



**Canadian  
Home Builders'  
Association**

**CONSUMER ADVICE:  
CHOOSE PRODUCTS FOR YOUR NEW HOME  
OR RENOVATION PROJECT WITH CARE**

When you begin to plan for your new home purchase or home renovation, you quickly discover that the marketplace offers an astounding array of products. From windows to flooring, from faucets to locks, every product can be found in a tremendous range of styles, materials, colours and prices.

With so much to choose from, how can you make sure you end up with the right products for your project? How do you get the best value for your money and the peace of mind that comes with knowing that you have made wise, informed decisions?

Product selection often begins with appearance and price—how will something look in your home and how much are you willing to pay? Beyond that, however many other aspects need careful thought—overall quality, reliability, durability, ease of installation, warranty and after-sales service.

Not all products are the same, and in some cases, they may not be what they seem.

The majority of the products and materials that go into your home meet set standards for safety, health, performance and other important factors. Some standards are mandatory and included in building codes and regulations; others are voluntary, used by manufacturers as a benchmark for quality.

However, recent years have seen an increase in the appearance of counterfeit and non-conforming consumer products of all kinds. While there is no evidence of a large-scale problem with building products, it is still prudent for consumers to be on guard against unsafe or sub-standard products, which can show up in different ways:

- As counterfeit or “fake” brand name products
- As products with fake certification symbols—i.e. fraudulent use of marks belonging to standards organizations such as CSA (Canadian Standards Association), ULC (Underwriters Laboratories Canada) and CGSB (Canadian General Standards Board)

As non-conforming products that do not meet accepted industry standards  
As products evaluated for one function but used for other functions  
As no-name or knock-off products without any indication of performance, durability or warranty

Untested and uncertified, these products can, in the extreme, pose a serious safety risk, including the loss of life and property. Less dramatically, they may simply be sub-standard—not dangerous, but not performing as they should.

**As a homebuyer or renovating homeowner, what can you do to safeguard against counterfeit and non-conforming products?**

One of the most effective ways is to work with an experienced and respectable industry professional. Here is what you should know about doing business with a professional new home builder or home renovation company.

Reputable new home builders and renovators give careful thought to the best products for your project based on many factors including cost, ease of installation, quality, performance, durability, warranty, as well as ensuring compliance with codes and standards. That's why they rely on brand-name products made by well-known manufacturers, and a network of suppliers and sub-trades they can trust.

They also depend on approval marks by standards organizations (e.g., CSA, ULC and CGSB) to identify products that have been tested against required criteria for safety and performance, as well as listing numbers from evaluation agencies such as the Canadian Construction Materials Centre, operating within the National Research Council's Institute for Research in Construction.

Professional new home builders or renovators offer a warranty on their work, which typically is all-inclusive for the first year. Beyond that, many of the products they use are covered by extensive manufacturers' warranties, which are transferred to you, the homeowner.

New home builders and renovators will not warrant products used in your project that are not provided by them, or any damage arising from the use of those products; e.g., if you buy a product online or from a local retailer yourself, it is not included in the contractor's warranty. Many companies have a clause to that effect in their contract. (If your contractor uses allowances for kitchen, bathrooms or lighting, for instance, they normally specify the suppliers where you can make your own selections.)

If you want to purchase your own products independently of the new home builder or renovator or their networks of suppliers, there are a few things you can do to avoid later problems and disappointments.

Buy brands you know and trust by reputable manufacturers.  
Shop in building supply outlets and retail stores that you know you can depend on.  
Be cautious of Internet purchases—make sure you understand what you are getting, and what you are not (e.g., check country of origin and distributor, installation and performance data, maintenance and troubleshooting information, warranty and access to service).  
Be skeptical if a price is too good to be true—it could be.  
Be very suspicious if you are asked to pay cash only, or you can't get a receipt.  
Check for brands—if none or an unknown name or logo, you may want to investigate further before buying.  
Be careful if you can't find any information about the manufacturer on the packaging or the product—most manufacturers want you to know who they are, including name, address and website.  
Check the product or packaging—a shoddy general appearance or approval mark, or misspelled words may be evidence of a fake.  
Visit the websites of standards organizations (e.g. CSA, ULC and CGSB) to check legitimate approval online (look for products directories or similar and follow the prompts) or for information on product recalls and warnings.  
Ask your home insurance provider about any possible concerns regarding product selection for your home construction or renovation.  
Report suspicions right away—to the appropriate standards organization, the retailer or supplier.

***For more information:***

*There are a number of different organizations involved in standards for building products and materials. The organizations below are a good place to begin.*

<i>Canadian Standards Association</i>	<i><a href="http://www.csa-international.org">www.csa-international.org</a></i>
<i>Underwriters' Laboratories of Canada</i>	<i><a href="http://www.ulc.ca">www.ulc.ca</a></i>
<i>Canadian General Standards Board</i>	<i><a href="http://www.pwgs.gc.ca/cgsb_">www.pwgs.gc.ca/cgsb_</a></i>
<i>Canadian Construction Materials Centre</i>	<i><a href="http://www.irc.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/ccmc">www.irc.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/ccmc</a></i>