

Authors help consumers avoid home renovation rip offs

New breed of contractor co-authors book to help homeowners feel secure

By Mike Pearson
News Staff

Bobby Assadourian is a new breed of contractor. He combines a blue collar work ethic with white collar professionalism.

He never forgets to wipe off his work boots when entering a client's home. He's always willing to provide a written estimate and complete all the required paperwork for customers. And he never offers to take cash under the table.

Assadourian, manager of Hamilton construction firm Triple R Inc., is the kind of contractor Trevor Bouchard seeks for his clients. Bouchard, named Hamilton Chamber of Commerce's 2007 Young Entrepreneur of the Year, connects homeowners with qualified contractors. His consulting firm is called Quick Contractors.

Assadourian and Bouchard have co-authored a new book called *A Contractor You Can Bring Home to Mom*. Geared towards homeowners, the book offers tips on selecting professional home renovators who won't leave consumers feeling ripped off.

"We want to clean up the indus-

try and make it respectful," explains Assadourian during a recent book signing at the Ancaster Chapters store.

As Assadourian explains, one of the biggest opponents for any legitimate contractor is the "cash guy." With the province's new Harmonized Sales Tax scheduled to take effect on July 1, many homeowners may be tempted to pay cash under the table for their home renovation project to avoid the new 8 per cent provincial portion of the HST.

But with most unscrupulous cash transactions, there's no receipt and no paper trail. If something goes wrong, the customer is left with no warranty and no guarantees.

Bouchard said there are several warning signs homeowners should look for when selecting a contractor. If a contractor has no workplace liability insurance and fails to provide references, chances are it's not a legitimate business. A qualified contractor should also maintain good communication with clients.

"If it's a legitimate business, they should answer phone calls and e-mails within a reasonable amount of time," Bouchard said.

For an instant background check, Assadourian urges clients to enter a company name, salesperson and owner into a Google search.

"You'd be shocked at what you could find," he explained.

A quick online search helps customers verify whether contractors have indeed been in business as long they claim. Searches can also turn up historical reports of consumer complaints and even criminal charges filed against contractors.

Bouchard said the book also gives homeowners an understanding of business infrastructure and overhead a legitimate contractor needs to run a business.

"It's not just a matter of swinging a hammer. There's a lot of other components that go along with it."

The paperback edition of *A Contractor You Can Bring Home to Mom* is available at selected Chapters, Coles and Indigo book stores and online from Lulu.com. The book sells for \$18.40 and all proceeds support an Ontario March of Dimes program that helps disabled homeowners make accessibility improvements to their homes.

Assadourian also hosts a bi-weekly radio talk show called Just Ask Bob. The show, which airs every second Thursday from 12:30-1p.m. on Talk 820, offers home renovation tips and advice on hiring a contractor. Just Ask Bob continues on Jan. 21 and Feb. 4.

The authors will hold another book signing Jan. 24 at the Eastgate Square Coles store from 1-4 p.m.

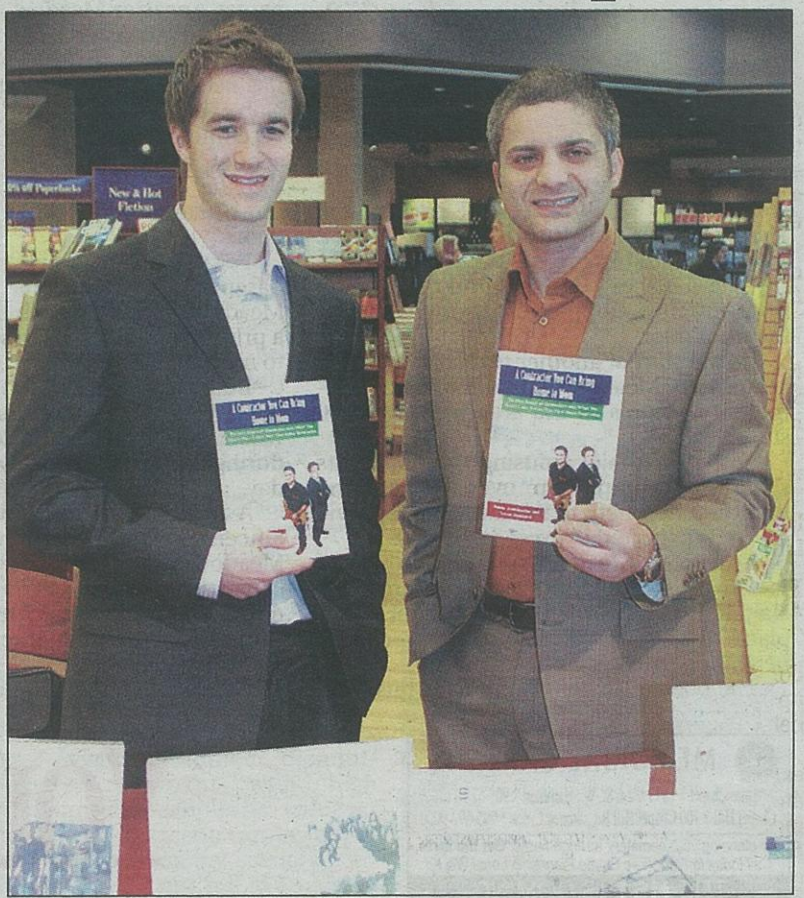


PHOTO BY MIKE PEARSON

Trevor Bouchard, left, and Bobby Assadourian are co-authors of *A Contractor You Can Bring Home to Mom*.

New Catholic school ready to handle enrolment growth

Immaculate Conception slated to open in January, 2011 at corner of Garner and Kitty Murray

By Mike Pearson
News Staff

Ancaster's newest Catholic elementary school will be ready to handle an influx of new students.

The school, recently named Immaculate Conception, is now under construction at the corner of Garner Road and Kitty Murray Lane. Immaculate Conception is slated to open in January, 2011.

A contract has been awarded to TRP Construction for \$10.858 million.

Pat Daly, chair of the Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board, said although Immaculate

Conception likely won't be full in its first year, the school should have 500 students by 2013. Its initial enrolment is expected to number just 250.

The new school will initially accommodate students from Holy Name of Mary on Meadowlands Boulevard, plus new students who move into the catchment area between June and January.

Daly said the board waited about four years to secure funding and a suitable piece of land for the new school.

"In terms of us making requests for funding, it took quite a while," Daly said.

He said Immaculate Conception will be a state-of-the-art facility, with a large gymnasium and environmentally friendly and efficient

heating and cooling systems.

The school's initial enrolment will alleviate overcrowding at Holy Name of Mary which currently accommodates 785 students.

The school's new name was shortlisted by Reverend A.F. Tonnos, Bishop of Hamilton. Immaculate Conception refers to the biblical story of the conception of the Virgin Mary in the womb of her mother, St. Anne.

"I think that the connection to St. Anne and to St. Joachim, the father of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a relevant and fine connection and therefore my first choice," Bishop Tonnos wrote in a letter to the Catholic school board.

Immaculate Conception will be Ancaster's fourth Catholic elementary school.

Help us honour community stars

The Ancaster division of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and the Ancaster News are looking to honour community stars.

Nominations are now open for the prestigious Royal Bank Citizen of the Year award, the Ancaster Old Mill Volunteer of the Year award, and new for 2010, Business of the Year.

Citizen of the year nominees must have performed the act for which they are being nominated in a voluntary capacity, over and above those required in the performance of their regular professional duties, or, in the course of their professional activity, have brought outstanding/remarkable attention to the community on a provincial, national or international basis.

For the youth awards, individuals must be 19 years of age or under as of Dec. 31, 2009.

The Business of the Year must be in business in the community and will be judged on community involvement for the overall business or on a project/program basis.

For more information and nomination forms, log onto www.hamiltonchamber.on.ca. Nomination forms are also available at Burgeon-vest-Bick Securities Ltd., 241 Wilson St. E., Ancaster, or the Royal Bank, 59 Wilson St. W.

The awards will be presented on Friday, April 9 at a gala dinner at the Ancaster Old Mill. Deadline for nominations is Jan. 29.

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Ancaster Skating Club hosts carnival at Morgan Firestone Arena, Feb. 21

The Ancaster Skating Club is preparing its upcoming carnival, featuring more than 150 youth performers.

The Feb. 21 event begins at 2 p.m. at Morgan Firestone Arena.

Youth skaters will showcase their skills in solo performances, duets, trios and larger groups. Performers dress in full costume with a spotlight

and curtain raising.

Door prizes will be awarded during intermission.

Admission is \$5 per person, with children three and under admitted free.

The Ancaster Skating Club is a sanctioned member of Skate Canada serving skaters of all ages and skill levels.

The club runs from September to April, with all programs based at Morgan Firestone Arena. The Ancaster Skating Club is a non-profit, volunteer operated organization.

The club offers skating lessons for all ages and skill levels and competitive training. Visit the club's Web site at www.ancasterskating-club.ca

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