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# Hiring a Renovator? – Do Your Homework

The Ontario Home Builders' Association welcomes the announcement by the Harper government to provide tax incentives to Canadians performing home renovation projects. However OHBA President Frank Giannone cautions home owners to do their homework before they hire a renovator.

"Too often, homeowners leap into agreements with unprofessional renovators without knowing anything about the company or quality of work they perform," says Giannone. "We are encouraged by the announcement in the 2009 federal budget to help boost consumer confidence, but homeowners need to interview professional renovators and make informed decisions before they jump into anything too quickly."

OHBA Renovators' Council Chair Michael Martin of Michael J. Martin Luxury Renovations in Ottawa, recommends the following tips when hiring a renovator:

- Ask for the company's history: how long have they been in business; how many projects do they do a year; what types of projects do they specialize in?
- Ask for and check references. It's one thing to ask for a list of references, but if you don't follow through

and ask the reference's experience with the contractor, you are taking a big leap of faith that they will be right for you. Find out from the reference if you can visit their home to see the work that was done;

- Make sure the level of quality of the renovator is up to your expectations and ask about their warranty;
- Check to see if the renovator is a member of a professional organization like your local Home Builders' Association, and if applicable in your area, Renomark™. Visit www.renomark.ca for more information on this professional designation program;
- DO NOT hire a contractor for cash or without a contract. Long gone are the days when you can seal a deal with a handshake. Protect yourself and your investment with an agreement on paper stating what work is to be done; an agreed upon completion date; and an amount; and be sure to have two signatures and a witness. A contract does not have to be a fancy document drafted by lawyers to be an effective means of protection. It's unlikely Mike Holmes is going to come to your rescue if you get into trouble;
- Beware of the door-to-door salesman offering to replace your windows or roof. This is one of the oldest

scams running and unfortunately these characters tend to prey on seniors or those most vulnerable;

- Keep receipts or any paperwork associated with your renovation. You may be required to produce documentation to obtain your tax credit;
- Most renovations require a building permit. Don't cheap out. When in doubt, check with your local municipality. Building permits also come with inspections from your local municipal building inspector. If you are not comfortable inspecting your own renovation, you may want to consider hiring a certified home inspector to assist you.

Michael Martin adds, "there has never been a better time to renovate your home. Interest rates are at an all-time low and now with the federal government's announcement for tax credits for eligible home renovations you can finally get going on that project you've been putting off."

The Ontario Home Builders' Association is the voice of the residential construction industry in Ontario representing 4,200 member companies organized into 29 local associations across the province. The industry contributes over \$36 billion dollars to Ontario's economy, employing over 325,000 people across the province.

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