

# Foreign Service Officer

Represent Canada abroad: diplomacy, trade, aid and helping Canadians in trouble overseas.

## TYPICAL PAY

**\$91,000**

a year, full time

## PAY RANGE

**\$56k to \$139k**

starting to experienced

## TIME TO QUALIFY

**4 to 6 years**

after high school

## DEMAND

**Limited**

job outlook

## LICENCE NEEDED

**No**

anyone can do it

## WHERE YOU WORK

**Embassies and consulates abroad,  
headquarters in Ottawa, trade offi...**

## How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12  
Take French seriously. Bilingualism is close to unavoidable in this career.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years  
Political science, international relations, economics, law, business or languages. There is no required subject.
- 3 Build international experience** During your degree  
Exchange terms, work abroad, a third language, volunteering with international organizations.
- 4 Apply to a recruitment campaign** Campaigns run irregularly  
Global Affairs Canada recruits through advertised processes for streams such as trade commissioner, political and economic officer, management and consular officer, and international assistance officer.
- 5 Testing, clearance and training** 6 to 18 months  
Written exams, interviews, language testing and a security clearance, then training before your first assignment.

## Pros and cons

- + You live in several countries and are paid to understand them
- + Real responsibility young, especially at small missions
- + Strong pension, allowances and paid relocation
- You move every two to four years whether you want to or not
- Postings can be dangerous, isolated or hard on family
- Partners often cannot work at the posting

## Good to know

### Half your career is outside Canada

Global Affairs Canada tells applicants outright to expect about half their working life to be spent abroad, rotating to a new assignment every two to four years.

### Trade is the biggest stream

Trade commissioners, who help Canadian companies find customers and partners overseas, make up a large share of the foreign service. Diplomacy in practice is often commercial.

## Optional boosts

A third language. Time living abroad. Trade or business background. Public service experience.

### Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Foreign service officer, wages (updated Nov 2025)  
Global Affairs Canada: A career in the Canadian foreign service  
Government of Canada: GC Jobs and how to apply

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/foreign-service-officer>



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