DECK BUILDERS OTTAWA

# Pools & Hot Tubs

Decks that give access to an above-ground pool, gated enclosures and gates under Ottawa's Pool Enclosure By-law, and hot tubs on decks

4 Expert Answers from Deck IQ

deckbuildersottawa.ca/construction-brain

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Q1

## Pool deck gate lock rules in Ottawa?

Under Ottawa's Pool Enclosure By-law 2013-39, every gate in a pool enclosure must have three things: a self-closing device, a self-latching device positioned at least 1.35 metres above the bottom of the enclosure, and a lock. The gate must be kept closed and locked at all times except when the pool area is in use.

Those three requirements apply to every gate, including any gate built into a deck structure that forms part of the pool enclosure. The self-latching device's height, 1.35 metres from the bottom of the enclosure, is the figure the by-law sets.

The by-law also sets rules for the enclosure the gate sits in. Every enclosure must be at least 1.5 metres high, openings must prevent the passage of a 100 mm sphere, and nothing on the exterior face of the enclosure between 140 mm and 900 mm above the bottom may facilitate climbing. Those enclosure rules shape what the gate itself can look like, since the gate is part of the enclosure.

A few things are worth confirming with the City's Building Code Services before you build or modify anything. Whether a deck guard can serve as the pool enclosure is not settled: a deck guard built to the 2024 Ontario Building Code can be as low as 900 mm on a deck not more than 1 800 mm above grade, while the pool by-law requires 1.5 metres. The heights and the no-climb rules differ, so confirming with the City before relying on a deck guard as the pool barrier is the right step. Every pool enclosure, including a replacement, requires a pool enclosure permit, which the City's fee schedule sets at $257.

If the deck giving access to the pool is detached, self-supported and greater than 10 square metres, the City's Pool Enclosures page says it also requires a separate building permit. The building permit fee for that deck follows the City's general construction formula: $12.75 per $1,000 or part thereof of the assessed value of the work, with a minimum of $117.

Hot tubs fall under the same by-law. An enclosure is required around a hot tub unless it has a safety cover capable of supporting a 90 kilogram load, permanently attached and locked whenever the hot tub is not in use. The City says a pool enclosure permit and inspection are still required even with a compliant cover.

Before anyone digs for a footing or post to support a gate or enclosure, a locate must be requested through Ontario One Call at least five business days in advance. It is free and required by the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012.

When you get quotes for this work, ask each builder to show you exactly which line items, gate hardware, enclosure framing, permit drawings, removal of any existing structure, and the foundation, are included in the price and which are not.

Q2

## Hot tub under 600 mm deep in Ottawa: pool rules?

A hot tub qualifies as a pool under Ottawa's Pool Enclosure By-law 2013-39 if it can hold a water depth of 600 mm or more at any point. The depth of the water the tub holds is what matters, not the depth of the tub below grade or its height above it. If your hot tub meets that threshold, the full pool enclosure rules apply regardless of how it is installed.

Under By-law 2013-39, every pool enclosure, including one around a hot tub, requires a pool enclosure permit, which carries a fee of $257. The enclosure must be at least 1.5 metres high, with openings that prevent the passage of a 100 mm sphere, and no attachment that can facilitate climbing fixed on the exterior face between 140 mm and 900 mm from the bottom. Every gate must be self-closing, self-latching at least 1.35 metres above the bottom of the enclosure, and lockable, and must be kept closed and locked when the hot tub is not in use.

There is one alternative to a full enclosure for a hot tub: the by-law allows a safety cover in place of an enclosure, but only if the cover is capable of supporting a 90 kilogram load (or meets ASTM F1346-91), is permanently attached, and is securely fastened and locked whenever the hot tub is not in use. The City says a pool enclosure permit and inspection are still required even when a compliant cover is used.

A few other points worth confirming with the City's Building Code Services:

- Whether your deck's own guard can serve as the pool barrier is not settled. A pool enclosure must be 1.5 metres high with the no-climb requirement between 140 mm and 900 mm, which differs from a standard deck guard. Confirm with the City before assuming the deck railing counts.
- Zoning setbacks apply. Under Zoning By-laws 2008-250 and 2026-50, both of which apply with the most restrictive provisions winning, walkable decking serving a hot tub has a setback from an interior side or rear lot line equal to the height of the structure where it abuts certain zones, and 0.6 metres where it does not. Your lot's specific situation needs to be confirmed with the City.
- A hot tub on a deck is a structural question. The 2024 Ontario Building Code does not size a deck for a filled hot tub in Part 9, and we found no hot-tub load figure to quote. The deck needs a design that accounts for that load, and confirming the structural requirements with an engineer before purchasing the tub is worth doing.
- If any digging is needed for footings or connections, a locate must be requested through Ontario One Call at least five business days before work starts. That is free and required by the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012.

The pool enclosure permit application goes through the City's My ServiceOttawa portal. You can use the request form here to have local deck builders from the Ottawa Construction Network directory reach out with quotes.

Before you commit to a builder for this project, ask them directly whether their quote includes preparing and submitting both the pool enclosure permit and any required building permit, and who is responsible for booking all required inspections.

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Q3

## Deck access to an above-ground pool in Orleans: gate rules?

A deck that gives access to an above-ground pool in Orleans needs both a pool enclosure permit (the City fee is $257) and, if the deck is attached to or next to the house with a walking surface more than 600 mm (24 in.) above the adjacent grade, a building permit for the deck structure itself. The City of Ottawa's Pool Enclosures page also states that any detached, self-supported deck facilitating pool access that is greater than 10 square metres (approximately 108 square feet) requires its own building permit.

### Gate and enclosure rules under Pool Enclosure By-law 2013-39

Every pool enclosure, including the one around your above-ground pool, must be at least 1.5 metres high. Openings through the enclosure must prevent the passage of a 100 mm sphere. The by-law says no attachment that can facilitate climbing shall be fixed or placed on the exterior face of an enclosure between 140 mm and 900 mm, measured from the bottom of the enclosure.

Every gate in the enclosure must have all three of the following:

- a self-closing device
- a self-latching device located at least 1.35 metres above the bottom of the enclosure
- a lock

Gates must be kept closed and locked at all times except when the pool area is in use.
An above-ground pool with walls under 1.5 metres needs a full enclosure. Its walls can serve as the enclosure only if they are at least 1.5 metres high with no horizontal members that may facilitate climbing, and the ladder area or deck that gives access to the pool is enclosed by a gated enclosure that meets the by-law. The City says removable or swing-type ladders are not allowed as part of the required enclosure.

One point worth confirming with the City's Building Code Services: a deck guard and a pool enclosure are governed by different height and no-climb rules. A deck guard serving one dwelling unit may be 900 mm high where the deck is not more than 1 800 mm above the ground, and 1 070 mm otherwise, while the pool enclosure must be at least 1.5 metres high. Whether a deck's guard can also serve as the pool barrier is something to settle directly with the

City before the drawings are finalised, because the two sets of requirements do not automatically align.

On zoning, both By-law 2008-250 and By-law 2026-50 apply to any permit application deemed complete on or after March 11, 2026, with the most restrictive provisions from each governing. Under 2026-50, the setback for walkable decking serving an above-ground pool or hot tub from an interior side or rear lot line depends on whether those lot lines abut certain zones: where they do, the setback equals the height of the structure; where they do not, it is 0.6 metres. Confirm which rule applies to your specific lot with the City.

Before any footing holes are dug for the deck, a locate request through Ontario One Call is required by law, at no charge, at least five business days before digging starts.

Ask your builder before work begins: can you show me, on the permit drawings, exactly how the gate enclosure around the pool access point meets the 1.5 metre height, the self-latching latch position and the no-climb zone requirements of By-law 2013-39?

Q4

## Pool deck landing size limits in Ottawa zoning?

In Ottawa's Neighbourhood zones (N1 to N6), Zoning By-law 2026-50 section 202 says a landing to an above-ground pool may be as tall as needed to access the pool, with a maximum size of 2.3 square metres. Beyond the landing, the rules that shape a pool deck are setbacks, projection limits and height thresholds. Both Zoning By-law 2008-250 and Zoning By-law 2026-50 apply to any permit application deemed complete on or after March 11, 2026, and the more restrictive provision from each by-law wins.

### What the zoning rules actually control

For a deck serving a pool, the key variables are height above grade and proximity to lot lines.

- If the walking surface of the deck is not higher than 0.6 metres above adjacent ground, and the deck is uncovered and unenclosed: in the rear and interior side yard there is no minimum setback or maximum projection under 2026-50 section 204; in the front or exterior side yard the deck must stay at least 1 metre from the lot line and may project no more than the greater of 2 metres or 50 per cent of the required yard. By-law 2008-250 section 65 Table 65 row (6) sets the same front and exterior side yard rule, and also no limit in the rear and interior side yard for decks at or below 0.6 metres.
- If the walking surface is higher than 0.6 metres, or the deck is covered: a minimum setback of 1 metre from any lot line and a maximum projection of 2 metres apply in all yards under 2026-50 section 204.
- For walkable decking that serves an above-ground pool or hot tub: under 2026-50 section 202, the setback from an interior side or rear lot line equals the height of the structure where the deck abuts EP-zoned or N1 to N6 lands, and 0.6 metres where it does not abut those zones. By-law 2008-250 section 55 uses a distance equal to the height of the structure where the decking abuts a residential zone. Again, the more restrictive of the two applies.
- Under both by-laws, a deck may have a maximum of two enclosed sides.
- Whether a standalone deck counts toward the accessory-structure area limits in your zone is not settled in the wording of either by-law: the City is the right place to confirm that.

On soft landscaping: 2026-50 counts a deck as hard landscaping. If your zone sets a minimum soft-landscaped area, the deck area does not satisfy it. We did not research the specific minimums for each neighbourhood subzone, so the City needs to confirm what applies to your lot.

A pool deck also needs a pool enclosure permit under By-law 2013-39 (fee: $257), and if the deck is detached, self-supported, and greater than 10 square metres, the City requires a separate building permit for it as well. The enclosure rules, including the 1.5 metre height requirement and the no-climb provisions between 140 mm and 900

mm, apply regardless of deck size.

Because the answer turns on your lot's zone, the depth of your rear yard, whether the deck abuts N1 to N6 lands, and which provisions of both by-laws are most restrictive for your specific property, the right first call is to the City of Ottawa: it can look up your zone, confirm which setbacks and projections apply, and tell you whether a minor variance through the Committee of Adjustment would be needed if your preferred layout does not fit within those limits.

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**Disclaimer:** This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Deck Builders Ottawa. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa's Building Code Services) before starting any deck project. Decks in Ottawa are built under the 2024 Ontario Building Code (O. Reg. 163/24) and the City's permit and zoning rules. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **deckbuildersottawa.ca** for the latest answers.