

On a quiet Saturday in Mississauga, two neighbors on the same street are both getting fences this summer. One has three quotes in hand, a tape measure, and a notebook full of questions. The other accepted the first estimate that arrived and is already planning to have the crew back out before the leaves fall. Same suburb, same clay soil, same summer, very different outcomes. Choosing a contractor for a new installation is not a single moment. It is a sequence of decisions about money, materials, and site conditions, and each one nudges the final price and the lifespan of the fence. This guide walks through what actually drives the cost of a new fence across the GTA, the options worth weighing, and the decisions that separate a smart buy from a costly one.

What Actually Drives the Price of a New Fence

Every estimator builds a quote from the same raw inputs. Learn to read those inputs and you can compare bids on equal terms, instead of comparing a cedar board fence with a vinyl privacy screen and wondering why the numbers look so different.



- Material family and grade. Cedar, spruce, vinyl, aluminum, chain link, and composite each sit in their own price band, and grade moves the number within each band. Clear cedar pickets with tight grain cost more than knotty utility boards, and the difference shows up in how the fence looks after a few winters.
- Linear footage and height. Length sets the baseline, but height pushes cost faster, because taller panels demand heavier posts, deeper holes, more concrete, and better wind resistance.
- Gates and openings. A gate is a framed assembly with hinges, hardware, and often a reinforced latch post set in concrete. A double gate for a driveway costs meaningfully more than a single walk gate, and gates on sloped ground cost more still.
- Terrain and grade. A flat lot in Brampton is the cheapest ground to build on. A ravine lot in Toronto, a sloping side yard, or a run that climbs over a grade change adds labor to every post hole.
- Access and staging. Crews price the work of getting material to the line. A truck that backs up to the yard is a different job from pallets carried through the house, over a deck, or down a narrow path.
- Demolition and disposal. Old posts set in full concrete cylinders come out slowly, and hauling the debris away carries real disposal cost. A contractor who skips that line item is either eating the cost or planning to leave the mess.
- Post installation method. How posts are set, how deep they go, and how drainage is handled at the base are core decisions in a freeze-thaw climate, and they show up in the price.
- Season and finish. Demand across the GTA runs hot from late spring through early fall, and a stained or sealed fence adds material and labor on top of the build itself.

Material Families and the Tradeoffs Between Them

Wood remains the default for most residential yards, and cedar leads the way because it resists rot naturally. The catch is upkeep. A cedar fence wants a sealer or stain every few years, and owners who skip that cycle watch gray, cracked boards replace the warm color they paid for. Spruce costs less and paints well, but it needs even more attention to moisture.

Vinyl sells on the promise of no maintenance, and it delivers on that promise. It also carries a higher upfront number, and on windy lots near the lake the panels need enough structure behind them that they do not flex in a gust. Aluminum offers a clean, low-maintenance look with good visibility, which suits front yards and pool areas, but it gives no privacy. Chain link is the workhorse for back lanes, commercial yards, and utility corridors, and it is often the cheapest way to secure a long perimeter, even if most owners do not love how it looks from the deck.

Composite blends wood fiber and plastic, shrugs off moisture better than lumber, and never needs staining, at a price above cedar. The honest way to choose is to weigh what the fence must do against what you are willing to maintain over twenty years, not against how the samples look in a showroom.

The Decisions That Move the Number

Some cost drivers are fixed by the site. The rest are yours to make, and they are worth making before you collect quotes.

Height is the first decision, and it is a balancing act between privacy and practicality. Taller panels screen more, but they catch more wind, demand stronger posts, and may bump into local rules, **pool enclosure contractor** so confirm what your municipality allows before you commit. Gate count and width matter as well. One wide double gate for lawn equipment costs more than a single walk gate, and every extra opening adds hardware and framing.

Post spacing changes both cost and character. Closer spacing means more holes, more concrete, and a sturdier fence, which matters on exposed lots. Board style shifts the number too: board-on-board gives full privacy from both sides but uses more material than a picket fence with gaps. Add a top cap, corner trim, or a stain package, and each one moves the total a little further.

How to Budget Without Guessing

Get three quotes, and make sure all three price the same scope. A bid for 120 feet of six-foot cedar with two gates is not comparable to one for 140 feet with a single gate and no demolition. Write out the scope yourself, hand it to each estimator, and ask for a line-item breakdown covering material, labor, posts and concrete, gates, demolition, and disposal.

Set aside a real contingency for what you cannot see until the digging starts: a buried concrete pad, a tree root the size of your arm, a rock shelf under the sod. The point is to have the cushion before you need it, not to discover you need it mid-dig. On payment, structure the schedule around milestones rather than a large deposit, and keep a holdback until the last gate swings properly and the site is cleaned up.

Seasonal Timing and the GTA Climate

Timing affects both price and quality. In the spring, thawing clay turns yards to mud and crews are still working through the previous year's backlog. Summer is the busiest stretch, which means longer lead times and less room to negotiate. Late-season installs can still go in well, but concrete cures differently in cool weather, and posts set before the ground freezes need the holes and drainage done right the first time.

Freeze-thaw cycles are the real enemy of a fence in this region. Clay soil holds water, expands when it freezes, and heaves posts out of line over a few winters if the drainage around them was an afterthought. An experienced crew talks about this unprompted. If your estimator does not mention frost, drainage, or soil conditions, ask directly, because that conversation is where the fence is actually won or lost.

Where Commercial Work Diverges

Strip malls, parking lots, and industrial yards change the math. The scale is larger, so material costs dominate and small inefficiencies multiply. Access is often restricted to specific hours, and the crew has to work around tenants, delivery trucks, and customers. Approvals can run through property management, landlords, and municipal processes, so the schedule needs room for documents, not just weather.

Security needs push the design in commercial settings: taller runs, anti-climb details, vehicle-rated barriers near loading docks, and gates that lock reliably. Maintenance planning matters too, because a failed commercial fence is a liability issue and a business interruption, not just an eyesore. Confirm insurance and worker coverage requirements with the contractor and with your own insurer before any commercial crew starts, since the stakes run higher than on a residential side yard.

What a Good Estimator Should Flag

Watch for the estimator who brings up the parts of the job you had not thought about. A good one will ask about the utility corridor behind your lot in Newmarket, the easement running along the back lane, or the shared fence line with the neighbor in Pickering. They will mention that the run crosses a drainage swale, or that the fence will sit in the snow drift zone off the roof. They will ask whether this is a pool enclosure, because that changes the design completely.

If the conversation is only about materials and dates, steer it back. Site conditions are where fences fail, and the estimator who volunteers them is the one who has seen the failures. Verify anything they tell you about property lines, easements, or municipal rules with the appropriate authority, but treat their warnings as the first draft of the truth.

Making the Call

Choosing a contractor for a new installation comes down to preparation. Know your property line, your purpose, your material, and your scope, and you will be able to [perimeter fence services](#) judge quotes on their merits. Ask about soil, drainage, frost, and access, and you will hear who actually understands the ground under the GTA. The neighbor with the notebook gets a fence that holds its line for decades. The one who signed on the spot gets a lesson. Which one you are is decided before the first hole is dug.