OTTAWA KITCHEN RENOS

Cooktop Clearances

Building Code clearances above and beside a cooktop: cabinets over the range, metal hoods and gypsum protection

5 Expert Answers from Kitchen Reno IQ

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Table of Contents

1. Does the backsplash behind my Ottawa range need fire protection?
2. What protection does a wall beside a cooktop need in Ontario?
3. When can cabinets sit 600 mm above a cooktop in Ontario?
4. How high above a cooktop must cabinets be under Ontario's Code?
5. Do side cabinets near a cooktop need gypsum board in Ontario?

Q1

Does the backsplash behind my Ottawa range need fire protection?

Ontario's Building Code addresses what sits above and beside a cooktop, and the answer turns on where your backsplash is relative to the burners or elements.

The Code (9.10.22.3) sets out which surfaces need protection. Combustible wall framing, finishes or cabinets within 450 mm of the cooktop must be protected above the burners by gypsum board at least 9.5 mm thick, or a material with a 10-minute fire-resistance rating and a flame-spread rating of not more than 25. However, the Code carves out an explicit exception: countertop splash boards or back plates do not need that protection (9.10.22.3.(2)). A backsplash that sits directly behind the cooktop and reads as a splash board or back plate falls within that exception.

What sits directly above matters separately. Framing, finishes and cabinetry installed directly above the cooktop location must be at least 750 mm above the level of the burners or elements (9.10.22.2.(1)). That distance can come down to 600 mm if the material is noncombustible or if a metal hood projects at least 125 mm beyond the framing, finishes and cabinets above (9.10.22.2.(2)). Cabinets at least 450 mm above the burners do not need the gypsum-board protection, except those directly above the cooktop (9.10.22.3.(3)).

These are minimums for new work. Ask the City's Building Code Services how they apply to your renovation before the work starts, particularly if you are opening the wall behind the range or changing the cabinet layout above it.

A few practical points for your quote:

- Confirm with your contractor whether the backsplash material is combustible and where it sits relative to the 450 mm zone.
- If you are tiling the backsplash, tile work is covered at ottawatiling.com.
- Appliance installation instructions can require clearances beyond what the Code sets; check your range's manual for its own figures.

Before the tile or panel goes in, ask your contractor to measure the distance from the burners to every combustible surface above and beside the cooktop and confirm in writing how the Code clearances are met.

Q2

What protection does a wall beside a cooktop need in Ontario?

Clause 9.10.22.3 of Ontario's Building Code sets out the protection required for combustible wall framing, finishes or cabinets beside a cooktop.

Any combustible wall framing, finish or cabinet within 450 mm of the cooktop must be protected above the burners or elements. The Code accepts either gypsum board at least 9.5 mm thick, or a material with a 10-minute fire-resistance rating and a flame-spread rating of not more than 25. Two things are exempt from that protection requirement: countertop splash boards or back plates, and cabinets that sit at least 450 mm above the burners, except for any cabinet directly above the cooktop.

The cabinet directly above the cooktop has its own rule under 9.10.22.2. Framing, finishes and cabinetry installed directly above the cooktop must sit at least 750 mm above the level of the burners or elements. That clearance can be reduced to 600 mm if those surfaces are noncombustible, or if they are protected by a metal hood that projects at least 125 mm beyond them. These are minimums for new work; ask the City's Building Code Services how they apply to your renovation.

The appliance installation instructions may also specify clearances, and those can be more demanding than the Code figures above. Ask your contractor to show you the instructions for the cooktop you are installing before the cabinets go in.

A few things to confirm with your contractor in writing before the work starts:

- which surfaces within 450 mm of the cooktop are combustible and what protection material will be used
- the measured height from the burners to the underside of any cabinet directly above
- whether a metal hood is part of the plan and, if so, how far it projects
- whether the City considers the work an alteration that needs a building permit

The request form on this page sends your project details to Ottawa kitchen renovation contractors listed in the Ottawa Construction Network directory.

Q3

When can cabinets sit 600 mm above a cooktop in Ontario?

The default clearance in Ontario's Building Code is 750 mm between the cooktop burners or elements and any framing, finishes or cabinetry installed directly above (clause 9.10.22.2.(1)). The 600 mm reduction is available under clause 9.10.22.2.(2) when one of two conditions is met: the material above the cooktop is noncombustible, or the framing, finishes and cabinets are protected by a metal hood that projects at least 125 mm beyond them.

Those are minimums for new work, and you ask the City how they apply to your renovation.

The side-wall protection rule adds another layer. Combustible wall framing, finishes or cabinets within 450 mm of the cooktop must be protected above the burners by gypsum board at least 9.5 mm thick, or a material with a 10-minute fire-resistance rating and a flame-spread rating of not more than 25 (9.10.22.3.(1)). Two things are exempt from that side-wall protection: countertop splash boards or back plates (9.10.22.3.(2)), and cabinets that sit at least 450 mm above the burners, except those directly above the cooktop (9.10.22.3.(3)). Again, these are minimums for new work; ask the City how they apply to your renovation.

A few things the Code does not settle on its own. The cooktop's installation instructions may require more clearance than these Code minimums, so check them as well.

On the duct side, if a hood is installed, Ontario's Building Code clause 9.32.3.11 requires the exhaust duct to be noncombustible and corrosion-resistant, to lead directly outdoors with no connections to other ducts, and to carry a grease filter at the intake end. A new duct through an exterior wall is not named on the City's permit or exempt lists; ask the City's Building Code Services before that part of the work starts.

A quote for this work should name the cabinet height and the protection method it is pricing, identifies who supplies and installs any hood and duct, states who applies for any City permit, and breaks out the cost of cabinetry, countertop, hood and duct work as separate line items so you are comparing the same scope in each quote.

Q4

How high above a cooktop must cabinets be under Ontario's Code?

Ontario's Building Code sets the minimum height at 750 mm above the level of the cooktop burners or elements for framing, finishes and cabinetry installed directly above the cooktop (clause 9.10.22.2.(1)).

That 750 mm can be reduced to 600 mm under clause 9.10.22.2.(2) if the material above is noncombustible, or if it is protected by a metal hood that projects at least 125 mm beyond the framing, finishes or cabinets. These are minimums for new work; ask the City's Building Code Services how they apply to your renovation.

The Code also addresses what sits beside the cooktop, not just above it. Combustible wall framing, finishes or cabinets within 450 mm of the cooktop must be protected above the burners by gypsum board at least 9.5 mm thick, or by a material with a 10-minute fire-resistance rating and a flame-spread rating of no more than 25 (clause 9.10.22.3.(1)). Countertop splash boards and back plates are exempt from that protection requirement (9.10.22.3.(2)), and cabinets at least 450 mm above the burners do not need protection either, except for those directly above the cooktop (9.10.22.3.(3)). Again, these are minimums for new work; ask the City how they apply to your renovation.

Separately from the Code, the cooktop's installation instructions may require more clearance than these minimums, so check them.

The hood is the other piece: the 600 mm figure applies where the cabinets above are protected by a metal hood that projects 125 mm beyond them.

Before any cabinet or hood goes in, have the scope, the price and the start and finish dates written into a signed contract so there is no dispute later about what was agreed.

Q5

Do side cabinets near a cooktop need gypsum board in Ontario?

Ontario's Building Code addresses this in clause 9.10.22.3. Combustible wall framing, finishes or cabinets within 450 mm of the cooktop must be protected above the burners by gypsum board at least 9.5 mm thick, or by a material with a 10-minute fire-resistance rating and a flame-spread rating of not more than 25.

Two exceptions narrow that requirement. Countertop splash boards or back plates do not need that protection. Cabinets positioned at least 450 mm above the burners also do not need it, except for cabinets directly above the

cooktop, which are covered by a separate clearance rule.

The clearance rule for what sits directly above is in clause 9.10.22.2. Framing, finishes and cabinetry installed directly above the cooktop must be at least 750 mm above the level of the burners or elements. That distance can be reduced to 600 mm if the material is noncombustible or is protected by a metal hood that projects at least 125 mm beyond the framing, finishes and cabinets. These are minimums for new work; ask the City's Building Code Services how they apply to your renovation.

Read with the clause, the measurement that matters is the horizontal distance from the cooktop: combustible wall finishes or cabinets within 450 mm of it are protected above burner level, and those further away are outside this clause. The range's installation instructions may require more than the Code minimum.

If a quote moves cabinets or the cooktop, ask it to show the distances that put each cabinet inside or outside the 450 mm zone. The request form on this page sends your project details to Ottawa kitchen renovation contractors listed in the Ottawa Construction Network directory.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Kitchen Renos. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa) before starting any kitchen renovation. Some of this work needs a City building permit, electrical work is filed with the Electrical Safety Authority, and gas work is regulated by TSSA. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawakitchenrenos.ca** for the latest answers.