

Air Traffic Controller

Paid a salary from the first day of training. Most people who apply never get in.

TYPICAL PAY

\$114,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$53k to \$221k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 3 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Airport towers, area control centres, a national training centre

How you get there

- 1 Finish high school** Grade 12
 A high school diploma or equivalent is the education requirement. No aviation experience is needed.
- 2 Apply and pass the screening** Months
 You must be 18 or older and a Canadian citizen or permanent resident. Online aptitude tests come first, then interviews. Most applicants stop here.
- 3 Medical, security and drug screening** Weeks to months
 A Transport Canada Category 2 medical certificate, a security clearance and an initial drug test including cannabis.
- 4 Basic training** Several months
 Full-time classroom and simulator work, a 37.5 hour week with mandatory attendance. Failing a check means you are out.
- 5 On the job training** 1 to 2 years
 You move to a tower or an area control centre, work real traffic beside a qualified controller, and switch to shift work. You are licensed when you check out.

Pros and cons

- + Paid from your first day of training, with no tuition
- + Very high pay without a degree
- + A short workweek once you are licensed
- Most applicants are screened out, and trainees fail out too
- Rotating shifts, nights, weekends and holidays forever
- You must move to wherever you are trained

Optional boosts

Area control centre. Tower. Terminal control. Instructor or supervisor.

Good to know

Seven rooms control the whole country

Civilian air traffic over Canada is handled from 7 area control centres: Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Moncton and Gander. About 42 airport towers sit under them.

No aviation background needed

Nav Canada, the company that runs air traffic control in Canada, says no previous aviation experience is required. A high school diploma, the aptitude tests and the medical are the gate.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Air Traffic Controller in Canada, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Job Bank: Air traffic controller, job requirements

Nav Canada: Air Traffic Controller careers

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/air-traffic-controller>



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