



Who you should hire for renovations

You've been planning your home renovation for months, attended all the home shows and spent countless hours online looking at inspiration boards and photos. You've also interviewed numerous contractors, checked their references and received written price quotes from those you are interested in hiring. Now it's time to decide who will be doing the job.

Once you have met with the contractors who are bidding on your job, you should review each set of bid documents carefully.

Compare every aspect of their bids — the description of the work, specifications (materials and products), price and allowances, deposit and payment milestones, project schedule and any additional recommendations or ideas.

While overall price is important, it is only one factor. Many homeowners who have successfully completed major home renovations speak about the importance of peace of mind and working with a renovator they trust and feel confident in.

If you have a particularly strong sense of confidence in one of the renovators, they are probably your best choice, even if their price is not the lowest. In the end, you should choose the renovator based on your sense of the overall value they can provide.

If any prospective contractors suggest they can offer a better price if you pay them in cash and skip the paperwork, you should eliminate them from further consideration. They are essentially saying they cheat on their taxes and lie to the government, and you shouldn't expect they will treat you any better. You may also be implicated in future audits.

Before you hire a contractor, get informed. The Canadian Home Builder's Association offers free unbiased information on how to hire a contractor the smart and safe way. Find more information at www.getitwriting.ca. (NC)

Contact Kate Vanderburgh, sales representative for Royal LePage Real Estate Services Ltd., Broker at 905-338-3737 or by email at kate@katevanderburgh.ca.

KATE'S KORNER



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Seven secrets to sell your home successfully

Here are some tips from the Ontario Real Estate Association that will help your home stand out when you decide to sell.

1. Focus on first impressions: You only get one, so make sure everything potential buyers see first is in top shape. During winter, keep your driveway shovelled and hats and mittens neatly stored for a clutter-free entryway.

2. Empty your closets: A great trick is to create the illusion of extra storage space with half-empty closets, drawers and cabinets.

3. Upgrade strategically: Skip costly major overhauls — quick fixes are cheaper, easier and can often deliver a better return on your investment. Things like a fresh coat of paint, cleaning the carpets, and replacing door

and cabinet handles in the kitchen are big-impact projects that can be accomplished in a weekend.

4. Edit personal touches: Buyers are more likely to make an offer if they can visualize themselves living in your home, so put away family photos and kitschy personal mementoes. Stick to simple artwork and accessories that make the space feel lived-in, but neutral.

5. Understand legal documents: When you list and sell your home, there are several real estate documents you need to complete the transaction, like the Agreement of Purchase and Sale and the Listing Agreement. Work with your Realtor to make sure you understand the important information in these agreements and that they con-

tain the specific wording that suits your needs.

6. Make sure the price is right: You don't want to leave money on the table but you also shouldn't set the price unreasonably high, or you may scare away buyers and keep your house on the market longer than necessary. Your Realtor can help you determine what's right for your local market.

7. Light it up: A home that looks bright, airy and spacious is more welcoming and feels larger. Get the look by opening the curtains before viewings, choosing pared-down window treatments in light colours, and adding a few strategic lamps, which you can borrow from a friend until you sell.

Find more information at www.orea.com. (NC)



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