

The first warm weekend after a heavy storm, half the GTA is standing in a backyard looking at damage. A section of cedar fence lies flat across the lawn, the gate leans so badly it scrapes the patio stones, and pickets that were upright on Friday now point at the neighbor's deck. The natural instinct is to reach for the phone and start calling fence companies for a quote. That instinct costs people time and money. Choosing a contractor for fence repairs starts with preparation, not phone calls, and the owners who prepare get sharper estimates and repairs that actually hold up.

Fence repair is a different trade from fence installation. A crew that builds new fences all day can be genuinely lost when the job is replacing one rotted post inside an existing line, splicing a broken rail, or matching an eight-year-old stain. Repair work is surgical. It is judgment about what can be saved and what has to go, and that judgment begins on your side of the fence, before a single contractor has seen the property.

This article walks through the assessment work that separates a smooth repair project from a drawn-out one: documenting the damage, deciding between repair and replacement, knowing what your fence is made of and how old it is, settling the property-line question, and preparing the information a good estimator needs to give you a real number.

Walk the Fence Line Before You Make a Single Call

Set aside twenty minutes and walk the entire fence, not just the section that fell down. Look at every post, every rail, every picket, and both gates. Note which posts lean, where rails sag, where pickets are loose at the top nail, and where the gate has started dragging. Then check the neighbor's side of the fence if you can reach it. Rot almost always starts on the side you cannot see, especially where soil has been mounded up against the boards by a lawnmower or a flower bed.

Do this even when the damage looks obvious and contained. A storm can knock down one section while quietly cracking the posts of the two sections beside it. A contractor who only sees the fallen section will quote the fallen section, and the leaning posts beside it become a second job in the fall. Your walk-around tells you the real scope, and it tells the estimator that you are not a customer who will simply accept whatever he says.

Document the Damage the Way an Estimator Will

Take photos the way a claims adjuster would. Start with a shot of the whole fence from each end so the context is visible, then move in for close-ups of the damage: the base of each post, the tops of the rails where they meet the posts, the gate hinges and latch, and any section where boards sit against the soil. Put something in the frame for scale, a tape measure or a shovel, so someone looking at the photo can tell whether that crack is an inch long or a foot long.

Measure the damaged run in linear feet and count the pickets. Note the post spacing, which on older fences is commonly four to eight feet, and the overall height of the fence. Write down what the ground looks like along the fence line: low spots that hold water, mulch piled against the boards, a downspout dumping onto the fence base. That last detail matters more than most owners realize, because standing water is what kills fence posts, and no repair will last if the water keeps coming.

Repair or Replace: The Question Behind the Question

Not everything that looks broken needs replacing, and not everything that looks fine is fine. The repair-versus-replace decision is the heart of the job, and it is where inexperienced contractors and unprepared owners make their biggest mistakes.

Signals that point toward replacement include rot at the ground line, posts that are loose in the soil when you push on them, damage spread across more than a third of a run, and a history of patchwork repairs stacked on top of each other. A fence that has been patched three times in different materials is past saving; you would just be adding to the patchwork. Signals that point toward repair include isolated damage, one broken section with sound posts on either side, a leaning gate with good hinges, and a fence that is otherwise in decent shape.



Ask any contractor you are considering for an [Burlington fence installation](#) honest split: what can be repaired today, what will need attention in three years, and what is truly finished. A repair is not automatically cheaper than a replacement. If half the posts are rotten, repairing them one at a time over two seasons costs more in labor and call-out fees than a clean replacement, and you still end up with a fence of mixed ages. The estimator who explains that tradeoff to you is worth more than the one who just starts measuring.

Know the Fence You Already Own

Before you request a fence quote, figure out what your fence is made of and roughly how old it is. Cedar is the classic GTA fence material, and it rots from the bottom up; a cedar fence in its teens is often sound at the top and soft at the base. Pressure-treated lumber is heavier and more rot-resistant, but it can twist and crack as it dries, and it is nearly impossible to match against an existing run once the lumber has grayed. Vinyl fences handle rot completely, but they get brittle in cold weather and older vinyl colors are hard to match, so a repair section can look like a different fence. Chain link is the easiest to repair because the components are standard, and ornamental aluminum is usually a matter of replacing a section or fixing a weld.

Age matters as much as material. Repairing a five-year-old fence makes obvious sense. Repairing a twenty-five-year-old fence means paying for new posts, new rails, and new pickets inside an old line that will keep failing around them. Matching is the single biggest source of complaints after repairs, and it gets harder the older the fence gets, because the new wood has not had years of sun and rain to silver down to the same color.

Sort Out the Property Line and Your Neighbor's Half

Most fences in Toronto and the surrounding municipalities sit on or near a property line, and that makes the fence a shared concern whether it looks like one or not. If the fence is on the line, your neighbor has a say in what happens to it, and you have a say in what happens to theirs. A repair that requires access to the neighbor's yard needs their permission, and a repair to a shared fence usually means a conversation about who pays.

Do not guess where the line is. An old fence is not proof of the boundary, and a fence built by a previous owner can be sitting well onto the neighbor's property. Check your survey if you have one, or check the records available through your municipality, before you authorize post replacement near a boundary. In newer subdivisions around the GTA, fences go up before owners really know their lines, and the disputes surface years later when a repair crew starts digging. A conversation with your neighbor before you request a fence quote costs nothing and prevents most of the bad feelings.

What to Have Ready When You Request a Fence Quote

By the time you call a contractor, you should be able to hand over the whole picture in one message:

- Photos of the full fence line and close-ups of the damage
- Rough linear measurements of the damaged run and the fence height
- The material, approximate age, and finish of the existing fence
- Access notes: gates, slopes, gardens, and whether the neighbor's yard is needed
- Your timeline and whether you want the repair stained to match

The more specific the request, the more specific the quote. "A section fell down" gets you a visit and a vague estimate. "Thirty-two feet of cedar fence on the west side, four leaning posts, gate dragging" gets you a real number.

Expect the estimator to ask questions back, and treat the questions as information about the estimator. A good one asks how old the fence is, who installed it, how long you plan to stay in the property, and whether you want the repair stained to match. Those questions mean the person is thinking about the job. A contractor who shows up, squints, and names a price without asking anything is pricing the easy version of the job, and you will meet the rest of it later.

What a Useful Repair Quote Contains

A quote for repair work should break the job down so you can see what you are buying: materials by type and grade, labor, disposal of the old material, which posts are being replaced versus reset, gate hardware, stain or paint if included, and backfill and cleanup. The number itself depends on factors you control and factors you do not: linear footage, height, material, number of gates, terrain, how hard the site is to access, how much demolition and disposal is involved, how the posts are set, and the time of year. Prices move with seasonal demand across the GTA, so a spring quote and a fall quote for identical work can differ. The final figure depends on the scope and your local market, and no honest contractor will quote blind over the phone without seeing the site.

Be wary of the one-line quote. A single lump sum with no breakdown is hard to compare against other bids, and it is impossible to verify later when the crew says the stain was extra. Ask each candidate to quote the same scope, in writing, and ask what would change the price if the crew finds worse rot once the fence is opened up. A contractor who handles that question with a straight answer about how changes are priced is a contractor you can work with.

Time the Request for the Season

GTA weather runs the repair calendar. Spring thaw heaves posts out of clay soil and reveals the frost damage that winter hid, which is why so many fence problems surface in March and April, from Toronto's older neighborhoods to the newer subdivisions of Whitby and Oshawa. That is also when everyone calls at once. If you request a fence quote in late winter, you can get on the schedule for early spring work. If you wait until the ground dries, you join the summer backlog, and repair crews across Mississauga, Oakville, and Burlington are already booked with new installations. Fall is the quieter window for repairs, and winter work is possible but limited by frozen ground and the fact that nobody wants a crew cutting through a frozen lawn.

Choosing a Contractor for Fence Repairs Starts With Preparation

Choosing a contractor for fence repairs is mostly about showing up prepared. The owners who walk the line, document the damage, know their material, settle the boundary question, and hand an estimator a complete

picture get honest scope, comparable quotes, and a repair that matches the fence they already have. The owners who call first and think later get whatever the first crew decides to sell them. Do the homework first. The fence has been standing this long; it can wait one more week while you get the details right.