

Ottawa Neighbour Dispute Checklist

A practical record for noise, fence, tree, yard, boundary, and property-maintenance concerns

Use this checklist to organise facts before you speak with a neighbour, contact 311, attend mediation, or get legal advice. It is general information, not legal advice. For an immediate threat, violence, active trespassing, or suspected criminal conduct, contact police or emergency services.

1. Define the issue

- Write one sentence describing what happened without guessing at motive.
- Record the address or exact location involved.
- Choose the closest category: noise, construction, fence, tree, weeds or long grass, garbage, property maintenance, boundary, encroachment, or another issue.
- Write the outcome you want. Be specific and realistic.

2. Build a dated record

- Note the date, start time, end time, and frequency of each event.
- Take photographs from your own property or a lawful public location.
- Keep copies of messages, notices, estimates, surveys, title documents, and contractor reports.
- List witnesses and what they personally observed.
- For recurring noise, report it while it is happening when possible. A phone recording may show timing and character, but it is not a calibrated municipal sound reading.

3. Check the right route

- City compliance issue: review the live City of Ottawa by-law page, then use My ServiceOttawa or call 311 as directed.
- Safety issue: contact police or emergency services.
- Relationship problem: consider Community Conflict Resolution Ottawa mediation.
- Money or return of personal property: review Ontario Small Claims Court information. The current monetary limit is \$50,000.
- Boundary declaration, injunction, order forcing action, title problem, or complex damage claim: get legal advice.

4. Before speaking with your neighbour

- Only approach the neighbour if it feels safe.
- Choose a calm time, describe the specific impact, and ask for one clear change.
- Bring the relevant date, photograph, or rule, but avoid threats.
- Write down any agreement, including who will do what and by when.
- If direct contact feels unsafe, skip it and use the appropriate formal route.

5. Information for an Ottawa by-law complaint

- Your name, home address, and telephone number.
- The property address or location involved.
- A factual description of the possible violation.
- Dates, times, duration, frequency, photographs, and other records.
- Whether the issue is happening now and whether an officer could observe it.
- Your availability for follow-up. The City says complainant information is kept confidential unless the matter proceeds to court, where attendance as a witness may be required.

6. Fence, tree, and boundary checks

- Do not assume an old fence marks the legal lot line.
- Look for an existing survey, registered plan, deed description, easement, title-insurance policy, and any encroachment agreement.
- For a new fence, confirm the applicable height and location rules. A typical Ottawa residential front-yard maximum is 1 metre, with many rear or side-yard situations allowing up to 2.13 metres, subject to exceptions.
- Ottawa fence viewers are available only in the rural and environmental zones listed under By-law 2011-350, not ordinary urban or suburban lots.
- Protected-tree removal may require a permit. When trunks or roots cross a boundary, get legal advice before cutting.
- A line fence is governed by Ontario legislation. Cost sharing and ownership can turn on the facts, documents, and applicable process.

7. Property and financing file

- Tell your real-estate lawyer about any known encroachment, boundary dispute, active order, threatened claim, or private agreement.
- Ask whether a current survey or surveyor opinion is needed.
- Review title-insurance coverage and exclusions with your lawyer. Do not assume every boundary issue is covered.
- If buying near vacant land or redevelopment, review zoning, development applications, and likely construction impacts before removing conditions.
- If a property issue could delay closing or refinancing, tell your mortgage professional early so the file can be planned around accurate information.

Notes and next action

Useful starting points: ottawa.ca for by-law and 311 reporting information, ontario.ca for Small Claims Court and provincial law information, and ccr-ottawa.com for community mediation.

Mortgage information is general and subject to lender approval, borrower qualification, and change. This checklist does not replace legal, surveying, insurance, or municipal advice.