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CIGDEM ILTAN ciltan@thejournal.canwest.com

## **Beware of itinerant renovators working on the cheap**

**Unlicensed contractors offer poor-quality results, province warns**

Alberta homeowners should be cautious before opening their doors to contractors advertising cheap renovations or outdoor work, the provincial government warned Monday.

They could be unlicensed, travelling contractors who are part of an annual springtime scam, claiming to be passing through the area with offers of reduced rates for what turns out to be poor-quality work. Homeowners can end up forking over even more money to fix the mistakes.

Unlicensed contractors come from as far away as Australia each spring, usually working in rural communities, said Service Alberta spokesperson Cameron Traynor.

Last year, Service Alberta investigated 180 cases of travelling unlicensed contractors who provided unsatisfactory renovations or outdoor work.

Service Alberta is currently investigating a case in the Red Deer area, where a contractor told a homeowner he had leftover asphalt from a nearby paving job. The contractor said the paving job would cost \$3,000, but the homeowner received a final bill of more than \$29,000. The driveway cracked within days.

The newly introduced federal Home Renovation Tax Credit program provides incentives for homeowners to invest in renovations. But homeowners should ask to see a contractor's provincial contracting licence, ask for written estimates and verify

references before hiring anyone, Traynor said. Contractors who ask for payment upfront must be licensed with Service Alberta.

“Use the same kind of due diligence you would during any other time of the year,” he said. “Be cautious and do your homework if someone is coming door-to-door looking for contract work.”

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