OTTAWA FENCES

Neighbours & Property Lines

Shared fences, Ontario's Line Fences Act and fence-viewers, surveys, the road allowance and easements

4 Expert Answers from Fencing IQ

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Q1

Shared fence with a neighbour who won't talk in Vanier?

When a neighbour won't engage, Ontario's Line Fences Act gives you a formal path forward, and it does not require the other person's cooperation to start.

The Act lets you notify the municipal clerk to have fence-viewers appointed. Three fence-viewers visit the site, examine the boundary, and issue a written award. The award sets out where the fence goes, what it looks like, and how the cost is split. The default is that each owner builds a designated half, or one owner builds the whole fence and the other pays half the costs, unless the fence-viewers decide that would be unjust. An owner who disagrees with the award has 15 days after receiving it to appeal to the referee, whose decision is final. If the neighbour's share goes unpaid, it can be added to their property tax roll.

A few things to know before you start that process. The City of Ottawa's Delegation of Authority By-law (2025-69, section 45) allows staff to appoint fence-viewers to carry out the Act, but we could not confirm which parts of Ottawa the process covers, any seasonal restrictions, or the current fee. Ask the City whether the process applies to your property in Vanier and what it costs. The municipal guide to the Act also notes that arbitration does not apply where one owner has already built or rebuilt a fence on their own initiative and then wants to make the neighbour pay after the fact, so the order matters. The fence-viewers' award sets the location of the fence but does not affect title to the land, and the City cannot decide where the property boundary actually sits; that is a civil matter between the owners.

Before any of this, confirm where the property line is. geoOttawa shows approximate lines, but only an Ontario Land Surveyor, under the Surveyors Act, can certify the boundary. A fence contractor cannot do that. Check your deed or title documents for easements and do not block them; if anything is unclear, a lawyer can help.

The fence itself must meet the City of Ottawa Fence By-law, as published on ottawa.ca. In a front yard it is 1 m. Any award the fence-viewers issue must conform to the by-law. The finished side of the fence must face the street and the neighbouring property.

Before using the Act, try a short letter to the neighbour; the Act is there if that does not work.

Keep a dated copy of anything you send your neighbour and anything you get back; if you do go to the City, that record shows what you tried first.

Q2

My neighbour built a fence on my side in Alta Vista?

If your neighbour has built a fence that crosses onto your property, the first step is to confirm exactly where your property line sits, because that question has to be answered before anything else can move forward.

geoOttawa shows approximate property lines, but approximate is the key word. Only an Ontario Land Surveyor, as required under the Surveyors Act and administered through the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors, can establish a boundary with legal certainty. A fence installer cannot certify where the line is. If you do not already have a recent survey, getting one is the clearest way to document that the fence is on your land rather than your neighbour's.

Once you have confirmed the line, talk to your neighbour directly and show them what the survey shows.

If a direct conversation does not resolve it, Ontario's Line Fences Act gives you a formal path. You can notify the municipal clerk to have fence-viewers appointed. Three fence-viewers examine the site, and their award sets the location of the fence and how costs are shared. The award does not affect title to the land, only the fence's placement and cost. One important limit: the AMCTO's guide to the Line Fences Act says arbitration does not apply where one owner has already built or rebuilt a fence on their own initiative and then wants to make the neighbour pay after the fact. Ask the City of Ottawa whether the process applies to your situation and what it costs, because we could not confirm which parts of Ottawa the process covers or the current fee.

If the fence is on City property rather than yours, that is a separate matter. The City of Ottawa Fence By-law No. 2003-462 prohibits fences on City property, including any road allowance, and the road allowance can be wider than it appears. geoOttawa shows approximate lines; for exact lines, a surveyor is the right call.

Check your deed or title documents for any easements across that part of your property, and if anything is unclear, a real estate lawyer can advise on your options before you take a formal step.

The request form on this site sends your details to local Ottawa fence installers who can look at the situation and give you a written assessment of what a correction or replacement would involve.

Q3

Can my neighbour remove a shared fence in Barrhaven?

Whether your neighbour can remove a shared fence depends on who owns it, and that question is not always straightforward. The City of Ottawa Fence By-law No. 2003-462 sets the rules for how a fence must be built and maintained, but it does not, on its own, say who owns a fence on or near a boundary line.

We found no rule in the Fence By-law that settles who may remove a fence. Where the fence sits and who paid for it matter, and the answer may depend on your title documents, any written agreement between the owners, or what a fence-viewer would decide under Ontario's Line Fences Act. The City's guide says to check your deed or title documents for any easements or agreements, and to consider speaking with a lawyer if there is any doubt about ownership.

Ontario's Line Fences Act gives either owner a path to formal arbitration. An owner who wants a boundary fence built, repaired or rebuilt can notify the municipal clerk to have fence-viewers examine the site. Three fence-viewers can set the location and description of the fence and, by default, assign each owner a half to build, or require one to build and the other to pay half the cost. Under the City of Ottawa's Delegation of Authority By-law 2025-69, staff can appoint fence-viewers to carry out this process. We could not confirm which parts of Ottawa the process covers or what it currently costs, so ask the City whether it applies to your property in Barrhaven and what the fee is. An appeal of a fence-viewer award goes to the referee within 15 days of receiving it.

One important limit: the municipal guide to the Line Fences Act notes that arbitration does not apply where one owner has already built or rebuilt a fence on their own initiative and then wants to make the neighbour pay after the fact. It also notes that a municipality cannot decide where the boundary between two properties actually sits; that is a civil matter between the owners, and only an Ontario Land Surveyor can survey the boundary.

The Fence By-law does require that any fence on residential property be kept stable, vertical, in good repair, safe and free from hazards.

The first step in any boundary fence situation is a direct conversation with your neighbour. If that does not resolve it, ask the City about the fence-viewer process and speak with a lawyer about what your title documents say.

If this leads to getting quotes for a new fence, place two written quotes side by side and check that each one states the same height and material, the same total length, how posts are set and how deep, gates as a separate line with their own price, and removal and disposal of the old fence as a separate cost.

Q4

How do I start a fence-viewing in Ottawa?

Fence-viewing in Ottawa is governed by Ontario's Line Fences Act, and the process starts with a written notice to the municipal clerk. Before going that route, talk to your neighbour directly, because the Line Fences Act process is for situations where the two of you cannot agree, and arbitration does not apply where one owner has already built or rebuilt the fence on their own and then wants the neighbour to pay.

If direct conversation has not worked, here is how the process runs under the Line Fences Act. You notify the City of Ottawa's municipal clerk that you want fence-viewers appointed. The City's Delegation of Authority By-law (2025-69, section 45) lets City staff appoint fence-viewers to carry out the Act. Three fence-viewers then visit the site, examine the fence line, and issue an award. The award sets out where the fence goes and how costs are divided, with the default being that each owner builds a designated half, or one owner builds and the other pays half, unless that would be unjust. Any award must conform to the City of Ottawa Fence By-law (No. 2003-462), so the height limits, materials rules and other requirements still apply.

A few things to know before you call the clerk. We could not confirm which parts of Ottawa the process covers, whether there is a seasonal blackout, or what the current fee is, so ask the City directly whether the process applies to your property and what it costs. The fence-viewers' award does not change who owns the land; it only sets the fence arrangement. If you disagree with the award, you have 15 days after receiving it to appeal to the referee, and the referee's decision is final. An unpaid share can be added to the tax roll.

One more point: the municipal guide to the Line Fences Act notes that the City cannot decide where the actual property boundary sits. That is a civil matter between the owners. If the boundary itself is in dispute, only an Ontario Land Surveyor, under the Surveyors Act and the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors, can survey and certify the line. A fence contractor cannot do that.

If you are at the stage of getting quotes while this is sorted out, put the two written quotes side by side and check that each one lists the same height and material, the same linear footage, how the posts are set and how deep, gates as a separate line item, and removal and disposal of any existing fence, so you are comparing the same job.

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.