

The HHHBA Presents
Renovation MythBUSTED: No Decent Contractors

HAMILTON-February 5th, 2013- Recently, the Hamilton-Halton Home Builders` Association has received an outpouring of grievances from homeowners who have suffered negative experiences with substandard and fraudulent contractors who were not members of our Association. In an attempt to help educate consumers, the HHHBA will be issuing a series of articles based on 'Renovation Myths'. This week's article focuses on busting the myth that it is difficult to find a good contractor. Hiring an honest, respectable contractor may seem like a daunting task, but it is certainly achievable if you follow these steps.

First, you'll want to **do your research**. Whether you have a big project or a small one, you want to be sure that your hard earned money isn't going to be wasted on a bad contractor who wants to rip you off. Get recommendations from people you trust or trusted industry sources like Renomark.ca and follow up with phone interviews.

Next, compile a list of at least three contractors who have good references and meet in person to discuss the details of your specific project and their quote. Once you have your top three contractors, do a background check with the City of Hamilton to ensure they are licensed in the city. You can call the Building Department at (905)-546-2782 and press '3' for licensing. Additional resources to help you find trustworthy contractors include the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.org) and The Ontario Consumer Beware List (<http://www.consumerbeware.mgs.gov.on.ca/catsct/start.do>).

Picking your top contractor should not be based solely on price. Beware of contractors who offer a low-ball bid or cash deals. They are often the ones who do shoddy work, cut corners, or worse, run off with your money! Once you have a legitimate contractor who you trust, work with them to make a payment schedule and contract for the work to be done. Both these documents are extremely important and should be as detailed as possible. If your contractor asks for 50 percent upfront, this should alert you to the fact that they probably don't have the financial standing to back your project.

The most important advice we can give to everyone is to make sure to have a detailed contract before giving any money to your contractor. Your contract agreement should detail every important step of the project including, payment schedule, proof of liability insurance and worker's compensation payments, a start date and projected completion date, specific materials and products to be used, and a requirement that the contractor obtain lien releases (which protect you if he doesn't pay his bills) from all subcontractors and suppliers.

The HHHBA can help you find the right contractor. As an Association we stand behind RenoMark, a symbol that identifies those renovation contractors who have agreed to the HHHBA Code of Ethics as well as a renovation specific Code of Conduct. RenoMark members are always legitimate, licenced business owners who provide two-year warranties on all labour. Members will always provide their clients with a written agreement, a fair and honest quote, along with reliable start and finish dates. RenoMark makes finding a professional contractor easy because illegitimate and dishonest contractors are never permitted to become members.

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