

Northern Developments



By Maurice Fenelon
Northern Development Officer
Home improvements sparked about 10 per cent of all the complaints lodged with the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations last year.

More than 1,100 consumers reported problems with home repairs or renovations. Paving, general interior renovations and work on windows, doors and siding were behind the largest number of request for government help. Painter's customers lodged the fewest complaints, with a total of only 19.

Misunderstandings cause the majority of problems. Take the time to go over every detail of a job before signing the contract.

Make sure both you and the contractor understand exactly what work is to be done, with what materials, then get it all in writing along with the costs.

Don't assume anything. If you want the porch built of the best wood or expect oil-based paint to be used on the new addition, put it in the job specifications in writing. Think details and you'll avoid a lot of problems.

It is vital to get at least three quotes on any job. Try to start with a selection of reputable contractors or tradespeople who have been recommended by friends. Provide each with a list of required work, show them the site and walk through the project with them.

Discuss alternatives for materials and construction methods.

but don't get confused. Be sure all quotes are based on exactly the same specifications.

It is helpful to have done a bit of research through a library or knowledgeable acquaintance, before calling for estimates.

Along with technical details, contracts should set out acceptable work hours. Start and finish dates are also important. Delayed completions are a common source of consumer complaints. This problem can sometimes be avoided by adding a contract clause setting out a financial penalty for each day of delay beyond the completion date.

Contracts for large jobs may involve installment or "progress" payments to be made as each phase of work is completed. A schedule of payments should be set out in writing.

To obtain protection under the law, consumers are required to hold back 10 per cent of each progress payment or the total cost of the contract for 45 days following completion. This ensures the homeowner cannot be held financially responsible if suppliers or subcontractors are not paid.

Should a consumer fail to pay the contractor, a lien can be placed on the property, creating serious headaches if the house is put up for sale.

It is a mistake to withhold payments in an attempt to settle contract disputes. It is possible to make payments into the courts to be held while a resolution is

sought. In this situation, the builder could not put a lien on the property.

Although the judicial system - small claims court in particular - provides recourse for consumers involved in disputes, most disagreements can be settled through discussion and compromise.

If this fails or you feel laws have been broken, send details of the complaint in writing to the nearest Consumer Services Bureau of the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations or the office of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

Ontario consumers have a legal right to fair and honest treatment. It is against the law for a company to make false or misleading statements.

The Law Society of Upper Canada provides information about renovations through its "Dial A Law" phone-in system. In area code 807, ask your operator for Zenith 99210. The applicable Dial A Law recordings are Home Repair Contractors (tape 90) and Builders' Lien (tape 700).

Additional information is also available at the office of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, 2 Stevens Avenue, Box 280, Marathon, Ontario - call 229-1153. For areas outside of Marathon ask your operator for Zenith 33160.

Hazardous waste disposal

Environmental problems facing Canadians today are complex and frightening.

Acid rain, pollution of lakes and rivers, "holes" in the ozone layer, and the global warming have become everyday news items. People across the country are concerned, and are asking "What can I do?"

As consumers we need to accept responsibility for the environmental effects of the manufacture, use and disposal of the products we use. We can all make a difference.

Individuals can make decisions and take action to protect the environment. "Even everyday household cleaning can be more environmentally sensitive," says Julia Langer, Executive Director of the national environmental group Friends of the Earth.

"Replacing a shopping cart full of harsh cleaning products with a few environmentally sensitive alternatives is worth a pound of cure," and can save you money too.

An average of eight different kinds of products are used in our bathrooms, including drain cleaner, scouring powder, mould and mildew killer, air freshener, mirror and glass cleaner, toilet bowl cleaner, floor cleaner, and disinfectant.

Companies play on our fear of germs. They try to convince consumers that only strong cleaners are effective, and that a different cleaning product is needed for every household chore.

There are some simple alternatives to the wide variety of packaged products. Baking soda and white vinegar form the backbone

of the environmentally friendly cleaners, and along with borax, washing soda and lemon juice, can replace over 20 different household cleaning products.

An excellent washing solution for floors, walls, and even woodwork can be made with three tablespoons of washing soda in about four cups of warm water. A half-and-half solution of white vinegar and water is also effective and doesn't need to be rinsed.

Grease or scuff marks are easily removed with a damp sponge sprinkled with baking soda. Baking soda is an excellent, non-toxic scouring powder for sinks, toilet bowls, tubs and counters. It doesn't scratch surfaces, and deodorizes as well.

Mould and mildew on tile grouting don't require highly reactive cleaners. White vinegar on a cloth or old toothbrush is just as effective. Even disinfection can become more environ-

mentally friendly and meet hospital standards when a solution of 1/2 cup of borax mixed with four cups of hot water is used.

A simple herbal basket of dried rose petals, peppermint, or cloves will effectively replace aerosols or solid air fresheners.

An all-purpose cleaner, vinegar and water, can be used for mirrors, windows and tiles. And instead of paper towels, crumpled newspapers are great for shining surfaces.

The most environmentally friendly solution for unclogging a drain is to use a plunger or a wire "snake".

Another alternative is a mild chemical drain cleaner. Pour 1/4 cup of baking soda down the drain. As quickly as possible, add 1/2 cup of vinegar. The reactive bubbles should be covered tightly with a cloth. A kettle full of boiling water poured directly down the drain finishes the job.

Free Foot Care Clinic

The McCausland Hospital will be offering a Free Foot Care Clinic for
(1) Nail Cutting & Packing
(2) Advice on Foot Care

This procedure will be done at the hospital on Tuesday, June 13, 1989 from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

In the emergency department and at the Schreiber Medical Centre on Wednesday, June 21, 1989 from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

PLEASE PHONE THE HOSPITAL FOR APPOINTMENTS AT
825-3273

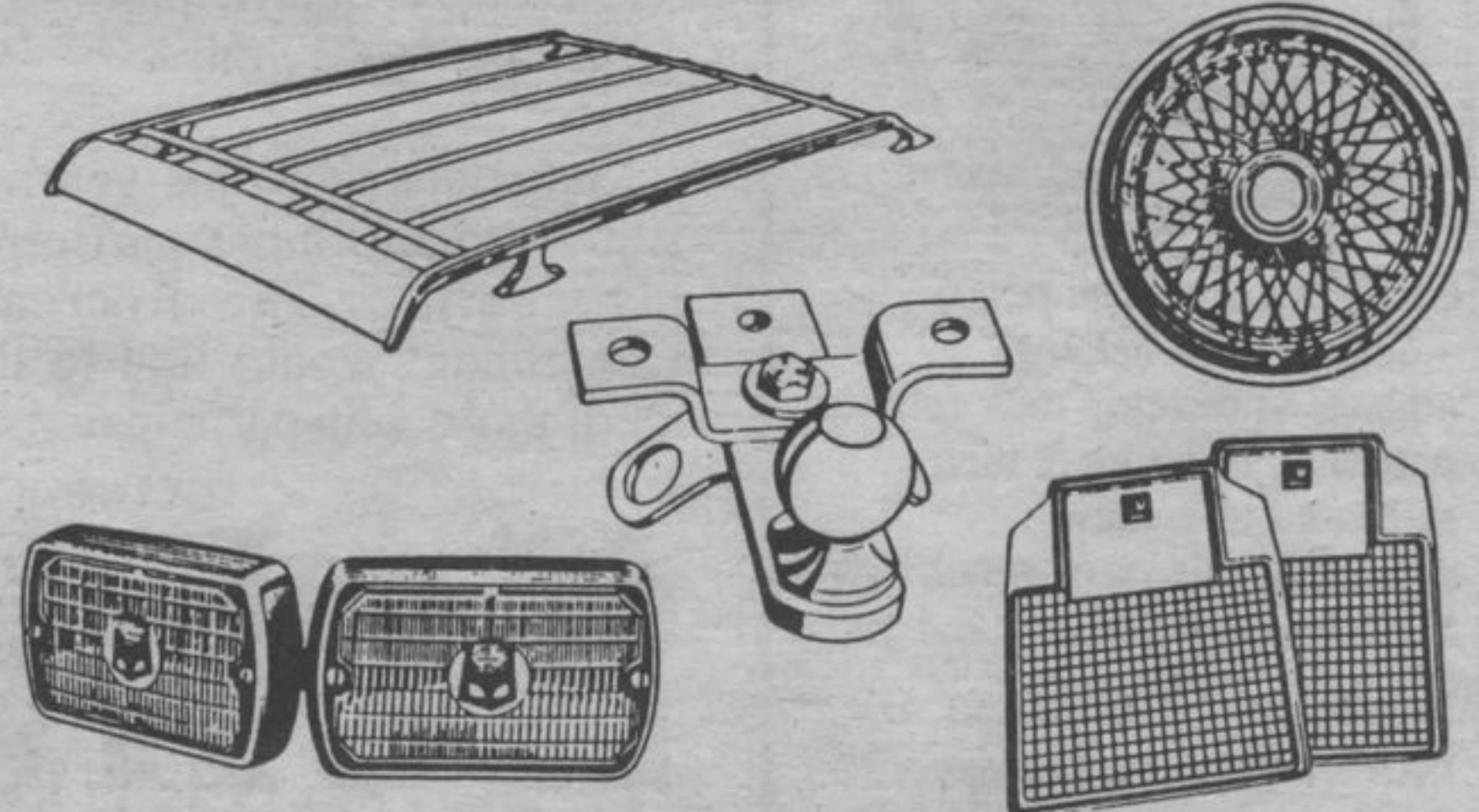
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THE SURVEYS ACT

Take notice that under the provisions of Section 52 of The Surveys Act, Revised Statutes of Ontario 1980, Chapter 493 as amended, a hearing before the Surveyor General will be held in the boardroom at the Terrace Bay District Office, Ministry of Natural Resources, Terrace Bay, Ontario on the 28th day of July, 1989 at 9:00 o'clock local time in the morning to consider the following resurveys shown on plans and field notes of survey:

District of Thunder Bay

1. Northerly Portion of the East Boundary of the Township of Bomby
2. Southerly Portion of the East Boundary of the Township of Brothers
3. Northerly Portion of the East Boundary of the Township of Laberge

Copies of reports, plans and field notes of survey may be examined at the District Manager's Office, Terrace Bay, or at the office of the Surveyor General, Ministry of Natural Resources, 90 Sheppard Avenue East, 4th Floor, NORTH YORK, Ontario.

All parties interested in or affected by the resurveys referred to herein may attend at this hearing and will be heard concerning any objections as to why the surveys as performed should not be confirmed.

And further take notice that if any person or persons do not attend at this hearing the Surveyor General may proceed in their absence and they will not be entitled to any further notice in the proceedings.

Renseignements en français : (807) 825-3205.

Dated the 23rd day of May 1989.

S. B. Panting
Surveyor General