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Written contract vital to paving projects

When having a driveway paved, get all details of the job carved in stone, then keep a close eye on the work, consumer advisers warn.

A written contract is considered vital for any renovation project. Paving jobs alone spark about 200 complaints to the Ontario government every year.

Unethical companies who undercut the competition — charging really low prices, but doing lousy work — were the worst culprits, say representatives of the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial

Relations (MCCR).

They advise that the consumer shop around, but don't pick a contractor based on a low price alone.

Consumers often have trouble with driveway paving jobs because they don't understand what they need, what they're buying or whether they were given what was promised.

Different types of work will be required, depending on the condition of the driveway. The job can vary from a simple resurfacing to complete excavation and replace-

ment of the existing pavement.

The quantities of stone and other materials used is crucial, say the ministry experts and this is where a lot of disreputable companies rip people off.

By following five basic rules, consumers can avoid scams, misunderstandings and financial losses. The ministry has produced a detailed guide to driveway paving, providing in-depth information about such things as types of material commonly used, necessary depths, and the different kinds of work involved.

According to the guide, "a six-inch base of stone, topped with two inches of asphalt meets most needs." That "two inches" represents the depth once the asphalt has been compacted. Get three written estimates.

After becoming familiar with materials and terminology used in the paving industry, call at least two contractors for estimates. Be sure each quote is based on the same specifications. Be suspicious of extremely low prices. Get recommendations or references.

Never hire a contractor without talking to at least one recent customer. Read the contract carefully.

It must include the name and address of both the paving company and the customer. Complete details about the job must be listed, including the type of work to be done and driveway dimensions. Depths and qualities of materials to be supplied should also be set out.

A start and completion date should be in the contract and deposits should be kept to a maximum of 10 per cent, experts advise. Keep an eye on work in progress.

Don't get in the way, but be sure the contract is being followed.

According to the ministry, a properly-paved driveway should have a lifespan of at least 10 years.

Industry representatives who helped prepare the paving brochure say most defects show up during the first 12 months and the standard one-year warranty is, therefore, sufficient.

Companies are obliged to fulfill all the provisions of their warranties, so get details in writing. But remember, if the contractor goes out of business, so does the warranty.

Consumers who feel they have been unfairly treated by a paving contractor can contact the nearest Consumer Services Bureau of the ministry for help.

Copies of the paving brochure are available from the Consumer Information Centre at 555 Yonge St., Toronto, Ontario M7A 2H6, (416) 963-1111.

Miller elected to OREA board

King City real estate broker Margaret Miller was elected as a regional director of the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) at its annual meeting March 7.

She will represent the areas of Brampton, Mississauga, Oakville-Milton, Oshawa and York Region on OREA's board of directors.

Active in the real estate profession for 15 years, Ms. Miller is an associate broker and vice president of Lorimer Realty Services Ltd. in King City. She is a member and a past president of the York Region Real Estate Board and belongs to the Toronto Real Estate Board as well. She is a Fellow of the Real Estate Institute of Canada.

She has served on OREA's MLS task force.

The Ontario Real Estate Association represents 45,000 brokers and salespeople and 48 local real estate boards throughout the province. OREA provides all real estate licensing courses in Ontario, and members may use the trademark "Realtor," denoting real estate professionals who subscribe to a high standard of ethics and service.



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NEW

This nearly new brick home features bright, spacious rooms, parquet and ceramic flooring and neutral decor. Good outbuildings, fenced pastures and a pond, all just minutes from town. Call Heather (Whiting) Scotland**. 853-2086. RMAC92-45

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