

# Dealing with the contractors

To avoid problems of inadequate workmanship or unfinished jobs, take the following steps in the contracting process.

## 1. Develop a short list of potential contractors.

You may know of a suitable contractor by reputation or a previous job but unless you are completely comfortable with the costs and workmanship, it's usually wise to consider several contractors. Ask your family, friends and neighbours to recommend a company or individual and consult the yellow pages and your local newspaper.

One factor to consider when making your short list is whether the contractor is registered with the Energy Conservation Contractors Warranty Corporation, which guarantees that conservation-related work will be completed to your satisfaction. The corporation's toll-free number is 1-800-263-5974.

You should also ask prospective contractors for references and run a quick check with the local Better Business Bureau or consumer protection agency.

## 2. Meet with contractors

To ensure a range of opinions and cost estimates, arrange for prospective contractors to visit your home to appraise the job and discuss the various options for proceeding. Contractors should provide you with a written estimate detailing the work to be undertaken, material and labour costs, additional costs or conditions and a mutually satisfactory method of payment. The estimate should be signed and dated by the contractor *but you are not required to sign anything at this point.*

## 3. Carefully evaluate each estimate.

Consider the quality of service and materials offered by contractors and their ability to complete the work according to your needs. Price is an important consideration but avoid hiring an inexperienced contractor simply to save yourself a few dollars. It may end up costing you in the long run.

## 4. Ask for a written contract.

Once you have made your choice, ask for a written contract incorporating the details of the estimate. A clause should be included outlining the liability insurance carried by the contractor to protect you from legal action if an injury occurs on your property while the work is in progress. As well, responsibility for incidental damage, clean-up, corrective action for problems caused by the work, and repairs required after the work is completed should be stipulated in the contract.

Don't sign the contract until you

have read it carefully and understand its terms and conditions. All costs and other details should correspond with the contractor's estimate. When you are satisfied that this is the case, sign the contract and retain a copy for your own records and protection.

## 5. Check the work.

Upon completion of the job, ask the contractor to describe exactly what has been done. Check all of

the work carefully to ensure it is completed to your satisfaction before making final payment. Each province has legislation that helps limit your liability should the contractor neglect to pay suppliers, employees or sub-contractors. If you are not satisfied with the work and your contractor is registered with the Energy Conservation Contractors Warranty Corporation, contact the corporation immediately.



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