

The Do's and Don'ts of Hiring a Renovator

According to experienced renovators, there are some simple steps you can take to be sure that you are hiring the right renovator for you. These simple do's and don'ts will also set the stage for a smooth renovation experience - the more you know before the work begins, the easier it will be to avoid problems and misunderstandings later.

Do...

Take the time to interview renovators in detail. Make sure that they have the experience and knowledge needed to work on your project, otherwise there is little reason to ask them to bid. Ask about background and experience. Get information about past and current projects. Professional renovators will tell you if your job is outside their area of expertise and recommend someone else for the work.

Ask each renovator to explain what you can expect if you decide to hire their company. Exactly what services do they offer? Who would do the actual work on your home? How would they make sure that your project stays on track? And so on. Voice any concerns you may have about the project and expect clear answers.

Provide all renovators with the same detailed information when you ask for bids; then compare bids carefully. The price on the bottom line tells only part of the story. Check the description of the job, material and product specifications, payment milestones and the construction schedule. If the renovators don't give you enough details, ask them to re-do their estimate. It's the only way you will be able to compare bids and determine exactly what you are buying.

Check credentials. Does the renovator have the liability insurance and workers' compensation coverage for anyone working on your project? You need to be protected in case of accidents or injuries related to your renovation. Typically, fly-by-nighters and underground operators don't have insurance, and a homeowner could be held liable if something goes wrong. And of course, check references of past and current clients.

Make sure you understand the financial arrangements before you sign a contract - what's included in the price and what's not; how allowances work; payment milestones, including deposits; change orders and

how they might affect the budget; and lien holdbacks. On a large renovation, you should expect regular progress reports including budget reviews.

Don't...

Don't ever hire someone who will not give you references, proof of insurance or a written contract, and don't get seduced by a cash deal under the table. Without a written contract, you will have little or no legal recourse if the renovator

doesn't live up to promises.

Don't automatically go for the lowest price when comparing bids - it could turn out to be more costly in the long run. Instead, consider the overall value of each renovator's bid.

Don't hire a renovator on the spur of the moment, because they are "working in your neighborhood this week" or offer a special deal if you sign up right now. Be careful.

Don't pay the full cost of

the renovation in advance. The payment schedule should be tied to the progress of the work and include an initial down payment when the contract is signed.

Don't disregard your hunches - don't hire someone you don't feel comfortable with, for whatever reason.

To find a professional renovator, contact your local Home Builders' Association for a list of members, or check www.chba.ca for more information.

Exciting new products for your renovation

From framing to finishing, today's homeowners and renovators can choose from more products and materials than ever before. New and improved products are constantly entering the marketplace as manufacturers strive to offer ever higher levels of quality, comfort, durability and choice.

According to renovation professionals, here are some of the latest products and materials used by homeowners and their renovators.

- Radiant-heat flooring increases comfort and coziness, particularly in basement renovations. Warm-water

heating coils embedded in concrete or used under standard sub-flooring distribute heat at the floor level, eliminating cold floors.

- Floating flooring, made of fiberboard and laminates, is super durable, versatile and comes in different looks and colours, including natural wood. It is glued together and "floats" on top of the sub-floor, not anchored to it - an advantage in basements, for instance, where variations in humidity levels can cause wood to alternately swell and shrink.

- Automatic dustpan inlets, connected to a whole-house

vacuum system, provide quick cleanups. Often used in kitchens or entrances, an inlet can be installed in baseboards or the kickboard of a cabinet. The homeowner can activate the system with a two switch and sweep dirt into the inlet where it is sucked away.

- Storage for a fold-up stepstool built into the kickboard under the kitchen cabinet is convenient and saves space.

- A bathroom exhaust fan timer with push buttons is easier to work than turning a knob and more precise to set. The buttons indicate the number of minutes the fan will run.



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Here's a cabin only 25 miles from Prince George on popular Ness Lake -- waiting for your "Handyman Expertise".... .62 acre waterfront lot. Call Metro Kozma for an appt. to view -- Asking \$73,500.



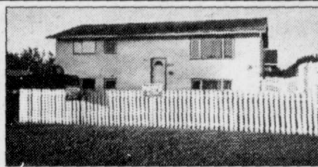
WATERFRONT ON CLUCULZ LAKE

Year round 4 bdrm, 4 bthrm home. 2x6 construction, garage, separate sauna house, excellent dock, satellite dish, B/I dishwasher, range, microwave, .62 acre lot. Seclusion plus view. Priced at just \$149,500. Call Metro now for your viewing apt.



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Just off 17th Avenue. A super little building (1300 sq. ft.) of concrete block, on 30' x 110' lot. Good street exposure and location! At this price, why rent? Just \$117,000. Call Metro 561-1880 now!

WATERFRONT LOTS

Cluculz Lake-Meier Rd W. 2 great lots approx 1 ac each. Adjoining each other... buy both as a pkg or individually. \$40,000 & \$50,000 ea. Call Metro Kozma (250) 561-1880.

CHOICE 5.03 ACRE LOT ON SOLITUDE RD.

Just past Garvin's Canyon on south side off Chief Lake Rd. Nicely treed and flat. In area of fine homes. One well serves just two lots. Priced at \$35,000. Call Metro Kozma 561-1880 - now!

FOOTHILLS BLVD.

2.5 acre apt. site...for 80 units. Near Cranbrook Hill Rd. City impost fees are paid. A tremendous opportunity at just \$495,000. Call Metro now!

HALF DUPLEX

with bsmt suite on Victoria St. Live-in & make money too! Just \$69,900

TYNER BLVD. NEAR UNBC.....

Two separate parcels of land consisting of 6 acres on the east side and 26.53 acres on west side of TYNER BLVD. just before the University. An interesting acreage in an interesting area of future growth. Asking price is \$150,000 and \$350,000 respectively. Call Metro Kozma 561-1880 about these properties.

Queensway St. between 15th & 17th Ave. - 6 lots zoned URM4 (Multiple Family) \$85,000 for each set of two lots. Call Metro.

FRASER LAKE - LILY LAKE RD. 80 acres. Lightly treed. \$25,000. Call Metro 561-1880.