

HIRING A CONTRACTOR



Most homeowners will eventually need to hire a contractor or renovator when they are thinking of a large or complicated renovation. CMHC wants to help you make sure your next project is done right and that you get what you pay for.

Who to Hire?

When choosing a contractor, you should hire someone who has experience with projects similar to yours. For large renovation projects, you can hire a renovator to take charge of the whole job. You may also need to hire an architect, architectural technologist or a designer to prepare your project plans.

Finding a Contractor

You should get estimates from several different contractors. A good source for referrals may be a family member, friend or neighbour who has had similar work completed. Other sources include local homebuilders, renovator associations, local building supply stores and contractor websites on the Internet.

Choosing a Contractor

You want a contractor who will explain what's going on as the project progresses, discuss problems and work with you to make the final result as good as it can be.

Remember that a good contractor will have satisfied customers. A contractor should have references from at least three previous clients who have had similar work done. You should contact these references and ask about their experience.

Getting Estimates or Proposals

Three estimates will usually give you the information you need to make a decision. The estimate should include everything that the contractor will do to complete the job. You should assume that anything not listed is not included in the price. Make sure you have extra money in your budget to cover unexpected costs.

Look for a fair price. Factor in any differences in what the contractors are offering and the skills they bring to the job.

Get It In Writing — The Contract

Contractors who don't have an address, don't want a written contract and offer discounts if you pay cash should be avoided. For your own protection and peace of mind, it's best to always have a written contract, even if it is a small job.

Ensure The Contractor Has Insurance

Make sure the contractor has workers' compensation and third-party liability insurance for all the people who will be working on the renovation and for the damage they may cause. Don't accept or assume any liability for the contractor or trades people.

Working With Your Contractor

Talk often with the contractor so you know what's going on and what might be needed from you. Good communication can help settle disagreements between you and your contractor.

Consumer Protection Laws

Provincial and territorial consumer affairs or consumer relations departments usually administer consumer protection laws. They can help you solve problems between you and your contractor. The Better Business Bureau will also handle consumer complaints and work through disputes to try and get a fair settlement.

If legal action is necessary, you may be able to take the contractor to small claims court.

Completion Certificate

Don't sign a certificate of completion until you have thoroughly inspected the work. If the contractor has to return later to finish a few minor details, you should note this, and if appropriate, hold back a portion of the payment to cover the work that still has to be finished.

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