



Fraudulent Home Renovations.

Many years ago, I chased a group of gypsies that surfaced every summer. They were looking for easy to fleece individuals that needed home or farm repairs. They were called the “Williamson” gang. They were based out of the states, and would come into southern Alberta and Saskatchewan to do fraudulent renovations. They tended to pick on the rural seniors, with roofing scams, and painting barns and fences. The work always looked good until the first rain. Then the paint would wash off, or the roof would leak. They had dozen’s of different scams. They were smooth and hard to catch. When we would finally catch up to them, they would get bail and then slide back across the border. They would either stay out of the country until warrants expired or return the next year, with different names, and frequent in different areas.

There are still remnants of them around, but we don’t need to look state side for fraud renovation artists. We have lots of home grown con artists.

Continually we hear about individuals that have been taken by contractors who don’t live up to their words, advertisements and what is in the contract. Here are some tips so that you don’t become a victim

Be very cautious of contractors who:

- Offer a free home inspection and then suggest major repairs.
- Who need to be paid a large down payment, with the excuse that it is to buy materials. Most contractors have bridge financing or charge accounts with their supplies.
- Offer a large discount to use your home to advertise their work. That price offer is made to everyone.
- Knock on your door to offer you a “discount” price as they are already working in the neighborhood.
- Quote you a price without seeing exactly what needs to be done.

To find a good contractor, you best bet is to ask around. Satisfied Customers will not hesitate to recommend a good contractor. Look around your neighborhood for similar work, and ask the home owner about the work and the contractor. Ask if you can look at the work and check out the quality of the work.

Some of the larger building supply and hardware stores, do home improvement work, and know reliable contractors. A check with your local Better Business Bureau can supply you with a list of member firms, or provide advice about the contractor.

As the home owner you need to decide the scope of the work and select the contractor. You need to describe the job completely and correctly in a contract. It is the owners responsibility to ensure zoning approval and permits are obtained and any necessary inspections are completed. The contractor will often make the inspection arrangements.

You need to periodically check to make sure the work is being done to your satisfaction. If you notice some appears to be amiss, question it at once. Don't wait until it is covered with wallboard. Don't make the final payment until you are satisfied that they work has been completed as contracted.

In the majority of fraudulent renovation cases, the contractor:

- Has no local business license or provincial license where applicable.
- Will not have a Canada GST number
- Not have worker's compensation coverage.

By following these tips, you will greatly reduce your chances of being victimized by most of these criminals. Yes fraud is a crime, but poor workmanship or being high prices is not necessarily. Always be cautious and remember if it seems to go to be true, it most likely isn't.



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