

Private Investigator

Surveillance, background checks and insurance fraud, not car chases. Licensed in every province after a short course.

TYPICAL PAY

\$44,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$34k to \$65k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 1 year

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Investigation agencies, insurance companies, law firms, self-emplo...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
 Not always required by law, but agencies expect it.
- 2 Basic training** 1 to 3 weeks
 Ontario: a ministry-approved course (about 50 hours, online or in class) covering law, evidence, surveillance and report writing. Alberta: the Alberta Professional Investigator Training course. BC and Quebec have their own.
- 3 Provincial test and licence** Weeks
 Ontario: pass the ministry test, then apply through ServiceOntario with a clean record check. You must be 18 and eligible to work in Canada. Alberta licenses through its security services and investigators program.
- 4 Get hired** Months
 Insurance investigation firms and large agencies hire most new licensees. Expect surveillance shifts first.
- 5 Specialize or go solo** 3 to 5 years
 After a few years: corporate fraud, workplace investigations, or your own agency licence.

Pros and cons

- + Cheap, fast entry
- + Independent work, no office
- + Can build your own agency
- Low pay for years
- Long, boring surveillance shifts at odd hours
- Casual work with no benefits at many agencies

Good to know

No badge, no powers

A private investigator has no more legal authority than any other citizen. They cannot arrest, detain or enter private property. Their power is patience, public records and a camera.

Insurance pays the bills

Most investigators in Canada work on insurance files: disability claims, car accidents and workplace injuries, checking whether the story matches the video.

Optional boosts

Insurance fraud and disability claims. Corporate and workplace investigations. Digital forensics and open-source intelligence. Process serving.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Detectives (police), wages, the page that pools this occupation (updated Nov 2025)

Job Bank: Private investigators, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Ontario: Private security and investigative services (licensing)

alis (Alberta): Professional investigator occupation profile

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/private-investigator>



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