OTTAWA FENCES

Hiring & Quotes

Choosing a fence installer in Ottawa: why the City's hardscaping licence does not cover fences, WSIB questions, what a written quote should include, and comparing quotes

6 Expert Answers from Fencing IQ

ottawafences.ca/construction-brain

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Q1

Hiring a handyman versus a fence company in Nepean?

The choice comes down to what the job actually involves, and the answer is not simply about price.

A handyman and a fence company are not the same kind of hire for a fence job. A handyman may be perfectly capable of replacing a few boards or resetting a leaning post. For a full fence installation, the question is whether the person quoting the job has done this work before: setting posts below frost, handling the finished-side rule under the Fence By-law (the finished side must face the street and neighbouring properties), and keeping the fence within the height limits the City of Ottawa Fence By-law No. 2003-462 sets. Ottawa does not licence fence contractors, and we found no Ontario trade certificate for fence installation. What matters is the specific person's experience with the scope of your job.

On the WSIB question: WSIB says people who own or run a business in construction must have coverage, with some exceptions. If you are hiring someone to build a fence at a home you live in, WSIB's rules exempt that work from the homeowner's obligation to obtain a clearance certificate. You may still ask any contractor for one; a clearance is valid for up to 90 days.

For the contract itself, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 requires that a direct agreement made somewhere other than the supplier's place of business and worth more than $50 be in writing and delivered to you; you then have 10 days to cancel without reason. If the agreement includes an estimate, the supplier cannot charge more than 10 per cent above it. Get the scope, the price, the post method, the gate count, the removal of any old fence, and any warranty in writing before work starts.

The Construction Act requires you to hold back 10 per cent of the price as work is supplied. Ask a lawyer about when it is safe to release that holdback on a larger job, because liens expire 60 days after completion events.

A few things worth asking any contractor, handyman or fence company, before they quote:

- How many fence installations have you completed, and can you describe the post-setting method you plan to use?
- Will you request the locate, or does that fall to me? (The Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012 requires a locate request before any digging; Ontario Dig Authority asks for it at least 5 business days ahead.)
- Is the quote a fixed price or an estimate, and what triggers a change?
- What does the written warranty cover, and for how long?

Before anyone arrives with a shovel, pull up geoOttawa to see the approximate property lines, check your title documents for easements along the fence line, submit the locate request through Ontario Dig Authority, and ask

your installer what to do about any trees growing close to where posts will go, since the City's guide says you cannot dig within a tree's critical root zone without Forestry Services' approval.

Q2

What should I check on a fence installer in Westboro before hiring?

Ottawa does not license fence installers, and we found no Ontario trade certificate or registration for fence work, so there is no licence number to look up. What you can check falls into a few practical categories.

Ask each installer for proof of WSIB coverage. WSIB says people who own or run a business in construction must have coverage, with some exceptions. For a fence at your own home, you as the homeowner are not required to obtain a clearance certificate, but you may ask for one. A clearance is valid for up to 90 days. For a rental or investment property, the exemption does not apply.

Ask whether the installer carries general liability insurance and request the certificate. We found no City of Ottawa rule requiring it for fence work, so the decision is yours, but get the certificate before work starts, not after.

On the contract itself, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 says a direct agreement made somewhere other than the supplier's place of business and worth more than $50 must be in writing and delivered to you; you then have 10 days to cancel without any reason. If the agreement includes an estimate, the supplier cannot charge more than 10 per cent above it. Ask for a written quote that breaks out materials, height and style, the length of the run, gate work as its own line, removal and disposal of the old fence if there is one, and how posts are set. Get any warranty in writing as well.

The Construction Act requires you to hold back 10 per cent of the price as work is supplied; ask a lawyer about when it is safe to release that amount on a larger job.

A few things to ask the installer directly:

- How will the property line be confirmed before the first post goes in? A fence contractor cannot certify where the line is; only an Ontario Land Surveyor can do that. geoOttawa shows approximate lines, and your deed or title documents may show easements that cannot be blocked.
- Who submits the locate request to Ontario Dig Authority? The Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012 requires a locate before any digging, including hand-digging post holes. Ontario Dig Authority asks for the request at least 5 business days ahead. The contractor is the excavator on a hired job and is responsible for the request, but confirm this in writing.
- What does the quote assume about post depth and the method used to set them?

- Is any part of the fence near a tree? The City's guide says you cannot dig within a tree's critical root zone without Forestry Services' approval.

Before anyone breaks ground, pull up geoOttawa to see the approximate property lines, check your title documents for easements, confirm the locate request has been submitted, and note any trees close to the fence line so you can ask Forestry Services whether approval is needed.

Q3

Red flags in a fence contract in Barrhaven?

A fence contract that leaves out the written scope, the price breakdown, or the start and finish dates is the first thing to look at carefully. Ontario's Consumer Protection Act, 2002 requires any direct agreement over $50 to be in writing and delivered to you, and gives you 10 days to cancel after you receive that written copy. If an estimate is included, the supplier cannot charge more than 10 per cent above it.

Here are the specific things worth reading closely before you sign:

- No written scope. If the contract does not name the material, the style, the height, the length of the run, and the number and size of gates, you have no basis to dispute a substitution later. Ask for every item spelled out.
- Vague pricing. A lump sum with no line items makes it hard to see what you are paying for removal of the old fence, gate hardware, or posts set in concrete. Ask for a line-by-line breakdown.
- A large deposit with no milestone tied to it. We found no Ontario rule capping deposits on a fence job, so the contract itself is your only protection. Ask what work the deposit covers and what triggers the next payment.
- No mention of who requests the locate. Ontario's Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012 requires a locate request before any digging. Ontario Dig Authority asks for it at least 5 business days ahead. The contractor is the excavator on a hired job and carries that responsibility, but the contract should say so plainly.
- Missing warranty terms. If a warranty is only mentioned out loud, ask for it in writing, with a clear description of what it covers and for how long.
- No finished-side commitment. The City of Ottawa Fence By-law, as published on ottawa.ca, requires the finished side to face the public street and neighbouring properties. If the contract does not specify which side is finished, ask for it in writing.

The Construction Act requires an owner to hold back 10 per cent of the price as work is supplied; ask a lawyer about release timing on a larger job.

The request form on this page forwards your project to fence installers listed in the Ottawa Construction Network directory.

Before you sign, ask the installer to show you exactly how the price changes if the ground conditions require a different post placement than the contract assumes.

Q4

Who checks the property line before an Ottawa fence goes in?

We found no rule that makes a fence installer confirm your property line, so plan on checking it yourself before the posts go in.

A fence contractor can help position the fence, but only an Ontario Land Surveyor can certify where a boundary actually falls. That comes from the Surveyors Act and the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors. A fence installer cannot make that determination.

The City of Ottawa's Landscaping Education Guide says to check property lines before installing or replacing a fence, so that it sits on your property and can legally be placed there. geoOttawa shows approximate property lines, which is useful for a rough sense of the lot, but the lines shown are not survey-accurate. For a confirmed boundary, you need a survey by an Ontario Land Surveyor. Before work begins, it is also worth checking your deed or title documents for any easements crossing the property. The City's guide says not to block those areas; if you are unsure what your documents say, the guide suggests a lawyer.

A few things worth knowing before the posts go in:

- If you and your neighbour disagree about where the line falls, the Line Fences Act gives either owner a process: notify the municipal clerk, and fence-viewers can be appointed to examine the site and issue an award. Ask the City whether that process applies to your property and what it costs.
- The City's guide notes that the road allowance can be wider than it looks. The Fence By-law, No. 2003-462, says no fence may be placed on City property, including the public road allowance. geoOttawa can help you see approximately where your lot line ends, but the City's right of way may extend further than the edge of the sidewalk or the grass strip.

Once the job is done, keep the written contract, the itemized quote and photos showing where the fence was placed relative to the lot. If a question about the line ever comes up later, those records are what you will reach for first.

Q5

Fence company asking me to get the locate in Gloucester?

Under Ontario's Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012, whoever digs is the excavator, and the excavator is responsible for the locate request before any ground is broken. On a hired job, that is the contractor. On a do-it-yourself job, that is the homeowner. If the company is asking you to submit it, ask them why, and get in

writing who submits the request and who waits for the response before digging. The utilities must respond within five business days, and a standard request can be made no more than 30 days before the dig.

A locate request through Ontario Dig Authority costs nothing. For any privately owned lines on your property, such as a line running to a garage, shed or outbuilding, ask the installer how those will be identified before post holes are dug; we found no Ontario Dig Authority statement on whether they are marked.

A few things worth sorting out before the work starts in Gloucester:

- Confirm in writing who is submitting the locate request and who is responsible if digging starts before the response comes back.
- Ask whether the five-business-day response window is built into the project schedule.
- Ask about any private lines on your property and how the installer plans to handle them.
- Confirm the locate confirmation number is shared with you, not just kept by the installer.

Whoever ends up submitting it, ask for the locate reference number and keep it with the written contract.

Q6

Do Ottawa fence companies need insurance?

We found no City of Ottawa or Ontario rule that requires fence installers to carry liability insurance for fence work. Ottawa does not license fence contractors: the City's hardscaping contractor licence, which has its own insurance condition, specifically does not apply to installing fences. We also found no Ontario licence, registration or trade certificate for fence installation.

That said, WSIB coverage is a separate matter. WSIB says people who own or run a business in construction in Ontario must have WSIB coverage, with some exceptions. There is an exemption that applies when a homeowner hires a contractor directly for fence work at their own home, meaning you are not required to obtain a WSIB clearance certificate in that situation. You may still ask for one. A clearance certificate is valid for up to 90 days. If the property is a rental or investment property rather than your own home, that exemption does not apply.

So checking a contractor's insurance is up to you. Here is what to ask for before work begins:

- A copy of their general liability insurance certificate, naming the policy limits and the insurer.
- A WSIB clearance certificate if you want confirmation of their standing, even though you are not required to obtain one for your own home.

- A written contract that covers the scope of work, the price, the payment schedule, the start date, and any warranty terms.

On the written contract: the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 says that a direct agreement made somewhere other than the supplier's place of business, for more than $50, must be in writing and delivered to you. You then have 10 days after receiving it to cancel without any reason. If the agreement includes an estimate, the supplier cannot charge more than 10 per cent above it.
The Construction Act also applies: as the owner, you are required to hold back 10 per cent of the price as work is supplied. Ask a lawyer about when it is safe to release that holdback on a larger job.

Requests sent from this site's form go to fence installers listed in the Ottawa Construction Network directory.

Before you sign, ask each installer to confirm in writing what liability coverage they carry and what it covers on a job at your property.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Fences. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa) before starting any fence project. Fences in Ottawa must meet the City's Fence By-law, and a free locate is required before digging any post hole. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawafences.ca** for the latest answers.