a day, keep looking. This is paperwork they use weekly.

2) Who does the work, and how many roofs has that crew built?

You do not just hire a brand name. You hire the five to eight people who are on your roof at 7 a.m. On tear-off day. Ask for the crew lead’s name, how long they have been with the company, and whether subcontractors will be on site. Subcrews can be fine, many excellent crews operate that way, but you want to know who is swinging the hammers. A company that assigns the same lead to your estimate, pre-start walkthrough, and job day has far fewer handoff mistakes.

The difference **local roofing Winnipeg** shows in small ways. An experienced lead sets lines true, insists on new step flashing with every re-shingle, and checks slope transitions before the underlayment goes down. A green crew may skip the tedious items that keep water out in February, not in August. You can hear experience in how they answer: they talk first about prep and details, not brand names and colours.

3) What roof system are you proposing for our pitch, and why?

Winnipeg roofs range from steep gables to dead-flat additions. Asphalt shingles dominate on any slope 4:12 and up, with architectural laminates faring best in our wind. On 2:12 to 3:12 pitches, shingling can work only if the underlayment is upgraded to a full-coverage ice and water membrane or a hybrid SBS underlayment, with carefully lapped courses. Below 2:12, you want a membrane system, not shingles. Think SBS-modified bitumen, TPO, or EPDM, each with different pros and cons.

Push the contractor to talk slope first, brand second. A credible answer sounds like this: your front half is 6:12, so a high-wind laminated shingle with six nails and starter strips at rakes will do well. The back addition is 2.5:12, so we will run full-coverage ice and water shield and consider a low-slope shingle detail approved by the manufacturer. Or, better, ***winnipeg roofing*** we recommend a torch-applied mod-bit on the addition and we will flash the transition with a raised curb. When a roofer lumps all slopes into one solution, they are designing for speed, not Winnipeg weather.



4) What exactly is your underlayment and ice dam strategy?

Our climate punishes shortcuts at the eaves. Ice dams happen when attic heat melts snow, meltwater runs to the cold edge, refreezes, then backs up under shingles. A proper assembly interrupts that journey. Ask how far the ice and water shield extends past the warm wall line. A typical answer is 24 inches past the interior warm wall, which often means two full courses at the eave and at least one course in valleys. For wide overhangs or cathedral ceilings, three or four courses are safer. Valleys should be protected with either open metal with ice and water beneath, or closed-cut with the membrane carried high. The decision should match the roof’s geometry and snow loads.

Standard felt underlayment has its place on dry August days, but synthetic underlayment handles our surprise squalls and offers better tear resistance in prairie wind. Ask for the manufacturer and product name. If the plan is just one strip of peel-and-stick along the gutter and paper everywhere else, expect to revisit the conversation after your first -25 snap.

5) Tell me about ventilation and the attic

Ventilation and insulation are not nice-to-haves in Winnipeg. They are the engine and muffler of roof health. The Manitoba Building Code uses a 1:300 ratio as a general target, meaning one square foot of net free vent area for every 300 square feet of insulated ceiling, balanced between intake at the soffits and exhaust at the ridge or high vents. Many older homes have blocked or nonexistent soffits, compact ducts that leak warm air, and low-slope back halves that cook in summer and frost in winter.

A good roofer pops their head into your attic before quoting. They look for frost on nails, matted insulation, disconnected bath fans, and blackened sheathing from past condensation. If they do not ask for attic access, they are estimating only the outside face. Venting is not a product decision, it is a layout decision. Ridge vents work well on long, clean ridges. Louver vents can solve chopped-up roof lines. In homes with limited soffit intake, a retrofit of proper baffles and soffit cuts may do more for your shingles’ lifespan than any upgrade to a premium laminate.

6) How do you approach flashing, especially where roofs meet walls and chimneys?

Water does not respect good looks. It respects proper flashing. Step flashing belongs where shingles meet a wall, one piece per shingle course, tucked under the siding or counterflashed with metal that goes into a reglet on masonry. Reusing old flashing is a gambler’s move in this climate. Ask whether they remove and replace the step flashing, how they will deal with stucco returns, and what their plan is for chimneys. Caulk is not a plan. Metal that goes into the mortar joint is.

Valleys need clarity too. Woven valleys look tidy in brochures but can trap snow. Open metal valleys shed snow and slush fast, which helps when a January thaw sends heavy meltwater down the center. If the contractor has a single “we always do it this way” answer for every detail, keep asking until you hear how they react to oddball cases, such as that low-slope dormer tying into a tall stucco wall that faces west wind.

7) What is included in tear-off, deck prep, and clean-up?

The fastest way to ruin a new roof is to install it over a spongy or rotted deck. Tear-off should go down to bare wood with a full inspection. Expect them to find and replace bad sections with plywood of matching thickness. Believable quotes include a per-sheet price for decking replacement, such as a fixed amount for 3/8 or 1/2 inch plywood, and a plan for using H-clips if required. You should also hear about drip edge at eaves and rakes, starter courses at eaves and rakes, and how they will handle existing vents and flues.

Site management matters more than people think. Where will the bin sit, and will it block your neighbor’s parking? How do they protect your stucco and windows during tear-off? Ask if they run a magnetic sweep daily, not just at the end. I still remember pulling 80 nails from a lawn in River Heights after a long day, then watching a child run barefoot across that same patch after dinner. You do not forget why magnets matter.

8) Which products are you specifying, and do the warranties have teeth?

Brand worship is a distraction, yet the exact products do matter. Architectural shingles with a high-wind nailing spec do better here. Many premium models carry wind warranties up to 130 mph, roughly 209 km/h, when installed with six nails and manufacturer-approved starter strips at the rakes. Ask for the shingle model, the underlayment brand, the ice and water shield brand, and the ventilation system. Then ask whether the crew is credentialed with that manufacturer, which can extend warranty coverage on workmanship.

Warranties come in flavors. A lifetime limited shingle warranty usually pro-rates after a period, sometimes after 10 years. Workmanship warranties from the contractor can range from 2 to 10 years. Five is a common and realistic promise. Transferability matters if you plan to sell. Also ask what is excluded, like storm damage or improper ventilation. A contractor who explains limitations clearly is doing you a favor. Vague guarantees that promise the moon tend to crater when you need help.

9) How do you schedule around Winnipeg weather, and what is your plan if it turns on us?

Our roofing season is short. Prime time runs May through October, with shoulder-season work possible on dry, sunny November days. Shingles rely on a self-sealing strip that bonds in warmth. Below roughly 10 C, that strip may not activate, so hand-sealing or cold-weather adhesives become necessary. Ask how they handle spring rain or a September cold snap. Do they stage work to avoid leaving valleys open overnight? Do they carry breathable tarps and clamp them if the forecast shifts?

I look for specifics. “We tear off only what we can dry-in that day.” “We check the radar hourly and stop at noon if the front moves faster.” “Below 10 degrees, we hand-tab the leading edge and advise clients that full bond may take a sunny spell.” Anyone who shrugs at weather is either very brave or not from here.

10) What will this cost, and how are payments structured?

Winnipeg roofing prices swing with material choice, slope, height, access, and hidden deck repairs. For an average 1,500 to 2,000 square foot home with a conventional 6:12 pitch, full tear-off, ice and water at eaves and valleys, new synthetic underlayment, drip edges, and standard vents, a ballpark range is sensible rather than a hard promise. Expect quotes to reflect dump fees, fuel, and the season’s supply pressures. A bid that lands miles below others likely leaves something out.

Payment terms tell you a lot. A modest deposit is common to secure materials and a spot on the calendar. Mid-payments tied to milestones can be fine on larger jobs. Avoid paying in full before completion and cleanup. Ask about holdback practices. Many projects in Manitoba retain a 7 to 10 percent holdback for a period after completion to manage lien risk, with release governed by applicable legislation and contract terms. Also ask how change orders are handled if decking surprises pop up. The calmest final invoices are the ones that mirror a clear, written scope with unit prices for variables.

11) Can I see similar jobs, talk to recent clients, and drive by finished roofs?

Pretty photos help, but nothing beats seeing three roofs the contractor finished in your part of town within the last two years. Drive by on a windy day and look at the lines. Are the ridge caps straight, or do they wander? Do the valleys look tight and centered? If the homeowners agree, a short call tells you how the crew treated the property, whether the schedule held, and how they handled the small hiccups that happen on every project.

I keep a mental catalogue of roofs I like to show clients because they teach without words. The Fort Garry bungalow where we replaced two sheets of spongy deck over the bath fan and stopped the frost that had plagued them for five winters. The North Kildonan two-storey where we rebuilt a chimney saddle and flashed it with new counter into the brick, saving a wall that the previous roofer had slathered with caulk. Good contractors do not fear comparison. They encourage it.

12) What happens after the last shingle goes on?

The best time to talk service is before you need it. Ask how the contractor handles punch lists, what their timeline is for small adjustments, and who answers the phone next spring if you see a mysterious drip or a lifted cap after a storm. Clarify whether they register manufacturer warranties on your behalf and leave you all product labels and batch codes. Good outfits keep digital photo logs of underlayment, ice and water coverage, and flashing details. Those photos are gold if a manufacturer ever wants proof of proper installation.

You should also hear a simple maintenance plan. Keep eavestroughs clear, especially under big maples that jam downspouts in September. Check the roof from the ground after major wind events. Cut back branches that scrape shingles. Do not pressure wash asphalt shingles. A roof is not a set-and-forget item in this climate, and a contractor who says so is treating you like a grown-up, which is a compliment.

Why these questions work in Winnipeg

Every market has its quirks. Ours is a textbook case of temperature extremes plus wind. Materials expand and contract hard. Nails back themselves out of thin decking if the installer misses rafters or runs the gun too hot. The sun bakes south faces until the granules loosen, and then a north wind drives snow sideways under a lifted corner by the chimney. A contractor who has learned these lessons on the job starts design at the edges and penetrations, not the catalog.

I once inspected two houses on the same block after a wicked October blow. House A lost a neat row of shingles along the rake because the installer skipped starter strips at the gable edge. House B, same exposure, sat tight because the starter course had adhesive at the rake and the nails were placed right of the seal line with six to a shingle. A five dollar roll of starter and two minutes of training made the difference between an insurance call and a quiet afternoon.

The Winnipeg roofing conversation you want to hear

Strong answers share a tone. They are specific without being glib, and they admit trade-offs. For example, a contractor might say, we can reflash that stucco sidewall properly if we cut a reglet and counterflash, which adds time and a bit of dust, or we can try to tuck step flashing up behind the stucco return and seal the face, which costs less but may not last as long under driven rain. My bias leans to the first approach on west faces because the wind finds every weakness by November. That kind of answer respects your budget and the physics of your house.

You also want a contractor who talks cleanup like a fanatic. Good roofing is loud, dusty, and short. The best day ends with a quiet yard. Tarps gone, bin swapped or removed, shrubs brushed off, magnets walking the grass in two directions, and a foreman walking you around the house with a finger on the details. The roof should look like it grew there, not like it crash landed.

Documents worth asking for

- Certificate of insurance, listing roofing operations, sent direct from the broker
- WCB clearance letter for Manitoba, current to the job date
- Written scope with product names, quantities, and unit prices for deck repairs
- Copy of business licence if applicable, and any manufacturer credential or warranty enrollment
- A simple site plan showing bin location, material drop, and protection plan

Red flags that save you time

- They will not go in the attic, even when access is easy
- “We can reuse the flashing” with no inspection or mention of step flashing
- A price far below three comparable quotes, with vague material descriptions
- No ice and water shield plan beyond a single eave strip, especially on low slopes

- Full payment demanded up front or only cash accepted

A few numbers to keep in mind

Crews in Winnipeg often run five to eight installers on a typical detached home. Tear-off and dry-in on a straightforward 1,600 square foot roof can be done in a day if the weather holds, with finishing and cleanup the following day. Complex roofs and deck repairs add time. Spring and fall are busy, so a two to eight week lead time is normal. If you need it done before your daughter’s grad party in June, book while there is still snow on the barbecue.

Expect to see six nails per shingle on most architectural products to meet wind warranty specs. Drip edge should run at both eaves and rakes. Ice and water shield should extend past the interior warm wall at eaves, commonly two courses, and line valleys full length. Ventilation should balance intake and exhaust, with real intake at the soffit. Bath fans should vent outside, never into the attic, and dryer vents should not terminate under low-slope additions where they steam up the deck.

Special cases worth discussing before anyone climbs a ladder

Low-slope additions on older bungalows are everywhere in Winnipeg. If a contractor proposes shingles on anything near 2:12 without a manufacturer-approved low-slope detail and full-coverage membrane beneath, press pause. Flat roofs deserve their own conversation about SBS-modified bitumen and proper terminations at parapets. Skylights can be friend or foe. New Velux units with integral flashing kits perform well when installed per the book, but putting new shingles around a 25-year-old skylight is an invitation to call-backs.

If you have stucco that runs tight to the roof, budget time to cut it back properly and install real counterflashing. If a chimney is crumbling, a brick mason may need to rebuild the top courses before the roofer can flash it right. Interdisciplinary jobs save you money later, even if they cost a little more now.

One last thought about colour and curb appeal

It is easy to spend so much energy on membranes and vents that you forget you also have to live with the look. Winnipeg’s light has a cool tone much of the year, which makes very dark roofs read even darker against snow and low skies. Mid-tone charcoal and weathered wood colours hide dust and pollen, while pitch-black can show every airborne fluff in April. Ask to see full shingles in daylight, not just a tiny swatch. Look at them against your brick or siding. A roof that disappears in a good way helps resale, and it does not cost a dollar more to choose wisely.

Bringing it together

Choosing a winnipeg roofing contractor is part detective work, part design, part trust. These twelve questions help you sort puffery from craft. Keep the conversation focused on your roof’s shape, your attic’s health, our weather, and the crew who will be on your ridge at sunrise. Good roofers speak that language fluently, and they are not shy about their answers.

When you hear specifics about membrane at the eaves, balanced ventilation, new step flashing under the siding, a bin placed where your neighbor will not fume, and a magnet sweep done twice, you are on the right track. When the estimate spells out the products by name and the warranty by term, better still. And when the person shaking your hand can point to three roofs within five blocks that still look crisp after two winters, you can stop shopping and start scheduling. Your shingles will thank you in February. Your ceiling will thank you even more.

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