

General Contractor

Run the whole build: hire the trades, keep the schedule, carry the risk. Usually a trade first, then your own company.

TYPICAL PAY

\$101,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$65k to \$174k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 10 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Job sites, site trailers, your truck, client homes

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Grade 12 with math, English and a construction class. Business courses help more than most people expect.
- 2 Trade or diploma** 2 to 5 years
A carpentry apprenticeship is the classic route. A 2-year Construction Engineering Technology diploma or a 4-year construction management degree is the office route.
- 3 Lead hand, foreperson, site superintendent** 3 to 6 years
Run crews, then whole sites for someone else. Learn scheduling, subcontractors, inspections and clients.
- 4 Licences and paperwork** Weeks to months
To build new homes you need a builder licence: HCRA (the Home Construction Regulatory Authority) in Ontario, BC Housing in BC, the provincial builder licence in Alberta, and the RBQ (the Quebec building board) in Quebec. Plus insurance, workers' compensation and often...
- 5 Your own company** Years 8 to 10 and beyond
Start with renovations or a single custom build, then grow.

Pros and cons

- + Highest earning ceiling in the construction trades
- + You own something: a company, a reputation, the buildings you made
- + Every job is different and you make the decisions
- You carry all the risk: thin margins, unpaid clients, price spikes
- Long hours and constant phone calls, including weekends
- Years of trade work before you are ready to run jobs

Optional boosts

Gold Seal Certified Superintendent or Project Manager. A journeyperson ticket. Construction safety certification. Estimating skills.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: General contractor (construction managers), wages (updated Nov 2025)

HCRA (Home Construction Regulatory Authority), Ontario

BC Housing: builder and developer licensing

Alberta: residential builder licensing

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/general-contractor>

Good to know

Ontario checks the licence for you

Every new home builder and seller in Ontario must be licensed by HCRA (the Home Construction Regulatory Authority), and the Ontario Builder Directory lets any buyer look up a builder's licence and recor...

Alberta is raising the bar in 2027

Alberta's residential builder licence costs \$600 for a new licence and \$500 to renew, and from January 1, 2027 builders must confirm they meet new competency standards. The province wants fewer untrain...



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