# Special Forces Operator

Canada's special operations units only take serving members who pass a hard selection, so you join the Canadian Armed Forces first.

| TYPICAL PAY | PAY RANGE | COST TO QUALIFY | TIME TO QUALIFY |
|---|---|---|---|
| **$116,000** | **$111k to $157k** | **Nothing** | **2 to 6 years** |
| a year, full time | lower end to upper end | tuition, fees, exams, kit | paid while you train |

| DEMAND | LICENCE NEEDED | WHERE YOU WORK |
|---|---|---|
| **Good** | **No** | **Ottawa and Petawawa in Ontario, training areas, deployments at home and abroad** |
| job outlook | no licence to hold | |

## How you get there

1. **Meet the basics to join** — Age 17 or older
   At least 17 (a parent must consent if you are under 18), a Canadian citizen or permanent resident, and at least Grade 10.
2. **Join and do basic training** — Months
   Enrol in the Regular Force or the Reserve Force and finish basic training.
3. **Become fully trained in your first job** — Varies by job
   The special operations command only takes members who have finished training in their current military job.
4. **Apply and pass the fitness test** — Months
   Send a notice of intent and the recruiting forms, meet the medical standard, then pass a fitness selection test. Fail it and you stop there.
5. **Selection, then special operations training** — Not published
   A structured assessment under intense physical and mental stress, then the unit's own courses. Course lengths are not published.

In Quebec the route is different. It is set out on the career page: career.help/ca/careers/special-forces-operator

## Pros and cons

+ Some of the highest pay for enlisted members in the forces
+ No tuition and paid at every stage
+ Intense training and courses, all paid for
- Years of service before you may even apply
- Selection under intense physical and mental stress, with no guarantee
- Long absences you cannot explain to family

## Good to know

### Training ahead doubles your odds

The forces' own fitness staff found that assaulter candidates who followed the full 12 week pre-selection program were twice as likely to finish the hardest phase of selection.

### Before 1993 it was a police job

JTF 2 (Joint Task Force 2) was created in 1993. Before that, federal hostage rescue and counter-terrorism belonged to the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and its Special Emergency Response Team.

## Optional boosts

The official fitness program · Maturity · Initiative and perseverance · Self-confidence

**Where these numbers come from**

Government of Canada: Regular Force pay by rank, including special forces (effective April 1, 2025)
National Defence: Compensation and Benefits Instructions, chapter 204 (special forces pay, CBI 204.31)
National Defence: Compensation and Benefits Instructions, chapter 205 (special operations allowances)
Canadian Special Operations Forces Command: how to apply

Numbers checked October 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/special-forces-operator

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