

Rail Traffic Controller

Sit in a control centre and decide where every train on your territory goes next.

TYPICAL PAY

\$85,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$64k to \$112k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 6 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

**Railway control centres in
Edmonton, Calgary, Montreal and...**

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Grade 12 or equivalent is the stated requirement at the major carriers.
- 2 Get railway experience** 2 to 5 years
Most successful candidates have worked as a conductor or locomotive engineer and already know the operating rules and the territory.
- 3 Apply and pass screening** Weeks to months
Testing that measures memory, multitasking and decision speed, plus an interview, medical and background check.
- 4 Paid training** About 5 to 6 months
Roughly 5 to 6 months of classroom and simulator instruction on the operating rules, signals and control systems.
- 5 Probation on live territory** Several months
Supervised shifts on real traffic, commonly around 130 shifts, before you are fully qualified.

Pros and cons

- + Strong pay for an indoor job with no degree
- + A real pension and union coverage at most carriers
- + Mentally interesting work that never repeats exactly
- Rotating shifts, including overnights, for your whole career
- High pressure and serious consequences for a mistake
- Long stretches of sitting and screen time

Good to know

One person can control hundreds of kilometres

A single desk in a centralized traffic control centre can govern a long stretch of main line. Canada's network runs to roughly 43,000 kilometres of track, managed from only a few control centres.

Trains do not move without permission

On controlled track, a crew needs authority from the rail traffic controller before entering. The controller, not the engineer, decides who goes first when two trains want the same piece of railway.

Optional boosts

Qualifying on more territory. Chief rail traffic controller. Rules and training roles. Network operations and planning.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Rail Traffic Controller, wages (updated Nov 2025)
Transport Canada: Rail transportation
Railway Employee Qualification Standards Regulations
CN Careers

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/rail-traffic-controller>



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