

Ironworker

Bolt up the steel skeleton of towers and bridges, or tie the rebar inside concrete. High pay, high risk, 3 to 4 years to certify.

TYPICAL PAY

\$89,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$60k to \$104k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

3 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

High-rise sites, bridges, industrial plants, precast yards

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Grade 12 with math and shop. You must be comfortable at height and physically strong.
- 2 Get into the union hall or a contractor** Weeks to months
Most ironworkers are union. Locals run intake with a fitness test and an aptitude test. Non-union steel erectors and rebar contractors also sponsor.
- 3 Register the apprenticeship** Days
With Skilled Trades Ontario, Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training, or your province's trades body. Pick a stream: generalist, structural, or reinforcing.
- 4 Work and study** 3 to 4 years
About 6,000 hours in Ontario: roughly 5,300 on the job plus three school levels of roughly 8 weeks, often at the union training centre.
- 5 Certificate of Qualification and Red Seal** After your hours
Pass the provincial exam. The Red Seal endorsement lets you follow the work to any province.

Pros and cons

- + Among the best-paid trades, from the first year
- + Strong union pensions and benefits
- + Certified in 3 to 4 years, no debt
- One of the most dangerous jobs in Canada: falls, crush injuries, crane accidents
- Brutal on the body over a career
- Outdoor work in every kind of weather

Optional boosts

Red Seal endorsement. Welding tickets. Rigging and signalling. Connector.

Good to know

Mohawk ironworkers built New York

Ironworkers from Kahnawake, near Montreal, helped raise the Empire State Building and generations of skyscrapers. The tradition continues today, and many still commute between Kahnawake and New York.

The Quebec Bridge disaster

In 1907 the Quebec Bridge collapsed during construction, killing 75 workers, 33 of them Mohawk ironworkers from Kahnawake. The disaster changed engineering practice, and the iron ring worn by Can...

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Ironworkers, wages (updated Nov 2025)
Red Seal Program: Ironworker (Generalist)
Red Seal Program: Ironworker (Structural/Ornamental)
Skilled Trades Ontario

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/ironworker>



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