

You are sitting across from an estimator, maybe in your kitchen in Toronto, maybe in a coffee shop in Burlington, and the fence is the reason you are both there. The next twenty minutes will decide more about the project than the contract signing will. The questions you ask reveal whether you are hiring someone who understands your site or someone who understands your eagerness. Choosing a contractor for a new installation is a conversation, and the person who controls the questions controls the outcome. Here are the questions property owners across the GTA should ask, organized by theme, with the reasoning behind each one and what a good answer sounds like.

Questions About Your Site

Have you walked the full property line, and do you know where the pins are?

This is the first question for a reason. Shared boundary fences, buried survey markers, and neighbors with their own ideas about the line make this the most common source of trouble in GTA fencing. A good answer names the corners, mentions whether the pins are visible or missing, and flags any spot where the line does not match what you described. If they suggest a survey where pins are absent, that is a sign of experience. Follow up by asking whether they will mark the line before you sign anything.

What do you see in the soil and grade along the run?

Clay soil, freeze-thaw heave, and sloping lots are the reality of most GTA yards, and how the crew reads the ground decides whether your posts stay straight for decades. A thoughtful answer mentions drainage, low spots, the way the run follows the grade, and how post depth will be adjusted for the conditions. A vague answer that sticks to materials and dates means the ground has not been studied yet. Follow up by asking what they would change about the design if the soil turns out wetter than it looks.

Are there easements or buried utilities near this line?

Hydro corridors, back-lane services, and drainage easements cross properties in patterns owners rarely know about. The right answer names the locates that have been arranged, [pool enclosure contractor](#) the easements they spotted on your property documents, and what they will do if a post hole lands on a mark. Confirm current requirements with the utility or your municipality yourself, but treat the contractor who raises the subject unprompted as someone who has learned from experience.

Questions About Materials and Design

Why this material for this specific yard?

Any contractor can sell you cedar or vinyl. A good one sells you the material that fits your yard, and the recommendation should be tied to your site: wind off the lake in Oakville, shade and moss in a north-facing yard in Markham, salt and snow along a driveway in Vaughan. Listen for reasoning that starts with your property, not with what is in the truck. Follow up by asking what they would choose for their own house on a lot like yours.

What grade of this material am I actually getting?

Two fences can both be "cedar" and be entirely different purchases. Board grade, post grade, and the quality of the fasteners and hardware determine how the fence ages, and the differences are invisible in a photo. A precise

answer names the grade, explains why it matters for your run, and shows up in the quote as a line item. If the answer is "the good stuff," ask them to be specific, because the quote should be specific too.

How will this fence behave in wind and snow?

Tall panels on exposed lots catch real wind, and snow sliding off a roof lands against one section of fence all winter. The contractor should explain how the posts, spacing, and panel design handle those loads, and whether anything about your lot changes the standard approach. A fence that flexes in a gust or tilts under a snow pile is a design problem, not a weather problem. Follow up by asking which part of the fence they expect to stress first.

Questions About Installation Method

How will the posts go in, and how deep?

Post installation is the backbone of the whole job, and in a freeze-thaw climate the depth and the concrete work decide whether the fence heaves out of line. The right answer describes the hole, the concrete, and the drainage at the base, and explains how the depth changes with soil conditions. A contractor who cannot describe their own post method in detail has not thought about it enough for your money. Follow up by asking what happens if a hole hits rock or a buried obstruction.

How do you handle water around the posts?

Water is what kills fences in this region, and the question separates crews who have learned from failures from crews who have not had them yet. A strong answer covers drainage away from the post base, how the concrete is shaped so water does not pool against the wood, and what they do on low spots along the run. This is also the moment to ask how the panels handle a sloped lot, because the answer reveals whether they have built on your kind of terrain before.

What happens to the old fence and the debris?

Demolition and disposal are real costs, and they belong in the quote, not in a surprise at the end. A complete answer covers the removal, the hauling, the disposal, and the cleanup, and names whether old concrete cylinders come out with the posts. If the answer is vague, the debris will find its way into a change order. Follow up by asking where the debris goes and whether the price already covers it.



Questions About Schedule and Season

When can you start, and how long will the job take?

Fence season in the GTA is crowded, with the spring thaw, the summer backlog, and the race to beat the freeze all shaping availability. A straight answer gives a start window, a realistic duration, and room for weather, and it does not promise the day after tomorrow. Ask what their current backlog looks like and how many crews are running, because that tells you whether your date is a plan or a hope.

What happens if the ground is frozen or the weather turns?

Concrete cures differently in cold weather, and frozen ground changes how holes are dug and how posts set. A contractor with a plan will describe how the schedule flexes, what work can proceed in cool weather, and what gets postponed rather than rushed. The wrong answer is "we just do it anyway." Follow up by asking what their policy is for weather delays and who carries the cost of the wait.

Who do I call when the schedule slips?

Projects slip. The question is whether you have a single person who answers. A good answer names a specific contact and how they communicate, whether by phone, text, or email, and commits to updates rather than silence. If the answer is "call the office," ask who in the office. The contractor who cannot name the person responsible for your job is telling you how the job will be managed.

Questions About Warranty, Maintenance, and Paperwork

What is covered after the crew leaves, and for how long?

Warranty language separates workmanship from materials, and the distinction matters. Ask what is covered, what is excluded, and how a claim actually gets made. A clear answer describes the process and puts the terms in writing. Verify the details with your own insurer where insurance and worker coverage are concerned, and keep in mind that the best warranty is a fence built right the first time, not a promise that sounds generous at the kitchen table.

What maintenance will this fence need, and when?

Every material has a maintenance life, and the contractor who sells you the fence should [View website](#) be able to tell you what it costs to keep it. A solid answer gives a schedule: when to seal or stain, what to clean and with what, which hardware to check and how often. If the answer is "nothing, ever," the material is either vinyl or the contractor is simplifying. Follow up by asking what they see fail most often on fences they installed five years ago.

Can you walk me through the quote line by line?

The quote is where all the talking becomes a document, and a contractor who can explain every line is a contractor who understands their own costs. Ask about the material quantities, the post count, the concrete, the gates and hardware, the demolition, and the disposal, and ask what is not included. The way they answer tells you whether the number is a plan or a guess, and whether they will be able to defend it when something changes mid-job.

Follow-Up Questions Worth Asking

1. Who exactly will be on my property each day, and who supervises the crew?
2. How do you handle surprises like buried concrete, rock, or unexpected roots?
3. Can you show me a similar job on a similar lot, and what went into it?
4. What do you need from me before day one?
5. What is the first sign of trouble I should watch for in the first year?

Putting the Answers to Work

The value of these questions is not in the asking. It is in comparing the answers across three or four estimators and noticing who speaks from their own site experience and who is reading from a brochure. Choosing a

contractor for a new installation works best when you treat the first meeting as an interview, with the fence as the job opening. Take notes, compare the answers, and confirm anything about bylaws, property lines, utilities, or coverage with your municipality, your surveyor, and your insurer. The estimator who answers well is the estimator who has done this before, and that is the person you want digging on your property.

One last habit pays for itself: write the answers down while they are fresh. The estimator who promised a specific post depth, a named material grade, and a communication plan should see those same words in the contract, because the fence is built from the contract, not from the conversation. When the answers and the contract match, the questions have done their job. When they do not, you have just learned something valuable before the first post hole goes in.