

Warm weather brings out need to renovate for some

If bright summer sunshine is a constant reminder your kitchen or rec room looks drab and gloomy, you may be planning to renovate. Whether you plan to add a small study or a second storey, unless you're a qualified do-it-yourselfer you'll need the services of a construction company or contractor.

Ontario's Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relation offers some tips

on choosing and contracting a supplier who can help your renovation project turn out terrific.

The first step is to decide the scope of the project and to determine the exact changes you want to make.

Visits to local home shows and tours of a couple of new home models can give you some ideas. Looking at remodelling magazines and newspaper supplements, and talking to

neighbours and friends will help you decide on the features you want.

"Having a clear picture of how you want the completed project to look is vital to making a success of your renovation," says Marilyn Gurevsky, a manager with the ministry's Consumer Affairs Branch. "If it's a major project, call in an architect or engineer to provide you with expert advice before you start.

Changing your mind halfway through the renovation will only result in added costs and frustrations."

Once you have a complete plan, you're ready to talk to some contractors:

- Make a list of contractors through recommendations from friends and neighbours.

- Look at the past work of contractors you may be in-

terested in hiring.

- Check to make certain which building permits you will need.

- Interview a few of the most promising contractors on your list.

- Ask for written quotes from a few companies.

Once you've chosen a contractor, the written agreement should be drawn up. A handshake is never

enough.

A down payment is usually made when the contract is signed or the work starts. Then payments generally follow the completion of each major stage of the work. Most renovation firms ask for payment up front for custom-made fixtures or major items they may buy on behalf of the customer.



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