



INVEST IN YOUR NEST

THE FREE PRESS GUIDE TO HOME ENHANCEMENT

KEEP YOUR HOME IMPROVEMENT DREAMS FROM BECOMING A NIGHTMARE

Common sense is all you need to keep your home improvement dreams from becoming a nightmare.

Make sure you know what you ultimately want to achieve. Put your ideas in writing and go over them with the contractor. Based on their experience they will be able to guide you on the correct timing or staging of the renovation. This will save them time and you money. Changing your plans in the middle of the job will often cost you big bucks and delay the completion of the project.

Consider using local contractors and ask for and check their references. Interview at least two contractors and have them prepare estimates for you. How quickly the contractor gets back to you and how detailed their estimate, will often indicate their reliability. Call the Ministry of Government Services (416) 326-8800 to see if there are any complaints against them.

Ask your contractor to use a standard form contract such as those developed by the Canadian Construction Documents Committee. CCDC contracts are designed to fairly balance the interests of the parties.

Make sure that your contract sets out in detail the scope of the work, whether the materials are included and that all the sub-trades are covered. Make sure that the warranties to be provided are spelled out. Ensure that your contract states who will be responsible for obtaining permits and arranging inspections. If it is the contractor's responsibility, ask to see the permits and the inspection reports. Do not allow work to begin until the required permits have been obtained. If you ask for extra work to be done get the contractor to provide an estimate for the work requested.

Do not give deposits of more than 10 per cent of the contract price. Do not pay in cash and always get receipts.

Know your rights under the Business Practices Act and Construction Lien Act, and when in doubt seek advice from a lawyer.

By Sally Harris, Barrister & Solicitor

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