

Construction Estimator

Work out what a building will cost before anyone pours concrete. A two-year diploma or a trade ticket, then an office job with site visits.

TYPICAL PAY

\$79,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$50k to \$128k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Contractor offices, cost consulting firms, site trailers, home office

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Grade 12 math is essential. Physics and a construction or drafting class help.
- 2 Diploma or trade** 2 to 4 years
A 2-year Construction Engineering Technology or Civil Engineering Technology diploma (NAIT, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, and colleges across the country), or a journeyperson ticket in carpentry, electrical or plumbing.
- 3 Junior estimator** 2 to 3 years
Learn quantity takeoff from drawings, pricing, subcontractor quotes and bid day under a senior estimator.
- 4 Designation** After a few years of work
CEC (Construction Estimator Certified) through CIQS (the Canadian Institute of Quantity Surveyors), or Gold Seal Certified Estimator through the Canadian Construction Association. Both need documented experience and an exam.
- 5 Senior or chief estimator** 8 to 10 years in
Own whole bids, mentor juniors, decide what the company goes after.

Pros and cons

- + Construction pay without construction weather
- + Two-year diploma is enough to start
- + Clear ladder to chief estimator, project manager or cost consultant
- Bid deadlines mean real pressure and late nights
- A wrong number can cost your company millions
- Losing most of the bids you work on is normal

Optional boosts

PQS (Professional Quantity Surveyor). Gold Seal Certified Estimator. A trade ticket. Specialty estimating.

Good to know

Quantity surveyor is the old name

The profession comes from Britain, where quantity surveyors have measured buildings for centuries. CIQS (the Canadian Institute of Quantity Surveyors) was founded in 1959 and now has more than 2,0...

One percent decides the winner

On public tenders the lowest qualified bid usually wins. Estimators at competing contractors are often within one or two percent of each other on a project worth tens of millions, so small mistakes decide w...

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Construction estimators, wages (updated Nov 2025)
CIQS (Canadian Institute of Quantity Surveyors): PQS and CEC designations
Canadian Construction Association: Gold Seal Certification
alis Alberta: Construction Estimator occupation profile

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/construction-estimator>



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