

Environmental Lawyer

Pipelines, mines, water and climate rules. A lawyer path that leads to government, big firms, charities or First Nations.

TYPICAL PAY

\$110,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$70k to \$200k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

7 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Government ministries, law firms, charities, First Nations, energy co...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Science plus strong writing. No specific requirements.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 3 to 4 years
 Any subject. Environmental science, geography, biology or political science are useful. Write the LSAT (law school admission test).
- 3 Law school (JD, juris doctor)** 3 years
 Take environmental law, administrative law, Aboriginal law and natural resources law. A few schools offer a joint law and environmental studies degree.
- 4 Licensing** About 1 year
 Article at a government ministry, a firm's environmental group, or a legal clinic. Then the bar exams.
- 5 Build the specialty** 2 to 5 years
 Environmental law is mostly administrative law. Your first years are permits, tribunal hearings and judicial reviews.

Pros and cons

- + Work tied to things you can see: a river, a mine, a wetland
- + Many employers: government, firms, companies, charities, First Nations
- + Government jobs have real hours and pensions
- Charity and clinic pay is low for a lawyer
- Cases take years and often end in compromise
- Deeply political, and governments rewrite the rules

Good to know

The Supreme Court decided who controls carbon pricing

In 2021 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Ottawa's carbon pricing law was constitutional. In 2023 it found that most of the federal Impact Assessment Act was not. Environmental lawyers argue...

The duty to consult comes from a case about trees

In 2004 the Haida Nation challenged logging licences on Haida Gwaii. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that governments must consult Indigenous peoples before decisions that could affect their rights. Ev...

Optional boosts

Energy regulation. Indigenous consultation. Climate and carbon rules. Litigation.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Lawyers and Quebec notaries, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Law Society of Ontario: Becoming a lawyer

Environment and Climate Change Canada

Ecojustice: About

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/environmental-lawyer>



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