



Mechanical Contractors Association of Canada



MECHANICAL CONTRACTING CAREERS

CONSTRUCTION ESTIMATOR

Are you analytical and organized? Do you have strong math skills? Could you review plans and specifications to accurately determine material and labour requirements? Could you make accurate allowances in your estimates for errors, breakage and weather conditions? Do you have field experience in the construction industry? If your answer to these questions is yes, then you could become a Construction Estimator.

Also known as

- Chief Estimator – Construction
- Construction Estimator
- Junior Estimator – Construction
- Cost Estimator – Construction
- Principal Estimator – Construction
- Professional Quantity Surveyor – Construction
- Quantity Surveyor – Construction

What the work is like

Construction estimators analyze the costs of and prepare estimates on construction projects. They may specialize in estimating costs for civil engineering, architectural, structural, electrical and mechanical construction projects, or they may specialize in estimating costs for one construction trade in particular, such as electrical. They are employed by residential, commercial and industrial construction companies and major electrical, mechanical and trade contractors. In some cases they may be self employed. In smaller organizations, estimators may also perform other tasks.

Construction estimators work in all four sectors of the construction industry: New Home Building and Renovation, Heavy Industrial, Institutional and Commercial, and Civil Engineering. To learn more about the construction sectors, check out [Inside the industry](#).

Your duties

As a Construction Estimator, your duties may include the following:

- prepare estimates of probable costs of materials, labour and equipment, and subcontracts for construction projects based on contract bids, quotations, schematic drawings and specifications
- advise on tendering procedures, examine and analyze tenders, recommend tender awards and conduct negotiations
- establish and maintain tendering processes
- set up cost monitoring and reporting systems and procedures
- prepare cost and expenditure statements and forecasts at regular intervals for the duration of a project
- prepare and maintain a directory of suppliers, contractors and subcontractors

- liaise, consult and communicate with engineers, architects, owners, contractors and subcontractors, and prepare economic feasibility studies on changes and adjustments to cost estimates
- manage and co-ordinate construction projects, and prepare construction progress schedules

Work conditions

The standard workweek for construction estimators is 40 hours (8 hours a day, 5 days a week). As with many careers in construction, there are peak periods that will require you to work overtime. The number of additional hours you work each week depends on the construction sector and region you work in, and will vary from one job to the next.

Construction estimators work in offices, but spend some time on construction sites reviewing progress and meeting with project stakeholders. They work with construction supervisors and managers to ensure accurate and up-to-date reports.

As with all careers in the construction industry, safety is the top priority. Estimators are trained to work safely and wear personal protective equipment such as hard hats, gloves and steel-toed boots whenever they are on construction sites.

Essential Skills

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) has identified nine Essential Skills that are necessary to succeed in the workplace. These skills provide the foundation for learning all other skills and apply to most construction careers. Best of all, you can learn and improve on these skills in school, on the job and during your everyday life.

The most important Essential Skills for construction estimators are the following:

- Document Use – reading and interpreting documents to extract information
- Numeracy – working with numbers to perform calculations
- Problem Solving – coming up with solutions to challenges

[Click here](#) to see how these skills are applied on the job. You can also [click here](#) to learn more about Essential Skills.

Typical background requirements

Completion of a college program in civil or construction engineering technology is normally required, or several years of experience working as a qualified tradesperson in a construction trade.

Specific skill requirements include the following:

- prepare estimates of labour and material costs
- estimate pre-contract costs
- prepare and maintain a directory of suppliers and contractors
- read and interpret blueprints, drawings and specifications
- provide economic feasibility studies and preliminary estimates for proposed projects
- operate CADD systems

Certification by the Canadian Institute of Quantity Surveyors may be required.

Training and certification

The Canadian Institute of Quantity Surveyors (CIQS) is a good source of information on courses and training providers for this occupation. The institute offers training courses in construction estimating, and also awards (in conjunction with regional associations) the Professional Quantity Surveyor and the Construction Estimator Certified designations to estimators who meet their certification requirements. For more information, visit www.ciqs.org.

The Canadian Construction Association awards qualified people with Gold Seal Certificates for several construction occupations, including the Gold Seal Certificate – Construction Estimator designation. For more information, visit www.goldsealcertification.com.

The American Society of Professional Estimators (ASPE) is another source of information on courses and training providers for this occupation. ASPE also award a certification in estimating to estimators who meet their certification requirements. For more information, visit www.aspenational.org.

Salary ranges

Estimator hourly wages vary depending on the contract, the company, collective agreements, and local and national economic conditions. Typical hourly wage ranges for construction estimators (based on national or regional averages) are as follows:

Entry-level estimators

Region	Typical hourly rate
National average	\$13-\$17
Atlantic Canada	\$11-\$14
Ontario and Quebec	\$13-\$16
Western Canada	\$16-\$18

Based on national averages, junior apprentices can earn annual salaries ranging from \$27,000 to \$35,000 per year, not including overtime.

Experienced and/or fully trained estimators

Region	Typical hourly rate
National average	\$18-\$28
Atlantic Canada	\$16-\$22
Ontario and Quebec	\$18-\$24
Western Canada	\$25-\$30

Based on national averages, journeypersons can earn annual salaries ranging from \$37,000 to \$58,000 per year, not including overtime.

Highly experienced estimators

Region	Typical hourly rate
National average	\$25-\$40
Atlantic Canada	\$22-\$30
Ontario and Quebec	\$25-\$35
Western Canada	\$33-\$50

Based on national averages, highly experienced journeypersons can earn annual salaries ranging from \$52,000 to \$83,000 per year, not including overtime.

Construction work can involve overtime, so your total annual salary will vary depending on the number of overtime hours you work.

In addition to the hourly rate, many construction workers receive statutory holiday and vacation pay. Depending on the contract, you may also receive benefits such as group insurance for health, dental, and vision care, as well as retirement packages and training benefits up to 30% of your hourly rate. If you are self-employed, it is up to you to arrange your own benefits.

Building your career

With experience you can progress to more senior positions, such as Senior Estimator or Chief Estimator.

As with most careers in the construction industry, your skills are portable. If you want to move, you can take your skills with you.