

Film Director

Decide what every shot, performance and cut is trying to say, then get a hundred people to deliver it.

TYPICAL PAY**\$85,000**

a year, full time

PAY RANGE**\$46k to \$146k**

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY**4 to 10 years**

after high school

DEMAND**Moderate**

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED**No**

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK**Film and television sets,
commercial shoots, streaming pr...**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
English, drama, media arts. Make short films on a phone. Quantity first, quality follows.
- 2 Film school or set work** 1 to 4 years
A university film degree, a one-year private film school, or skipping both and working your way up as a production assistant.
- 3 Make shorts and get them seen** 2 to 5 years
Festivals are how directors are discovered in Canada. A short that travels gets you meetings.
- 4 Paid directing work** Years 3 to 8
Music videos, commercials, branded content, documentary segments, then episodic television.
- 5 A feature or a series** Year 6 and beyond
Usually financed through Telefilm Canada, a provincial agency, a broadcaster or a streamer, with a producer attached.

Pros and cons

- + Total creative authority over what ends up on screen
- + Public funding for Canadian features that many countries do not have
- + No licence, no exam, no required degree
- Long unpaid years before anyone hires you to direct
- Income arrives in lumps and can stop for a year
- Twelve to fourteen hour days on location, away from home for weeks

Optional boosts

Assistant directing. Editing. Documentary. Commercials and music videos.

Good to know

Public money is behind most Canadian films you have hear...

Telefilm Canada reports that 95.5% of the box office earned by Canadian films came from films it helped fund. Without that agency the national film industry would be much smaller.

Screen production is a \$10 billion industry here

The Canadian Media Producers Association puts film and television production volume at about \$10.2 billion in 2025, supporting roughly 181,000 jobs across the country.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Film Director in Canada, wages (updated November 2025)
Telefilm Canada
Canadian Media Producers Association
National Film Board of Canada

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/film-director>



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