

CALGARY HOT TUB BUYER'S GUIDE

The practical questions to ask before you buy a hot tub in Calgary

Cold-climate performance | City permits | Electrical planning |
Hard-water care | Delivery and service

Calgary tip: *The right hot tub is not just the one that looks best in the showroom. It is the one that is insulated, supported, serviceable, and placed properly for Calgary's winter, wind, snow, hard water, and freeze-thaw conditions.*



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CANADA**



CANADA
CALGARY

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Buying a hot tub in Calgary is different from buying one in a mild climate. The spa has to perform in winter, manage heat loss, deal with hard water, survive freeze-thaw cycles, and be easy to service when the weather is cold.

Use this guide to understand the most common questions people ask before buying a hot tub, with answers customized for Calgary homeowners.

Most important Calgary buying filters: *insulation, cover quality, winter reliability, local service support, electrical planning, delivery access, drainage, and water-care setup.*

CALGARY-SPECIFIC PLANNING NOTES

- ◆ **Permits:** In Calgary, hot tub projects most commonly require an electrical permit.
- ◆ **Raised structures:** If the hot tub will sit on a deck or other raised structure, engineering is typically required.
- ◆ **Water:** Calgary water is considered hard, so water balancing and scale control should be part of your startup plan.
- ◆ **Climate:** Plan for deep cold, wind, snow, sudden Chinook thaws, ice, and winter access from the house.

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CHOOSING THE RIGHT SIZE AND LAYOUT

Calgary buyer note: *buy for year-round use, not just summer entertaining. In winter, people tend to use the tub in shorter, more frequent soaks, so comfort, easy entry, cover placement, and proximity to the house matter as much as total seating capacity.*

How many people will use it most of the time?

Buy for the number of people who will use it on a normal week. For many Calgary homes, that means two adults or a family of four, not the biggest party scenario. A smaller spa can be more economical to heat and maintain, while a 5-7 person model is better if the tub will be part of regular family time or entertaining. In general if you'll have 4 people in the regularly, we suggest a 7'x7' tub or 8'x8' tub.

Is this mostly for two adults, a family, entertaining, or rental/Airbnb use?

Couples often prioritize deeper therapy seats including loungers. Families usually need varied seat heights, open seating, and room for kids to move safely. Entertaining or rental use calls for simple controls, durable finishes, strong water care, and a seating layout that feels open rather than cramped so people of all sizes can be comfortable in it.

Do I want lounge seats or all upright seats?

A lounge seat is great for reclining, leg therapy, and full-body relaxation after skiing, golf, hockey, running, or long workdays. Upright seats usually make better use of space and are better for conversation. In Calgary, where winter soaks are often shorter, many buyers prefer a layout that lets people get comfortable quickly. When considering a lounge, the style matters. Look for a lounge with a more vertical back, and a wall on the side, both of these help ensure you won't just get pushed out of the lounge when you turn the jets on.

Will kids be using it?

Choose a tub with safe entry, good lighting, a large flat footwell, varied seat depths, and easy supervision. Keep water temperatures lower for children and keep soaks shorter. A locking, well-fitted cover is especially important in family backyards. All hot tubs should come with cover locks, ensure you ask your delivery crew to install them when they're setting up the hot tub, assuming this is part of your retailers delivery offering.

Do I need a cool-down seat?

A cool-down seat is very useful in Calgary because winter air can be cold while the water is hot. It lets you sit partly out of the water, cool off without fully getting out, and helps kids or heat-sensitive users take breaks.

How much backyard or deck space do I need?

Plan for the hot tub footprint, steps, cover lifter, service panels, snow clearing, drainage, and a safe walking path. In Calgary, leave more room than the spa dimensions suggest because winter access, icy surfaces, and cover movement all matter.

How much clearance is needed around the tub for service?

Confirm where the equipment panel is and leave practical access to it. In most hot tubs, the main components are directly under the top side controller on the hot tub. This is especially important in Calgary because service may be needed in winter, when snow, fencing, frozen gates, or tight enclosures can make access difficult.

Is bigger always better, or does a bigger tub cost more to run?

Bigger is not always better. A larger tub holds more water, has more surface area, can take longer to heat, and may use more chemicals. In a Calgary winter, the better question is: what size will we use often, comfortably, and efficiently?



UNDERSTANDING HOT TUB PRICING

Calgary buyer note: *the real budget is the hot tub plus electrical, base preparation, delivery access, permits, accessories, water care, and winter operating cost. A low sticker price can become expensive if it is poorly insulated or hard to service locally.*

What is the difference between a lower-priced hot tub and a premium hot tub?

The difference is usually in insulation, shell construction quality, components like controllers and pumps, jet quality, seating comfort, cover quality, warranty, service support, and parts availability. In Calgary, insulation and service support are not luxury features - they directly affect winter performance and ownership cost.

What should I realistically budget in Canada?

Budget for the spa, cover, delivery, electrical, base preparation, steps, cover lifter, starter chemicals, filters, permit requirements, and future maintenance. Ask for a full installed ownership estimate rather than comparing only the hot tub price. Be aware that deep discounts in the hot tub industry are often marketing ploys, and the full retail isn't really \$6,000 more than the sale price.

Is delivery included?

Ask exactly what delivery includes. Calgary delivery may be straightforward in a front-drive suburb, or more complex with narrow side yards, retaining walls, stairs, mature landscaping, snow, ice, or a detached garage. Crane delivery, extra labour, or old tub removal all cost extra.



Is the cover included?

Most quality spas include a fitted insulated cover, but confirm this in writing, and watch for retailers that want to charge extra for a cover, as this is just a ploy to lower the sticker price, as there's no way you can have a hot tub in Calgary without a cover. In Calgary, the cover is part of the heating system. A poor cover loses heat, takes on snow load, allows water to evaporate and raises operating costs. Also, we recommend a flat shell without embellishments like speaker horns or decorative elements, as all of these will reduce the insulation of the cover, often significantly.

Are steps, cover lifter, chemicals, and accessories included?

Some packages include these and some do not. In Calgary, a cover lifter is highly recommended because snowy, heavy covers are awkward to move, and the foam that cover are made from can be damaged when the cover is dropped. Steps should be stable in winter and positioned where they can be kept clear of ice, and we highly recommend covering steps and the landing with a heated snow melting mat in the winter to improve the user experience and the make stepping out of your hot tub much safer.

What does electrical installation usually cost?

Electrical cost depends on distance from the panel, panel capacity, amperage, trenching requirements, conduit, GFCI protection, disconnect location, and permit requirements. Have a licensed electrician review the exact model specifications before delivery, but on average we see most electrical installations costing \$1,500 to \$2,500.

Do I need a concrete pad, pavers, gravel pad, or reinforced deck?

You need a level, stable base designed to carry the filled weight of the tub plus people. Concrete is common, but a properly prepared gravel or paver base will work for many models. Concrete is often poured with a 4% grade, which isn't ideal for a hot tub, and it needs 27+ days to cure before it can hold the hot tub's weight. If the tub is on a deck or raised structure, engineering is typically required in Calgary, and highly recommended. A hot tub full of water and people weighs as much as a Ford F150.

Are there financing options?

Many dealers offer financing. Compare the monthly payment, total interest, term length, fees, and what is included. Financing should not hide the installed cost: electrical, base, delivery complexity, and accessories still need to be planned. While the interest rates charged by retail finance companies is usually higher than a bank, it's often easier to secure, and usually the loans are open so that they can be paid off partly or fully at any time. Be aware of discounted finance rates, as it's important to understand that your retailer is paying this interest, and it's likely to be just buried in the price of your hot tub or swim spa. Unlike the car industry, financing in hot tubs, is carried by a third party who's only benefit is the money they earn from loaning money to you.

Are prices negotiable?

Sometimes there is room on price, but the better value may be accessories, delivery, water-care support, cover lifter, steps, or service. In Calgary, a slightly higher price from a local service-focused dealer can be better than a cheaper tub with limited support, and if you purchase a hot tub from Costco, it's unlikely that a local retailer will support you in delivery, service, or ongoing water maintenance questions. These are services reserved for the hot tub clients of the retailer you purchase from.

When is the best time of year to buy?

Spring and fall often have strong buying activity, but the best time is when the right model, price, and delivery timeline match your project. If you want the tub ready for winter, start early enough to handle, ordering lead times, electrical, base prep, permits, and delivery access.



OPERATING COSTS AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Calgary buyer note: *operating cost is driven by heat loss. Wind, cold nights, snow load, cover quality, insulation, water temperature, and how often the cover is opened all matter. A hot tub that performs well in milder climates may not be the best choice for Calgary.*

How much electricity will it use per month?

Energy use depends on spa size, insulation, cover quality, outside temperature, wind exposure, usage, filtration cycles, and water temperature. Ask for cold-climate operating guidance, not just a generic estimate. In general, most hot tubs cost between \$30 and \$60 per month to operate.

Will it run all winter?

A quality hot tub designed for Canadian conditions will operate all winter in Calgary. The key is strong insulation, a tight insulated cover, proper water level, reliable equipment, and keeping the spa powered and circulating. In fact, you should never turn your hot tub off in the winter, without fully winterizing it. The main risk is that water in the pumping will freeze, expanded and crack plumbing, creating a very expensive repair that's never covered by any warranty in the industry. When your hot tub has perimeter insulation, we often see small space heater installed in open areas as backup to keep the spa warm if it does turn off for some reason. This isn't possible in full foam hot tubs.

Does a better-insulated tub really save money?

Yes. Better insulation reduces heat loss and helps the heater run less often. In Calgary, insulation is especially important during cold snaps, windy nights, and repeated freeze-thaw cycles. While full foam insulation may be proposed as better by retailers selling those hot tubs, we believe perimeter insulation is better for a few reasons. First all

of your expensive components are kept warm, along with the water. Second, those expensive components produce heat when they're running, and that heat is captured naturally into the water, adding to the efficiency, whereas full foam tubs will vent this heat which is better in hot climates where that heat can overheat the water. Finally, perimeter insulation allows for a backup heat source to be installed in the hot tub, that would engage if the hot tub ever turns itself off in the winter, which most often happens if PH is too low for too long, causing the heating element to corrode and fail.

What temperature should I keep it at?

Many owners soak around 100 °F to 104 °F (38 °C to 40 °C). In winter, some keep the hot tub near their preferred soaking temperature so it is ready to use. For kids, longer soaks, or summer use, lower temperatures may be more comfortable. And in the heat of summer, we highly recommend lowering the temperature to 90 °F (32 °C).

Should I turn it down when not using it?

For short gaps between uses, maintaining temperature is often more practical than repeatedly reheating. If you are away longer, lowering the set point will save energy, but do not turn it down too far in freezing weather unless the spa is protected and monitored.

How much more does a poorly insulated hot tub cost in winter?

A poorly insulated spa loses heat faster, runs the heater more often, and may struggle more during deep cold. In Calgary, the difference can show up not just in the power bill, but also in comfort and reliability.

Does a bigger pump or more jets mean higher operating costs?

Not automatically. Larger pumps use more power while running, but overall efficiency depends on pump design, plumbing, filtration, heater operation, cover quality, and insulation. Jet count is not an energy-efficiency measurement.

How important is the cover?

Very important. Most heat escapes from the water surface. For Calgary, choose a tight, insulated cover that can handle winter use, and replace it when it becomes waterlogged, heavy, cracked, or poorly sealed.

WATER CARE AND MAINTENANCE

Calgary buyer note: *Calgary water is considered hard, and hardness can vary by season and area of the city. Hard water affects startup balancing, scale control, filters, heaters, and water clarity. Good dealer support matters, especially for first-time owners.*

Is a hot tub hard to maintain?

It is not maintenance-free, but it can be simple with a consistent routine. Test the water, keep sanitizer in range, rinse filters, manage hardness and pH, and drain/refill on schedule. Calgary hard water makes proper startup balancing especially important.

How often do I add chemicals?

Add chemicals based on test results and usage. Heavy use, kids, parties, and frequent winter soaks may require more frequent sanitizer and balancing. Do not guess - test and adjust, but most clients report monitoring and adjusting their waters 1 to 2 times per week.

How often do I test the water?

Most owners should test several times per week, and more often after heavy use, fresh fills, or water problems. In Calgary, test hardness on startup and pay attention to pH and alkalinity because scale can develop if water is not balanced, and we generally will see scaling develop on the shell of the tub if PH is too high for an extended period of time.

Do I need chlorine or bromine?

Both are common. Chlorine is widely used and effective. Bromine is popular in hot water because it is stable at spa temperatures. The best choice depends on your water-care system, usage, skin sensitivity, and dealer guidance. Bromine is usually more expensive than chlorine, but it's considered slightly easier to maintain the hot tub with Bromine.

What's the difference between salt, ozone, UV, mineral, chlorine, and bromine systems?

Chlorine and bromine are sanitizers that Health Canada requires to be used to sanitize the water even when other systems are present. Ozone and UV are both effective water automatic water treatment technologies that actively sanitize the water, and they are best used in combination. Mineral systems are considered passive, as they create an environment that Algae and Bacteria don't readily grow in to begin with, rather than actively killing them. Salt systems convert salt into Chlorine in your tub and are often called Chlorine factories, and these system will constantly raise the PH level of the tub, and you'll need to constantly be pushing PH down with chemicals. All of these support water care but do not completely eliminate the need for testing, balancing, and maintenance. Be cautious of any claim that a system is completely chemical-free or that the hot tub will maintain itself. It's also worth noting that automated testing systems are becoming mainstream, and many hot tubs are coming with rough-ins or full water monitoring systems, that connect to an app, identify the chemical you use, and tell you exactly when and how much to add. Ask your sales person for more info.

How often do I drain and refill it?

Many owners drain and refill every 6 months, depending on use and water condition. In Calgary, we recommend draining and refilling your hot tub in fall before it gets below zero, and then again in the spring when the weather breaks. If you do need to drain and refill your hot tub in the winter, wait for a chinook, and never do this when it's really cold. When a hot tub is "empty" it still retain many many liters of water in the plumbing, and if that water freezes it can and will expand and rupture your plumbing. This must be avoided at all costs.

How often do filters need cleaning or replacing?

Rinse filters every 30 days and deep-clean them by soaking them in a product like Filter Free every 60 days. Replace filters when they are damaged, clogged, discoloured, or no longer clean well. Hard water and heavy use can make filter care more important. And a clogged filter can hinder circulation so much that the hot tub will trigger a protection routine and stop heating. This is something to keep a keen eye on in the winter.



What happens if I go away for a week?

For a short trip, balance the water, clean the filter, set sanitizer appropriately, secure the cover, and make sure the spa is powered and maintaining temperature. In winter, consider having someone check the tub during extreme cold, and if you have a perimeter insulation tub, consider opening the back of the cabinet and installing a GFCI protected heater, blowing into empty space, set on the lowest set point, and ensuring it doesn't oscillate or move. Plug this into a power source that's separate from the hot tub. You can also purchase a hot tub specific space heater like the Spa Dragon, that will also notify your phone if the water temperature of the tub drops unexpectedly.

Can I use it if the water is cloudy?

In many cases a little cloudiness is not dangerous, but it has the potential to be. If it's a slight cloudiness overnight or after heavy use, add more Sanitizer than normal and shock the tub, you may need to shock the tub for several days to get the hot tub to clear again. Whenever treating water its very important to ensure Alkalinity and PH are in the correct zone first, because Sanitizer is much less effective when the balance of the water is out. We also recommend cleaning the filters of the hot tubs as part of treating cloudy water.

Why does hot tub water smell?

Strong odour usually means the water is not properly balanced or sanitized. A clean spa should not smell harsh. Check sanitizer, pH, filters, and water age. Odour can also come from combined sanitizer or organic buildup. If you smell Chlorine, you're smelling used Chlorine and you need to shock the tub with the cover open and the pumps running to remove the used Chlorine or Bromine from the hot tub. Is the smell is organic, your sanitized has dropped to zero and you need to add sanitizer, and allow it to work before entering the tub. Again, sanitizer works correctly only when the water is balanced.

Is it safe for kids?

Hot tubs are safe for kids with supervision, lower temperatures, shorter soaks, and a locked cover when not in use. Children should never use a hot tub unsupervised.

JETS, SEATING, AND FEATURES

Calgary buyer note: *focus on comfort and therapy you will use year-round. After skiing, hockey, golf, running, landscaping, or long workdays, jet placement and seating comfort matter more than a high jet count.*

How many jets do I need?

You need the right jets in the right places. A spa with fewer well-designed jets can feel better than one with many poorly placed jets. Ask which seats target neck, shoulders, back, calves, and feet.

Are more jets better?

Not always. More jets can look impressive, but jet quality, placement, water pressure, pump design, and adjustability matter more. More jets can also divide pressure to sparsely if the system is not designed well. 100 Jet's on 2 pumps, means the pressure at each jet is useless in most cases. We like to see around 25 jets to a pump, as an easy rule of thumb.

What makes a jet therapeutic?

A therapeutic jet targets a useful muscle group and can be adjusted for flow or direction. For many Calgary buyers, the most valued areas are shoulders, low back, hips, calves, and feet. In most cases, you'll need a lounge seat to effectively target the lower body, or look for a versatile jet like a volcano jet that you can effectively target with adjustable pressure to almost any muscle group.

Do I need a lounge seat?

A lounge is excellent for full-body relaxation, but it uses more space, usually eliminating one or 2 spots in a tub. Some people love loungers; others float out of them, which is often a function of the lounge seat design. We recommend a lounge with a more vertical back and a side wall toward the centre of the hot tub, you don't float out. Try one if possible, especially if the lounge is the main reason you like a model. Loungers also tend to be more height specific, and some loungers will even have multiple foot well's to accommodate taller and shorter people.

What's better: lounge seating or open seating?

Lounge seating is better for reclining therapy. Open seating is better for families, conversation, and groups. In Calgary, consider whether the tub will mostly be recovery and relaxation, or social family use.

Are foot jets worth it?

Foot jets are worth considering if you ski, golf, run, stand all day, or like deep relaxation. Foot therapy is often used more than buyers expect, and can be one of the most relaxing areas of your body to massage, particularly if you subscribe to reflexology.

Do I need LED lights?

You do not need them, but they improve nighttime use, safety, and atmosphere. Because Calgary has long winter evenings, good lighting can make the spa area more inviting and safer.

Are built-in speakers worth it?

It's worth noting that they are almost always limited to a 1 year warranty, even if the hot tub has a 3 year warranty. This rightly indicates that they do tend to be a higher call out issue than anything else on the hot tub. However, they are a personal choice. Some buyers like the clean built-in look; others prefer a separate outdoor speaker that is easier to replace. Prioritize reliability, seating, insulation, and service before audio.



Is Wi-Fi control useful?

Wi-Fi control is useful if you travel, want alerts, or adjust temperature remotely. In Calgary winter, remote monitoring can provide peace of mind, but it is not a substitute for a reliable spa and good maintenance. Some users use the Wi-Fi control as a remote while they're in the spa, allowing them to turn pumps and music on and off without leaving their seat. In new hot tubs, you might also be able to upgrade to full water monitoring with your Wi-Fi control, providing full guidance on water maintenance.

What control system does it use?

This depends on the brand of hot tub. Some brands use a proprietary control system, which often also indicates that all the components of the hot tub are proprietary. We recommend against proprietary parts, because they tend to be more difficult to source and often double the price of a widely available option like Gecko or Balboa. The control system affects reliability, ease of service, and parts availability. Ask whether parts are commonly available and whether local technicians can service the system.

Is the tub easy to operate?

A good tub should be easy to use in the dark, in cold weather, and with wet hands. Temperature, jets, lights, and filtration settings should be simple to understand. Many hot tubs are now available with colour touch screens that are able to clearly communicate the status of the hot tub, and making operations simple.

COLD-CLIMATE AND WINTER USE

Calgary buyer note: *this is one of the most important sections. Calgary hot tubs must deal with deep cold, wind, snow, hard freezes, sudden Chinook thaws, and freeze-thaw drainage around the base.*

Can I use it year-round in Calgary?

Yes. A good cold-climate hot tub can be used year-round, and winter is often the best season for soaking. It's important to note that we never recommend turning a hot tub off in the winter, but if you must, it's imperative to fully winterize the hot tub's plumbing. Choose a spa built for cold weather, place it where you will actually use it, and keep the path from the house safe and clear. We love snow melting mats for the path to the tub, and especially the stairs into the hot tub, as they will become icy otherwise, from bather dripping.

Will it freeze?

A properly running spa will not freeze. The risk comes from power loss, low water level, equipment failure, shutting the tub down incorrectly, or leaving plumbing wet after draining. Always keep the hot tub powered and circulating in freezing weather, and avoid unnecessary service. Always professionally winterize a hot tub if it will sit empty or off during the winter.

What happens during a power outage?

Keep the cover closed and do not open the spa unless necessary. A well-insulated tub can hold heat for a period of time, but timing depends on outside temperature, wind, insulation, water temperature, and outage length. Have a plan for extended outages, including secondary sources of heat, in the case that you have a perimeter insulation hot tub.

What insulation system is best for cold climates?

Look for a complete cold-weather design: insulated cabinet, insulated base, quality cover, protected plumbing, reliable controls, and serviceable equipment. Do not judge insulation by one buzzword alone. We prefer hot tubs that enclose the expensive pumps and control systems inside of the warm cabinet, with insulation around everything. Older hot tub will usually have a cabinet full of foam, which meant that they needed less fiberglass to support the shell, as the foam was doing much of the job. In full foam hot tub the expensive components are usually in a vented cold zone if they're in the cabinet, or in some cases under an uninsulated external step. We prefer a hot tub with perimeter and base insulation so the components are in the warmth and the heat they produce is captured into the water for greater efficiency. In warm climates we recommend full foam, with those component in a vented area, but the opposite is true for Calgary.

Is full-foam better?

Full-foam can be energy efficient and can support plumbing, but leak repairs will be far more labour-intensive and may even require the hot tub to be brought to a shop and put on a stand while the technician digs out foam to find a leak. This is often so price prohibitive, that sadly the hot tub is relegated to the dump well before it's useful life is done.

Is perimeter insulation better?

Perimeter insulation makes service far easier, plus the design retains pump heat inside the cabinet, pushing it into the water. Pumps operate at 60 °C and the water is 40 C, so there's lots of energy to harvest. The hot tubs performance still depends on cabinet design, base insulation, and cover quality. Ask how the whole system performs in winter.

How important is the cover?

In Calgary, the cover is critical. It protects against heat loss, snow, wind, debris, and safety risks. A waterlogged or cracked cover can raise energy use and become difficult to lift.

Can I drain it in winter?

Avoid draining in winter unless it will be refilled immediately or professionally winterized. Water left in plumbing can freeze and cause expensive damage.

What if we go away in January?

Balance the water, clean filters, secure the cover, and confirm the spa is maintaining temperature before leaving. For longer trips or extreme cold, have someone check power, water level, and temperature. If you have a perimeter insulation hot tub, consider adding a secondary heat source like a Spa Dragon, usually in the back of the hot tub.

How do I protect it from wind and snow?

Use a sheltered location, privacy screen, fence, pergola, or landscaping where appropriate. Keep snow from piling against the cabinet and keep the service panel accessible. Make sure the cover lifter can operate in snow, and always clear the snow from your cover before operating the cover lifter.



PLACEMENT AND BACKYARD PLANNING

Calgary buyer note: *the best location is close enough to the back door that you will use it in January, but still has room for cover operation, service, drainage, snow clearing, and safe electrical installation.*

Can I put it on my deck?

Maybe, but the deck must be designed or reviewed for the filled weight of the spa, water, and users, a hot tub can be heavier than a for F150. In Calgary, if the hot tub is on a deck or raised structure, engineering is typically required for the permit process.

Do I need a concrete pad?

A concrete pad is a common but not required and often not the best option. The base must be level, compacted, stable, and suitable for the specific tub. For Calgary, also think about drainage, frost movement, and long-term settling.

Can it go on gravel or pavers?

Yes, if the base is properly built, compacted, level, and designed for the load. Poor base prep can lead to shifting, settling, uneven waterline, and shell stress.

How level does the base need to be?

Level. Hot tubs are designed to sit evenly. A sloped or uneven base can affect structure, waterline, water depth at the filter, seating comfort, and in some cases cabinet alignment.

How close can it be to the house?

Close is convenient, especially in winter, but avoid creating moisture, steam, drainage, or service problems. Consider doors, windows, soffits particularly vented soffits, rooflines, snow shedding, privacy, and cover movement and clearance.

How far should it be from the electrical panel?

The farther the spa is from the panel, the more electrical cost may increase as cost of the wire can be significant. Distance affects wire, conduit, trenching, labour, and routing. Confirm panel capacity, specifically the space available for a 240 Volt breaker (usually double the size of a normal 120 volt breaker) and route early. If your panel is full, some electricians will recommend a new larger panel, but to save costs you can often create a sub panel off the main panel. In addition to the spot on the panel, you'll also need a secondary panel outside with the GFCI breaker in it, that will then lead to the hot tub.

Where does the cover open?

Plan this before delivery. The cover should not block a door, view, walkway, service panel, or safe winter path. It also needs room to open when snow is present.

How do I create privacy?

Use fencing, privacy screens, pergolas, landscaping, or strategic placement. In Calgary neighbourhoods with two-storey homes, check views from neighbouring upper windows, alleys, and adjacent decks.

How close should it be to the back door?

Closer is usually better in Calgary. If the tub is too far away, icy steps, snow, and cold wind can reduce use. A short, well-lit, shovel-friendly route is ideal.

Do I need drainage around it?

Yes. Plan for splash-out, rain, snowmelt, draining, and Chinook thaw cycles. Avoid low spots where water pools around the base and freezes.

Can it go indoors or in a sunroom?

It can, but indoor installations need serious planning: ventilation, humidity control, drainage, waterproof finishes, structural capacity, and service access. Do not treat an indoor hot tub like outdoor patio furniture.

Will steam damage my house or soffits?

It can if the spa is too close to overhangs, soffits, windows, or enclosed spaces. Calgary winter steam can condense and freeze on nearby surfaces. Leave airflow and avoid trapping moisture against the house.

ELECTRICAL REQUIREMENTS

Calgary buyer note: most full-size spas need a dedicated 240V circuit, GFCI protection, correct disconnect placement, and an electrical permit. Always confirm requirements with the exact spa model and a qualified electrician.

Does it plug into a regular outlet?

Some small plug-and-play spas use a standard outlet, but most full-size hot tubs require a dedicated 240V connection. Plug-and-play can be simpler, but it usually has heating and performance limitations, particularly in Calgary's climate.

What is the difference between plug-and-play and 240V?

Plug-and-play models are easier to install but often have smaller heaters and less ability to run heater and jets at full performance together. A 240V spa generally provides stronger heating and better cold-weather performance.

Do I need an electrician?

For most full-size spas, yes. Use a qualified electrician who understands hot tubs, GFCI protection, bonding, outdoor wiring, disconnect placement, and Calgary permit/inspection requirements. Even if you have existing service for an old hot tub, you'll need an electrician to hook up the hot tub.

How many amps does it need?

The required amperage depends on the exact model, heater, pumps, and control pack. Give the electrician the manufacturer specifications, not a guess from a similar tub. Most of our tubs require 50 amp or 60 amp breakers.

Do I need a GFCI breaker?

Yes. Hot tubs require proper ground-fault protection, and the many hot tubs check for and test it as part of their initial startup process. This is a core safety requirement because electricity and water are involved.

Where does the disconnect go?

The disconnect must meet code and should be accessible while still safely positioned away from the water. Have the electrician confirm the location based on code, site layout.

Can I use my existing hot tub wiring?

Maybe, but it must be inspected. Existing wiring may not match the new tub's amperage, disconnect, GFCI, bonding, or current code requirements. Do not assume it is usable.

What does electrical installation cost?

Cost depends on panel capacity, distance, trenching, conduit, amperage, GFCI equipment, routing, and permit/inspection requirements. Get a quote after choosing the model and location. We see most installations costing between \$1,500 and \$2,500, but this is highly dependent on distance and if other components are required due to capacity limitations.

Can the tub be delivered before electrical is ready?

Yes, but the spa cannot be fully started, heated, and tested until electrical is complete. Ideally, coordinate delivery and electrical so the spa can be filled and powered promptly, especially in cold weather. Keep in mind that a new hot tub has been wet tested, and there's likely to be water in the plumbing that shouldn't be allowed to freeze, as it creates the potential for broken plumbing.

Who coordinates the electrician?

Generally the homeowner hires the electrician, although a dealer may recommend trusted trades. Start early so electrical planning does not delay delivery or startup.

DELIVERY AND ACCESS

Calgary buyer note: *delivery access can change with snow, ice, landscaping, gates, slope, and tight side yards. Measure the route before you buy and review it before delivery day.*

How big is the hot tub when delivered?

Most hot tubs arrive as one large finished unit and are often moved on their side. The delivery size is based on the spa's outside dimensions, not the seating capacity. We usually need 40" of continuous width, and 100" of continuous height. Hills, window wells, tight corners, narrow spot, air conditioning units and other obstacles need to be identified.

Does it arrive in one piece?

Yes, most hot tubs arrive fully assembled in one piece. This makes access planning critical.

Can it fit through my gate?

Maybe. Measure gate width, pathway width, corners, eaves, stairs, retaining walls, gas meters, air conditioners, window wells, fences, and overhead clearance. Remember that snowbanks or ice can reduce usable access.

What access width is needed?

Access width depends on the exact model and delivery method. Ask for minimum clearances, then allow extra room for turning and maneuvering.

Can it go up stairs?

Sometimes, but stairs add significant complexity and risk, and usually increase the cost due to more people being required. Keep in mind, hot tubs are not lifted, they are rolled on carts. Number of steps, width, railing, landing space, slope, overhands and surface condition all matter. Winter stairs may be unsafe without clearing and traction.

Do I need a crane?

A crane may be needed if there is no safe ground-level access, the tub must go over a fence or house, or stairs and tight corners make standard delivery unsafe. Identify this before delivery day.

Who removes the old hot tub?

Some dealers offer removal at an extra cost. Confirm whether removal includes disconnecting, cutting, hauling away, disposal, and site cleanup.

What should be ready before delivery day?

The base should be complete and level, access cleared, gates opened or removed, snow and ice cleared, and placement confirmed. Electrical should be planned, even if final connection happens after placement.

Do I need to be home?

Yes, ideally. You should confirm final placement, cover orientation, steps, access, and any delivery decisions. Once the tub is set down, moving it again can be difficult.

How long until I can use it after delivery?

After placement, the spa must be filled, electrically connected, started, heated, balanced, and sanitized. Heating takes longer with cold Calgary tap water and winter temperatures.



BRAND, DEALER, AND SERVICE SUPPORT

Calgary buyer note: you are buying the hot tub and the local support behind it. In winter, fast parts access and service matter. A distant seller may be cheaper upfront but harder to deal with when something goes wrong.

What brands are reliable?

Reliable brands usually have proven components, good dealer networks, available parts, clear warranties, and a track record in cold climates. Ask how the brand performs in Calgary winters.

Is Canadian-made better?

Canadian-made can be an advantage for cold-climate design, parts logistics, and local-market support. It is not the only factor, but it can be meaningful when the product is built with Canadian winters in mind.

Where is it manufactured?

Manufacturing location can affect lead times, warranty support, parts availability, and quality control. Ask where the tub is built and where major components come from.

Are parts easy to get?

This is critical. Pumps, heaters, sensors, topside controls, covers, filters, jets, pillows, and seals may eventually need replacement. Parts availability affects downtime.

Who services it?

Ask whether the selling dealer services the product locally or relies on a third party. Local service is especially valuable during winter.

Is the dealer local?

A local dealer can help with water care, delivery, warranty, parts, and service. For Calgary buyers, local support is one of the biggest differences between a showroom purchase and an online-only purchase.

What happens if I have a problem?

You should know who to call, how service is booked, what is covered, what is chargeable, and typical response times. Ask this before you buy.

Do you stock replacement parts?

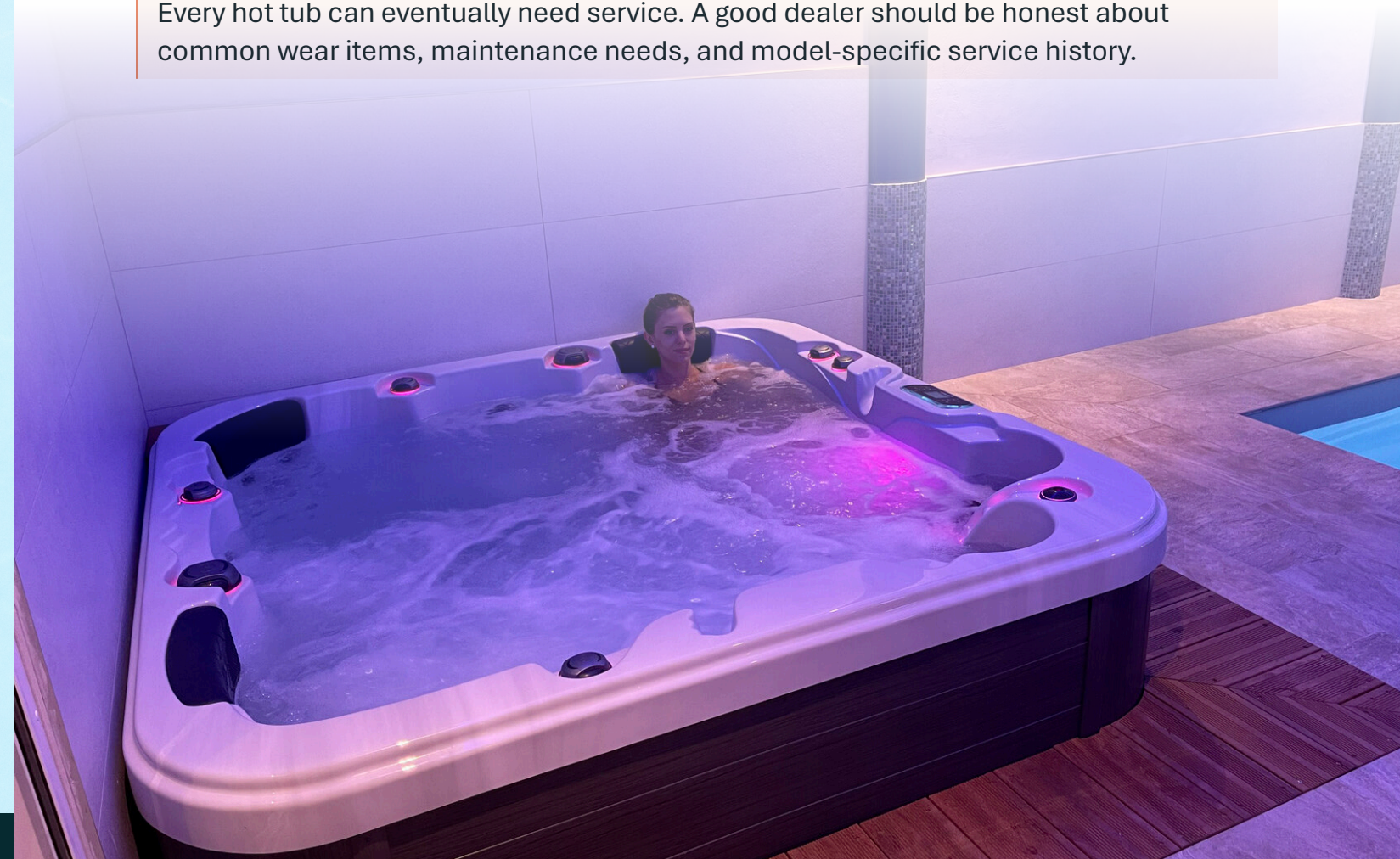
A dealer that stocks common parts can often solve issues faster. If every part must be ordered from far away, simple repairs can take longer.

Are the components common or proprietary?

Common components can be easier to service and replace. Proprietary parts may work well, but understand cost, availability, and who can service them.

Are there service calls on this model?

Every hot tub can eventually need service. A good dealer should be honest about common wear items, maintenance needs, and model-specific service history.



WARRANTY QUESTIONS

Calgary buyer note: *warranty strength is about more than years on paper. Ask whether labour, travel, diagnosis, freeze damage exclusions, water chemistry exclusions, and local service are clearly explained.*

What is covered?

Ask for the written warranty and review shell, structure, surface, plumbing, pumps, heater, controls, audio and lighting systems, jets, cabinet, and cover. Different components usually have different coverage periods.

What is not covered?

Exclusions may include improper water chemistry, neglect, freeze damage, misuse, unauthorized repairs, damage from poor installation, and normal wear items. Read exclusions before placing a deposit.

How long is the shell warranty?

Shell or structure coverage is often longer than equipment coverage. Understand the difference between structural shell coverage and surface/acrylic coverage.

How long are pumps, heater, controls, plumbing, and jets covered?

These are key working components and may have shorter warranty periods than the shell. Ask for a clear breakdown.

Is labour included?

Labour may not be covered for as long as parts. A warranty that covers parts but not labour can still leave you with service costs.

Are service calls included?

Some warranties cover parts but charge for travel, diagnosis, or service calls. In Calgary, clarify whether travel fees apply and who performs the work.

Is the cover covered?

Covers often have separate, shorter warranties and are considered wear items. Snow load, UV, water chemistry, and handling all affect cover life.

Is the warranty prorated?

A prorated warranty means coverage decreases over time. Ask whether each warranty category is full, limited, or prorated.

Does improper water chemistry void warranty?

Yes, it can. Poor water chemistry can damage heaters, seals, jets, covers, pillows, and surfaces. Keep records and follow the water-care program.

Who performs warranty work?

Ideally, the selling dealer or an authorized local technician performs the work. Confirm this before buying.

Do I call the dealer or the manufacturer?

Usually, start with the dealer. A strong dealer will help diagnose the issue, coordinate warranty claims, and arrange service.

WET TESTING AND COMFORT

Calgary buyer note: *comfort matters because the tub will be used in every season. A seat that looks good dry may feel different once you are floating, the jets are on, and the water is hot.*

Can I try the hot tub before buying?

Some dealers offer wet testing on select models. If available, it is one of the best ways to judge seat depth, buoyancy, jet strength, noise, and layout. In many cases, the wet test tub will share seat design with other hot tubs.

What should I look for during a wet test?

Check seat comfort, jet placement, water depth, footwell space, controls, entry/exit, noise, and whether the lounge works for your body. Imagine using it in winter with a toque, towel, and snowy steps nearby.

Are the seats comfortable for my height?

Seat depth varies. A seat that fits one person may be too deep or too shallow for another. Make sure the main users can sit comfortably with shoulders and neck supported.

Do I float out of the lounge seat?

Some people float out of loungers depending on body type, buoyancy, and seat angle. This is one of the most important reasons to wet test if you want a lounge.

Are the jets too strong or too weak?

Jets should be useful and adjustable, not just powerful. Too much pressure can be uncomfortable; too little may not provide the therapy you want. What are they like with and without air added.

Is it noisy?

Listen to pump noise, jet noise, air controls, and cabinet vibration. A hot tub should feel relaxing in a quiet Calgary backyard, not intrusive.

Are the controls easy to use?

Controls should be simple to use at night, with wet hands, and in cold weather. You should not need to pull out the manual for basic functions.

Can two people sit comfortably without bumping knees?

Footwell space matters. A tub rated for six people may feel crowded if the footwell is tight or the seats angle inward.

Is it big enough?

A larger footwell makes the spa feel more comfortable for families and groups. It also makes it easier to move around safely.



CHEAP vs. PREMIUM HOT TUBS

Calgary buyer note: *the cheapest spa is not always the cheapest spa to own. In Calgary, poor insulation, weak covers, limited service, and hard-to-get parts can become expensive quickly.*

Why are some hot tubs so much cheaper online?

Online or big-box spas may have lower overhead, fewer options, lighter insulation, simplified construction, limited delivery support, or less local service. They can work for some buyers, but understand the tradeoffs.

Are Costco or big-box hot tubs good?

They may be suitable for budget-focused buyers who are comfortable managing delivery, setup, service, and warranty. The question is not only whether the tub works - it is who supports it in Calgary when something breaks.

What do I lose with a cheaper model?

You may lose insulation quality, cover quality, seating comfort, jet performance, cabinet strength, warranty support, local service, and long-term parts availability.

Are the pumps smaller?

Sometimes. But pump size alone is not the whole story. Plumbing design, jet count, jet type, and pump efficiency all affect performance.

Is the insulation worse?

It can be. In Calgary, weak insulation is one of the biggest risks with lower-priced spas because it affects winter operating cost and comfort.



Are the jets lower quality?

They may be less targeted, less adjustable, or less durable. Count the quality and placement of the jets, not just the total number.

Are replacement parts available?

This is essential. Before buying a lower-priced or online spa, find out where parts come from, who installs them, and how long they usually take to arrive.

Is the acrylic shell thicker?

Shell construction varies. Ask about acrylic, backing, support, cabinet structure, and warranty. Appearance alone does not prove durability.

Will it last as long?

A lower-priced spa may not last as long, especially in a harsh climate. Lifespan depends on construction, insulation, parts, water care, service, and maintenance.

Who services it if something breaks?

This may be the most important question. If there is no local service path, even a minor issue can become a major headache.

LIFESPAN AND LONG-TERM OWNERSHIP

Calgary buyer note: *long-term ownership depends on build quality, cold-weather performance, water chemistry, service access, and cover condition. A hot tub is a long-term backyard appliance.*

What is the expected lifespan?

A quality hot tub will last 10-20 years with proper care. Lifespan depends on construction, water chemistry, insulation, cover care, service support, and how well the tub is protected from winter stress. It's important to know that, like a car, a hot tub will require some maintenance and repair, usually starting around the 7 year mark. Small leaks or component replacements are easily fixed with minimal labour as long as the cabinet provides easy access to all the parts, and the cabinet isn't filled with foam that can make it very difficult to find the source of leaks. Make sure you ask about access and what the inside of the cabinet looks like, as some brands actually provide almost no access into the cabinet, this can mean that a small leak that should be easily repaired spells the end of your hot tubs life.

What parts usually fail first?

Common wear items include covers, filters, pillows, seals, jets, pumps, heaters, and sensors. These are normal service items over the life of the spa, and if you purchase a hot tub with widely available parts and perimeter insulation, all of these items can be easily repaired and replaced.

How long does a cover last?

A cover's life depends on snow load, UV, water chemistry, handling, wind exposure, and whether it becomes waterlogged. In Calgary, inspect the cover regularly because it works hard year-round. Also ensure you leave the cover open for 20-30 minutes when adding and oxidizers like shock.

How long do pumps last?

Pump life depends on quality, usage, water chemistry, ventilation, and maintenance. Pumps are serviceable and can usually be repaired or replaced, but they should last 5+ years. Ensure water balancing is always in check, and you don't over sanitize the hot tub, both of these can prematurely degrade seals.

Can hot tubs be repaired?

Yes. Most quality hot tubs are repairable if parts and service are available. This is why brand, components, dealer, and service access matter. There are a few brands, including one popular Canadian brand that provide no cabinet access, and the dealer usually won't offer service beyond the required warranty period, as access has been designed to be almost impossible.

Is it worth fixing an old hot tub?

It depends on age, condition, repair cost, energy efficiency, leak risk, cover condition, and parts availability. If repair costs approach the value of the tub, replacement may be smarter. A perimeter insulation hot tub is much easier, faster and thus cheaper to repair, so these hot tubs often find a second life as refurbished tubs.

What maintenance extends the lifespan?

Balanced water, clean filters, proper sanitizer, regular draining, a good cover, winter monitoring, and quick attention to leaks or error codes all extend lifespan.

Does winter shorten the life of the spa?

Winter does not have to shorten the life of a good spa. The bigger risks are freezing, poor insulation, bad water chemistry, weak covers, and neglected maintenance.

Does water chemistry affect lifespan?

Absolutely. Poor water chemistry, particularly very high or very low PH can damage heaters, seals, jets, pumps, surfaces, pillows, and covers. In Calgary's hard water, proper startup balancing and scale control are especially important.

BEFORE YOU PLACE A DEPOSIT

Calgary buyer note: *before you pay, confirm the exact model, inclusions, delivery path, base, electrical plan, permit responsibilities, warranty, service path, and cancellation terms. Winter readiness should be part of the buying conversation, not an afterthought.*

Is the model in stock or special order?

In-stock models may arrive sooner. Special-order models may offer more colour and option choices but can take longer. Ask how timing lines up with base prep, electrical, permits, and desired season of use.

What is the delivery timeline?

Delivery can be affected by inventory, manufacturing, shipping, weather, site readiness, crane availability, and payment schedule. When delays happen, it's often during manufacturing due to part back orders, or delays during shipping.

Is the deposit refundable?

Always ask before paying. Most deposits are non-refundable, especially for special-order hot tubs or custom products. Make sure you are clear on the policy. But if a retailer is ordering something for you, in general, the deposit is non-refundable.

What is included in the price?

Ask for a written quote that lists the hot tub, cover, delivery, steps, cover lifter, starter chemicals, filters, options, promotions, and taxes. This makes comparisons fair. Watch out for dealers that charge for things like the cover which is required for the hot tub to function in Calgary.

What is not included?

Common exclusions include electrical, permits, crane, base preparation, old tub removal, extra delivery labour, trenching, concrete, landscaping, and future service.

Who handles delivery?

Confirm whether delivery is handled by the dealer, manufacturer, third-party carrier, or spa movers. Ask what happens if access is difficult or a crane is needed. Also confirm where the tub will be delivered. Most online or big box retailers will deliver with a 3rd party delivery company to your alley or front driveway only. And moving a thousand pound hot tub with proper tools and trailed mover is dangerous and highly likely to damage the hot tub.

Who handles service?

Ask who provides service after the sale and whether they are local to Calgary. A clear service path is one of the strongest reasons to buy from a local dealer.

What site prep do I need?

You need a stable level base, clear access, drainage, electrical planning, cover-lifter clearance, service access, and a safe route from the house.

What electrical do I need?

Get the exact electrical specification for your model and give it to your electrician. Confirm GFCI protection, disconnect location, amperage, and permit/inspection requirements. In most cases you'll need 240 volts and 50 or 60 amps, but this is very model specific.

What happens if the delivery access does not work?

Delivery may be delayed, extra labour may be needed, or a crane may be required at your cost. Review access before the delivery day to avoid surprises.

What are the payment terms?

Understand deposit amount, balance due date, accepted payment methods, financing terms, and any fees. Get the terms in writing.

What is the cancellation policy?

Cancellation policies vary. Ask what happens if you cancel before production, after production, before delivery. In most cases cancellation is not possible, or will come at a cost.

What warranty documents will I receive?

You should receive written warranty information or directions to the warranty info online for the spa and included components. Keep warranty documents, invoices, chemical records, and service records together.



FINAL CALGARY BUYER CHECKLIST

Before placing a deposit, make sure you can answer these questions clearly.

- Does the size fit how we will actually use it in both summer and winter?
- Is the seating comfortable for the main users?
- Do we understand the full installed cost, not just the spa price?
- Is the base planned for load, level, drainage, snow, and freeze-thaw?
- Has an electrician confirmed panel capacity, amperage, GFCI, disconnect, and permit requirements?
- Will the delivery path work in the actual season of delivery?
- Is the spa truly built for Calgary winter use?
- Is the cover strong, insulated, fitted, and easy to use with a lifter?
- Do we understand Calgary hard-water startup and ongoing water care?
- Is there local Calgary service support?
- Are replacement parts and warranty support available?
- Do we understand deposit, payment, delivery, cancellation, and warranty terms?

Best next step: *send photos of the backyard, approximate measurements, gate/path access, desired location, and how many people will use the spa most often. A good dealer can help flag sizing, electrical, base, delivery, service, and winter-use issues before you buy.*

This guide is written as general buyer education, not as legal, engineering, or electrical advice. Always verify current requirements with The City of Calgary or your local jurisdiction, a qualified electrician, and the manufacturer's installation manual before construction or installation.

