



**MAKING YOUR  
RENOVATION  
WORK**

**Get it in  
Writing!**

**A Homeowner's Guide  
for Building or Renovating**

(reprinted courtesy  
of Nova Scotia Home  
Builders' Association)

Canadian  
Home Builders'  
Association



**Get it in Writing** 

Canada

# Get Informed – Hire a Professional – Get it in Writing

## GET INFORMED

Renovating your home is an exciting process. Whether you are adding space or making repairs, there are steps you can take to make your project a success.

Get informed by asking yourself a few questions. **Is your project practical?** While you may not have a choice with maintenance renovations, some lifestyle renovations may not be practical. Be clear about your expectations and know when to draw the line. **Is your project adaptable?** Be sure to consider what the future may hold for your family and your home. Think about making your renovation flexible enough for another change down the road, saving you time and money later on.

### Use this step-by-step guide as a reference for your ideas, thoughts and details about your building/renovation.

- **Set your priorities:** Rank your product decisions and renovation priorities in order of importance to help you decide between wants and needs.
- Know what's possible: Seek professional advice from a home inspector or architect to give you recommendations on what you need or should have for your renovation. Make sure your renovation is compatible with your plumbing, heating and electrical systems. Municipal bylaws and building codes may also influence what and how you renovate.
- **Estimate the cost:** Get a clear idea of all of the costs involved in your renovation by getting quotes from at least three sources for each service and/or product you intend to use. Know exactly what you want and discuss the options. Be sure to account for a few unexpected costs.
- **Choose a professional contractor:** Check with your local Home Builders' Association for a list of members or ask friends, colleagues and neighbours for recommendations. Get written estimates from at least three of the contractors you've chosen. Estimates should include a job description, the full price (including applicable taxes), terms of payment, work schedule including start and completion dates and proof of insurance.
- **Get it in Writing:** Once you've chosen a renovator/contractor, always get a written and signed contract. **This is YOUR safety tool.** Without a written agreement, signed by both you and your contractor, there is little that can be done about poor or incomplete work. Professional contractors will always provide customers with a clearly written contract. If your contractor refuses to sign a contract or offers you a deal for cash payment, hire another contractor!

### If you pay 'under the table' for repairs, construction or home renovation – you could be paying more than you think.

**Paying under the table is no deal - it can put you in some very risky situations. If you pay cash (without a receipt) for work done on your home, you have no warranty, no recourse for poor workmanship and no liability insurance if an injury takes place on your property.**

## CUSTOMIZE YOUR RENOVATION

### Step 1 – What do you want to change in your home?

**Repairs and Replacements** – items worn out or no longer working properly.

ITEM	DESCRIPTION OF PROBLEM
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Lack of Space** – areas that result in crowding, discomfort or poor use.

ITEM	DESCRIPTION OF PROBLEM
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Lifestyle Limitations** – any aspect of your home that makes daily living difficult.

ITEM	DESCRIPTION OF PROBLEM
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

### Step 2 – Renovation goals

GOAL	USING THE NEW SPACE
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

NEW FEATURES AND AMENITIES
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

### Step 3 – What the future might hold for your home

How long do you expect to be living in your current home?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- Not expecting to move

Do you expect the number of people living in your home to change over the next few years?

- no change
- \_\_\_\_ fewer people
- \_\_\_\_ more people

Over this period of time, is it likely that any of the people living in your home:

- will be infants or young children?
- will have difficulty walking, reaching or bending?
- will have difficulty using stairs?
- will have reduced vision or hearing?

Other than the renovation you are currently planning, do you foresee changing the way you use any areas in your home over the next few years? If so, list the possible changes and the reasons for making them.

CHANGE	REASON

### Step 4 – Create your renovation wish list

When you’re planning your renovation, keep track of items you’d like to use. If you find ideas in a magazine, clip them and save in a folder. You can then show your contractor exactly what you want.

#### Create your wish list!

- Your **look** is the overall design and room layout. Write down what you find most appealing and what you like about certain designs and how you’d like to see them reflected in your renovation.
- **Features** are the finer details of design, finishing and layout. These are the ‘bits and pieces’ that you’d like to incorporate into your project.
- **Products and materials** can be used to enhance the look of your renovation. Collect pictures, product information and prices for things you find appealing.
- **Prioritize** which items you feel must be included in your renovation and which items you want to include.

## PROTECT YOURSELF – HIRING A CONTRACTOR

Before you choose a contractor, protect yourself by taking the time to interview companies to find the one that fits with you and your project.

### Step 5 – Questions to ask a contractor

**What is the history of your company?**

Experience can make a difference. Find out how and when a contractor got into the business. Ask about previous projects and request references.

**What services do you offer?**

Each contractor will offer a particular range of services. Some employ their own construction teams, while others hire or contract workers for each project.

**Have you done renovations like this before? Photos of past projects?**

Some renovators specialize in kitchen and bathroom projects, while others do all types of work. Contractors should be able to provide you with before and after pictures of previous projects.

**Do you carry Workers’ Compensation and liability insurance?**

Hiring someone who does not carry proper insurance and Workers’ Compensation Coverage could put you at considerable financial risk. Don’t do it! If something goes wrong or an accident occurred, you could end up paying for it.

**What warranty do you offer on your work?**

A professional contractor delivers prompt follow-up service on any problems or defects in work they have done. Ask about their warranty coverage – what is covered and for how long.

### Step 6 – Contractor Information (copy this sheet for each interview)

COMPANY \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

YEARS IN BUSINESS \_\_\_\_\_ MEMBER OF LOCAL HOME BUILDERS’ ASSOCIATION?  Y  N

PROFILE – RANGE OF SERVICES \_\_\_\_\_

- Does the contractor provide design services?  Y  N
- Did the renovator provide you with at least 3 references of past customers?  Y  N
- Did the renovator provide you with trade or supplier references?  Y  N
- Will the renovator arrange for you to visit a current project?  Y  N

- Contractor covered by Workers’ Compensation or equivalent insurance?  Y  N
  - Contractor carry liability insurance?  Y  N
  - Contractor provide warranty on all work performed?  Y  N
- Amount of coverage: \_\_\_\_\_

- Did the renovator listen to you and answer all of your questions?  Y  N
- Did they make useful suggestions about your project?  Y  N
- Would you describe the contractor as ‘professional’?  Y  N

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 7 – Reference Check Worksheet** (copy this sheet for each call)

CONTRACTOR \_\_\_\_\_

CUSTOMER NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT WORK DID YOU HAVE DONE? \_\_\_\_\_

WHEN WAS THE WORK COMPLETED? \_\_\_\_\_

DID YOU CONSIDER OTHER CONTRACTORS BEFORE HIRING THIS ONE? \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT WERE THE CONTRACTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES ON THIS PROJECT? \_\_\_\_\_

- How would you rate the contractor's performance?  Poor  Fair  Good  Excellent
- Overall quality of work  Poor  Fair  Good  Excellent
- Kept to the schedule  Poor  Fair  Good  Excellent
- Kept customer informed of progress  Poor  Fair  Good  Excellent
- Kept site clean and organized  Poor  Fair  Good  Excellent
- Kept to budget  Poor  Fair  Good  Excellent
- Provided good advice and suggestions  Poor  Fair  Good  Excellent
- Resolved problems  Poor  Fair  Good  Excellent
- Easy to work with  Poor  Fair  Good  Excellent
- Delivered what was contracted  Poor  Fair  Good  Excellent
- Would you hire this contractor again?  Y  N  Not sure

WHAT WAS THE BEST PART OF WORKING WITH THIS CONTRACTOR?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

DID YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEMS WITH ANY ASPECT OF THE RENOVATOR'S WORK OR SERVICE?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 8 – Contractor Evaluation**

Name of contractor	_____	_____	_____
Do you feel this contractor has the skills and experience needed to complete your project?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Did this contractor provide proof of insurance and/or Workers' Compensation coverage?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
How satisfied were past customers with and confident in this contractor?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Not satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Not satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Not satisfied
What was the contractor's bid price for your project and what down payment is required?	Total Cost \$ _____ Down Payment \$ _____	Total Cost \$ _____ Down Payment \$ _____	Total Cost \$ _____ Down Payment \$ _____

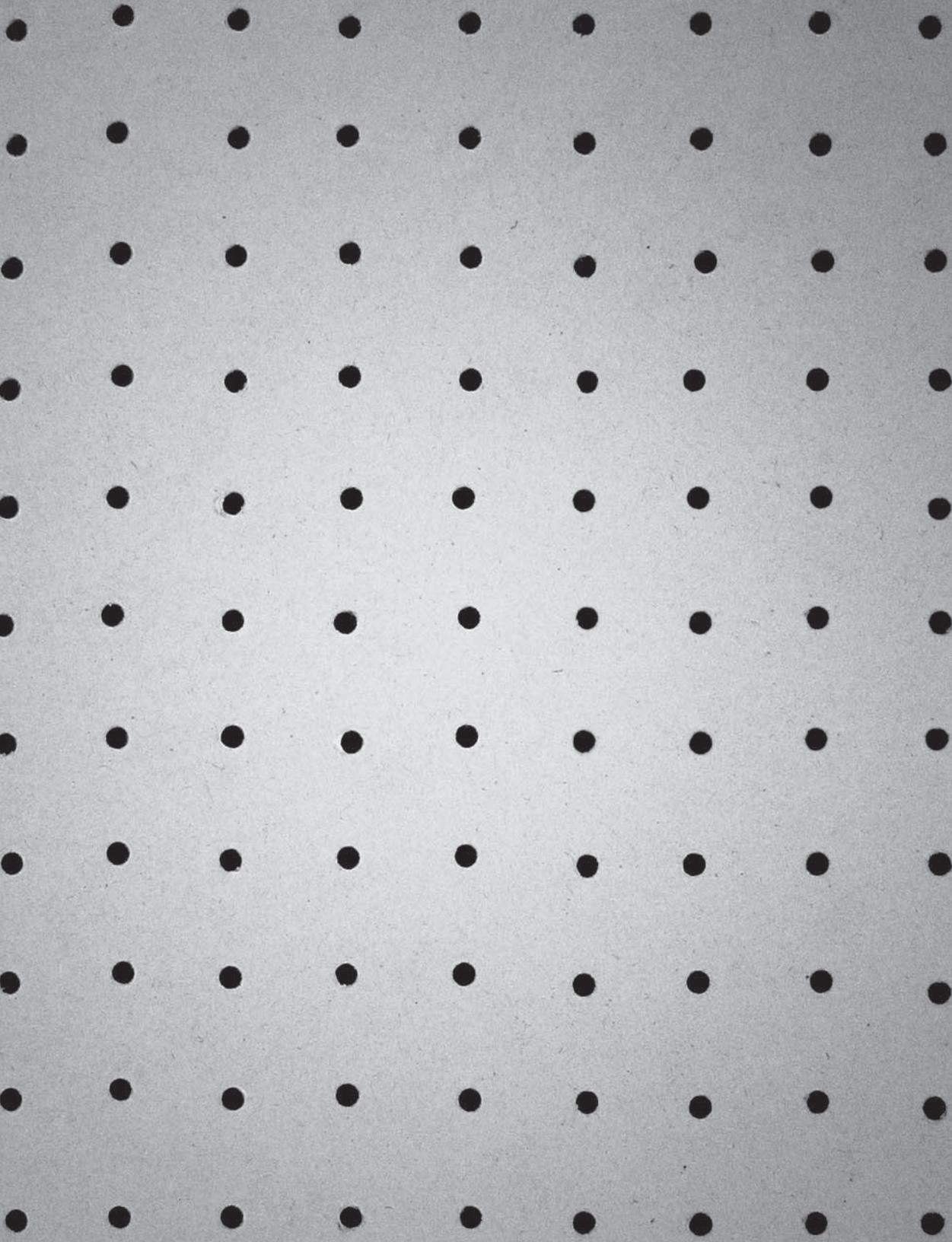
**GET IT IN WRITING**

**Step 9 – Get a Written Contract**

**This is your safety tool! Make sure that you read and agree with all of the terms of the contract before you sign it. Most professional contractors will write up a simple and easy to understand contract for you.**

**Remember – protect yourself – get it in writing!**

**Get it in Writing!**



[www.hiringacontractor.com](http://www.hiringacontractor.com)