



A KITCHEN RENO NIGHTMARE

ONE CONTRACTOR'S STORY

The writer is a member of the Canadian Home Builders' Association.

In January 2014, a single mom with a young daughter had a problem with ice damming on their roof which caused a major leak and damage to the attic, bathroom, kitchen, and dining room. Their insurance company evaluated the project and made a payout of \$20,000 so that she could get the necessary repairs done.

"No contract and 'cash up-front' should have been red flags. The project went bad, the money was gone, and no contract meant no recourse."

She asked around about people who could do the work and a friend recommended a contractor. Upon meeting the contractor she was very impressed. He seemed likeable and knowledgeable and she hired him to do the work, but didn't write up a contract. But she did pay him the \$20,000 for the work before anything was actually done.

The homeowner and her daughter moved out of the house from February to April at the expense of the insurance company to allow the work to be completed. The necessary demolition went fast but then the delays started. By May, none of the rooms were complete and some of the work was just wrong. This is what we found when we arrived:

- There were large gaps between the kitchen cabinets and the wall.
- The counter top was covered in paint overspray.
- The counter top didn't fit on the cabinets.

- The stove didn't fit between the cabinets.
- The range hood fan was 30" while the hole where it was supposed to fit was only 28.5".
- There was a pot light installed inside a kitchen cabinet.
- The electrical work had been done without a permit.

The electrical being done without a permit scared me. Permits are required for this type of work for a reason – safety – and they require inspections. Inspections mean another set of eyes verifies that everything was done correctly. While the insurance company provided great service in settling the ice damming claim, how would they react if there was a house fire caused by electrical work done without a permit?

I'm a renovator and builder and I took on the role of coordinating the work. I can confirm that what I witnessed was some of the worst workmanship I have seen in 35 years of doing renovations. Notwithstanding the mess we started with, I am very proud to have been a part of the effort to get mom and daughter back in their home.

This type of problem can happen to anyone. Even though the original contractor was recommended and seemed like a nice guy, he just didn't have the skills to do the work. No contract and 'cash up-front' should have been red flags. The project went bad, the money was gone, and no contract meant no recourse. Checking references could also have made a difference to what happened here.

Home renovation projects don't need to be nightmares. For a complete guide on the right way to find and hire a contractor, visit: hiringacontractor.com.

