

Homeowners left with unfinished projects after Ottawa construction company suddenly closes





- Colton Prail
- CTV News Ottawa Anchor/Reporter
- Published Feb. 6, 2023 5:11 p.m. EST

Homeowners and employees have been left reeling after an Orléans construction company suddenly closed its doors, walking away from half-built houses and projects worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Now, those who relied on the company, Highbridge Construction, are left wondering if they'll ever see that money again.

It's hard to imagine things getting worse for Bonny Bunda, but they just did in a very big way. (*Disclosure: Bunda is related to a Bell Media Ottawa employee.*)

"I knew immediately that we were in trouble," Bunda said.

Bunda is still recovering from a devastating fire that gutted her home and claimed the lives of several pets. She hired Highbridge Construction to rebuild her home, but it has ceased operations and isn't returning her calls.

"We lost everything and then we lost a little bit more. I don't know what steps we can take going forward," she said.

After months of frustration, Bunda's rebuild remains a hole and she's now out hundreds of thousands of dollars. She says Highbridge told her the money was insured, but she found out Monday it is not.

"When we contacted Tarion this morning, they said that Highbridge had actually never registered our rebuild contract and, unfortunately, we personally—I personally—have lost \$227,000."



A hole remains on Bonny Bunda's property. She hired Highbridge Construction to do repairs after a fire, but the work was never completed and the company has ceased operations leaving her out \$227,000 she says. (CTV News Ottawa)

Employees have also been left in the lurch. Wages are outstanding and there has been very little information from the company, just a locked door in Orléans.

Michelle Drapkin worked at Highbridge. She says the company had hundreds of current projects underway and continued accepting new ones until the day before its sudden closure.

"I have no idea how I am going to provide for my family in the next couple of weeks. They owe me money."

All projects are now stopped.

"The customers, I feel horrible for the customers," Drapkin said. "There are thousand of people out there that they owe money to. They've started builds and these people, like, they have no homes yet."

CTV News Ottawa is aware of a Glebe homeowner who is out tens of thousands of dollars after their home was left unfinished.

In an email obtained by Bell Media, Highbridge Construction co-owner Leam Hamilton writes, "It is with immense regret and overwhelming disappointment that we must inform you Highbridge Construction has been forced to close its door and cease business operations."

Just one day earlier, company emails showed employees were offered Air Miles if they waited until Monday to cash their paycheques.

"They've wrecked a lot of people's lives right now and I think they should be held accountable," Drapkin said.

Those like Bunda are now left empty-handed and forced to pick up the pieces.

"We have a big hole in the ground and it's been a long, cold winter, so we'll have to regroup and find a way to go forward," she said.

Employees say they had issues for months where contractors complained about not being paid and clients complained about delays in projects. Some of them never seemed to get going in the first place.

CTV News reached out to Highbridge Construction but did not get a response.