

# Driving in BC Wikibook

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# Getting a BC Driver's Licence

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This page is used in the Driving in BC Lesson Module, a law-related ESL lesson for newcomers to Canada.

If you are a newcomer to British Columbia, and you drive a vehicle, you can use a valid driver's licence from your country for the first 90 days. You must apply for a BC driver's licence within these 90 days.

You need different types of licences to drive a car, a motorcycle, bus, truck or taxi.

## Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC)

The Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) manages licences and provides insurance to BC motorists.

There are ICBC driver licensing offices throughout British Columbia. To find an office near you, go to the ICBC website at [www.icbc.com](http://www.icbc.com)<sup>[1]</sup>. Select "Driver Licensing."

## Knowledge test and road test

Most newcomers to BC have to pass a knowledge test and road test.

### Knowledge test

The knowledge test is about the driving rules in BC.

To get ready to take the knowledge test, go to an ICBC driver licensing office and pick up the publication *Learn to Drive Smart*<sup>[2]</sup>. You can also download this publication from the ICBC website<sup>[1]</sup>. At the website, select "Driver Licensing." The publication has information about British Columbia's traffic laws, the rules of the road, and safe driving.

When you know what is in the publication, you can take the knowledge test.

The ICBC website has an online practice test so you can practise before you take the test. To take the practice test, go to the ICBC website. Select "Driver Licensing," and take the practice test in English or Punjabi. You can also watch the online video, *What's the Real Knowledge Test Like?*

You take the knowledge test on a computer at an ICBC driver licensing office. The test takes about half an hour.



You may be able to exchange your licence for a British Columbia licence if:

- you have two years' driving experience, and
- you have a licence from one of the following countries: Austria, Australia, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States.

Check [www.icbc.com](http://www.icbc.com)<sup>[1]</sup> for details.

There are 50 questions in the knowledge test. You have to get at least 40 right, to pass the test.

If you do not get 40 questions right, you need to study some more. You can go back and take the test again whenever you feel ready.

You can take the knowledge test in Arabic, Chinese (Simplified and Traditional), Croatian, English, Farsi (Persian), French, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Tell the ICBC driver licensing office if you need a translator.

## Road test

The road test usually takes about an hour. An ICBC driver examiner goes with you to test how safely you drive. The examiner will take you on city streets and on the highway. You have to do things like park, back up, change lanes, merge with traffic, and obey speed limits, traffic lights and stop signs.

If you pass the road test, you can get a British Columbia driver's licence. You fill out the forms back at the office, pay the fees, and ICBC mails you the licence.

If you fail the test, you do not get a driver's licence. You have to practise driving some more. Ask the examiner when you can take the test again.



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## Stages in getting a licence

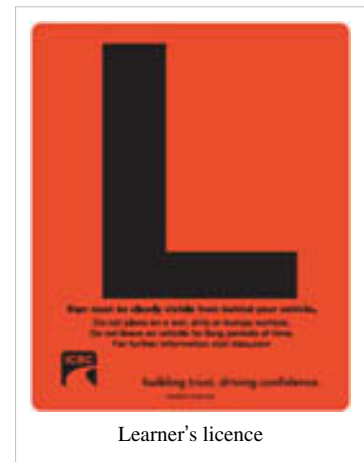
If you have never had a driver's licence before, you go through three stages:

1. Learner's licence
2. Novice licence
3. Full-privilege licence

### Learner's licence

When you pass your knowledge and vision tests, you get a learner's licence.

- You must always have a licensed driver 25 years or older sitting beside you.
- You cannot drive between midnight and 5 a.m.
- You cannot drink any alcohol when you are driving – your blood alcohol must be zero.
- Your car must have an "L" sign (for learner) on it.



Learner's licence



Learning to Drive? A driving school can help you learn to drive. You may be able to find a teacher who speaks your first language.

Make sure you have driver training that is approved by ICBC. Go to the ICBC website at [www.icbc.com](http://www.icbc.com)<sup>[1]</sup>. Select "Driver Licensing" and click on "Driver Training."

If you break any of the special rules for a learner driver, you have to pay a fine. You can also lose your right to drive, for a period of time.

If you break any traffic rules while you are a learner, you can lose your right to drive very quickly. For example, if you have two traffic tickets, you would lose your right to drive for one *month*. You can take the road test 12 months after you get your learner's licence.

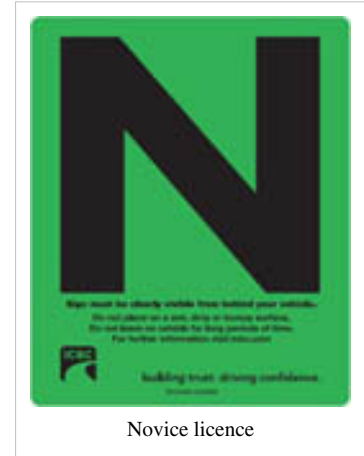
## Novice licence

When you pass the road test at the end of the learner stage, you get a novice licence.

- You can have only one passenger with you unless:
  - You have a licensed driver 25 years or older beside you, or
  - Your passengers are close family members.
- You cannot drink any alcohol when you are driving – your blood alcohol must be zero.
- Your car must have an "N" sign (for novice) on it for 24 months.

If you break any of the special rules for a novice driver, you go back to the beginning of the novice period.


If you break any traffic rules while you are a novice driver, you can lose your right to drive. The rules are the same as for a learner driver. For example, if you get two traffic tickets, you would lose your right to drive for one month.



## Full-privilege licence

You can take the road test for a full-privilege licence after you have had the novice licence for two years.

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## References

- [1] <http://www.icbc.com>  
[2] <http://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/getting-licensed/pass-veh/roadsense-drivers>

# Vehicle Registration and Insurance

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You must register your car and get licence plates and vehicle insurance. You can do this at any Autoplan office. For office locations and more information, go to [www.icbc.com](http://www.icbc.com)<sup>[1]</sup>. Select “Autoplan Insurance.”

## Vehicle insurance

### You must have Basic Autoplan insurance

When you drive a vehicle in BC, you must buy Basic Autoplan insurance from ICBC. Basic Autoplan covers you if you are in a traffic accident:

- When you are in an accident, Basic Autoplan can pay you some money if you cannot work. ICBC can also pay up to \$150,000 for medical costs for each injured person.
- When you are at fault and another driver makes a claim against you, Basic Autoplan can pay them up to \$200,000.
- When another driver is at fault and does not have enough insurance, Basic Autoplan can pay you up to \$1 million.
- If the accident is a “hit-and-run” (the driver who caused the accident leaves and nobody knows who caused the accident), Basic Autoplan can pay up to \$200,000. Anyone who is hurt in the hit-and-run can make a claim, not just the person who has the insurance.

### You can buy extra insurance

You can buy extra insurance from ICBC or from a private insurance company. Many people buy extra insurance to cover them if they cause a traffic accident. It could cost you much more than \$200,000 if you caused an accident and someone was seriously injured.

You can also buy extra insurance in case you damage your own car, or if another person damages your parked car or breaks into it.

To decide what extra insurance to buy, think about the price of your car, and how much of your own money you could afford to pay for costs.

### Cost of insurance

Many things affect the cost of your car insurance. They include these things:

- where you live,
- your age,
- the type of car you have,
- your driving record,
- your insurance claim record,
- the number of years you have had a driving licence, and
- if you drive your vehicle to work.

For all the ways you can save on what you pay for insurance, visit [www.icbc.com](http://www.icbc.com)<sup>[1]</sup>. Select “Autoplan Insurance.”

## Safe driving record


Were you a safe driver in your country? If so, you may be able to get a discount on the cost of your insurance. Ask your insurance company in the country you came from to write a letter that describes your insurance record. This must be a notarized letter in English.

Tell the insurance company that the letter must include:

- the name of the policy holder,
- the names of any listed drivers on the policy,
- the policy number, and
- the period of time during which you had coverage, and the dates of any claims.

Take the letter with you when you buy your insurance. The letter may help you to get insurance at a reduced rate.

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## References

[1] <http://www.icbc.com>

# Driving Safely

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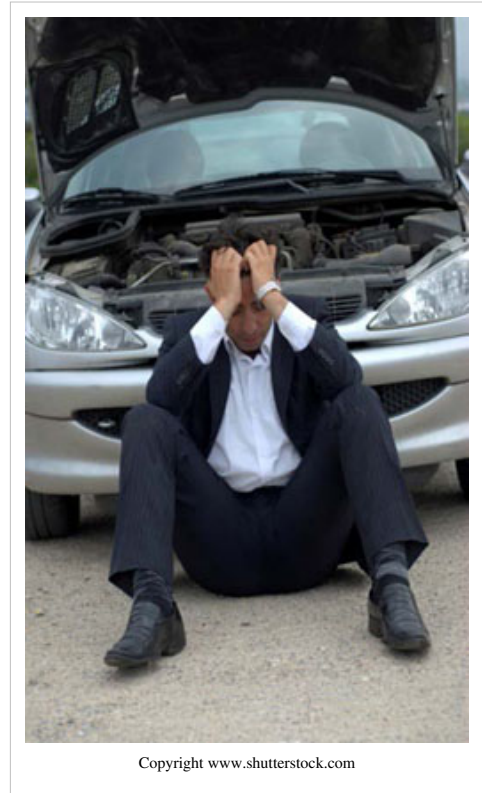
This page is used in the Driving in BC Lesson Module, a law-related ESL lesson for newcomers to Canada.

## Car accidents

### What should you do if you have an accident?

**If you have an accident, you MUST stop and help.**

1. If it is safe to do so, pull over to the side of the road so you do not block traffic.
2. If you can get out of the vehicle, find out if anyone is hurt.
3. If you or others are seriously injured, call 911.
4. Write down the other driver's:
  - name, address and phone number,
  - driver's licence number,
  - vehicle licence plate number, and
  - vehicle registration and insurance information.
5. Get the name, address and phone number of anyone who saw the accident.
6. Report the accident to ICBC as soon as possible:
  - Phone the Dial-a-Claim centre:  
Lower Mainland: 604-520-8222  
Elsewhere in BC: 1-800-910-4222
  - You can also report the accident online. Use the online claim report. To find the online claim report, go to the ICBC website at [www.icbc.com](http://www.icbc.com)<sup>[1]</sup>. Select "Claims."



ICBC has a "Claim Card" online that can help you collect the details you need. The Claim Card is available in English, Punjabi and Chinese. To find the Claim Card, go to the ICBC website. Select "Claims."



### **If you have any pain**

- Go to a doctor. Make a note of your injuries or have someone do it for you. Be sure to report all your injuries to the doctor.
- Talk to a lawyer before you make your claim to ICBC. You have a right to do this.

### **Reporting to the police**

Phone 911 and report the accident to the police if:

- Anyone has been hurt or killed.
- You think the damage to the cars will cost more than \$1,000.
- The other driver broke the law. For example, the driver was drunk or he drove through a red light.
- Another driver hit your vehicle and drove away (hit and run).

If it is not an emergency, report the accident within 24 hours. Call the non-emergency phone number. You can find the non-emergency number on the first inside page of your phone book.

### **Drinking and driving**

British Columbia has very strict laws about drinking and driving. Alcoholic drinks, such as beer, wine and liquor, can make you an impaired driver. If you cause an accident while drinking and driving, you may have to pay a fine, or go to jail. ICBC may not pay the costs if you cause an accident after you have been drinking. You may have to pay the costs yourself. Your insurance may also cost more.

### **If you are caught drinking and driving**

The police can stop you to check if you have been drinking alcohol.

Police can ask you to provide a breath sample into a roadside screening device. The device measures how much alcohol you have in your blood.

If you are caught driving with a blood-alcohol content *over 0.05*:

- You will lose your driver's licence immediately.
- You will pay a fine.
- You may also lose your vehicle. If you do, you will pay all the towing and storage fees.
- You will pay to get your licence back.

In addition to these penalties, you can be charged with a crime and have to go to court if:

- you are caught driving with a blood-alcohol content *over 0.08*, or
- you refuse to provide a breath sample.

If you are found guilty in court, you can:

- be prohibited from driving for at least a year, and
- pay more for car insurance.

## If you are caught using drugs and driving

When you are driving, police can stop you and check to see if you have been taking drugs. They can order you to give them samples of blood, oral fluid or urine.



The penalties for using drugs and driving are like those for drinking and driving. They include fines and penalty points on your driving record.

You can also be charged with a crime and have to go to court.

## Seat belts and child car seats

In British Columbia, all drivers and passengers must wear seat belts. There is a fine for not wearing a seat belt.

British Columbia also has rules about using child car seats.

- Children from birth to over 9 kilos (20 pounds) must sit in a baby seat in the middle of the back seat, facing the back of the car.
- Children between 9 and 18 kilos (20 to 40 pounds) must sit in a child safety seat in the back seat.
- Children until they reach 145 cm or 4'9" must sit in a booster seat that raises them to the correct level for the seat belts.



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Keep all children in the back seat until 12 years of age, away from active airbags.

In some communities, the local fire hall will check your child car seat to make sure it is safe.

For more information, call the free BCAA Child Passenger Safety Program at 1-877-247-5551. You can also go online for child passenger safety information at [www.bcaa.com/road-safety](http://www.bcaa.com/road-safety) <sup>[2]</sup>.

## Traffic tickets

You must pay a fine if the police catch you breaking traffic laws, such as driving through a red light or driving faster than the speed limit.

Drivers who break a traffic law also get driver penalty points on their driving record. For example, you get three driver penalty points for speeding. Drivers with more than three points in one year must pay extra money to ICBC for their insurance.

You might get a traffic ticket you do not think is fair. Or you might have been charged the wrong amount. If so, you have 30 days to fight the ticket.

To find out how to fight a traffic ticket, go to [www.clicklaw.bc.ca](http://www.clicklaw.bc.ca) <sup>[3]</sup>. Go to the section called "Solve Problems" and search for "traffic ticket."

## Cell phones

When you are driving, it is against the law to use a hand-held cell phone or any other electronic device you hold in your hands.

Learner or novice drivers cannot use any cell phone and electronic devices, including those that are hands-free.

## Pedestrians

The laws in Canada about people crossing the road are different from those in many other countries. Drivers must stop and wait for pedestrians in a *crosswalk* or in an intersection.

## Intersections

Any place where two streets meet is an intersection. At an intersection, you must stop if you see pedestrians waiting to cross the road.

When you approach any intersection, look left and right to see if there are pedestrians waiting to cross.

If a vehicle is stopped in front of you or in the lane next to you, they may be waiting for a person to cross the road, so be prepared to stop.

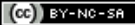
## Crosswalks

The roads in our cities and town have crosswalks. They can be marked by:

- white lines across the road,
- flashing lights, or
- traffic lights.

Drivers must always stop if anyone is walking in a crosswalk.

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## References


- [1] <http://www.icbc.com>
- [2] <http://www.bcaa.com/road-safety>
- [3] <http://www.clicklaw.bc.ca>

# Resources

## Helpful Information for Driving in BC

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Basic Autoplan</b>                       | Information on ICBC's Basic Autoplan insurance, which provides a basic level of insurance coverage for all British Columbians who own and drive a vehicle in BC.  | <a href="http://www.icbc.com/autoplan/basic">www.icbc.com/autoplan/basic</a> <sup>[1]</sup>  |
| <b>BCAA Child Passenger Safety Program</b>  | Information on BCAA's Child Passenger Safety Program, which helps make sure children are safe while travelling on BC roads.   | <a href="http://www.bcaa.com/road-safety">www.bcaa.com/road-safety</a> <sup>[2]</sup>  |
| <b>Clicklaw</b>                             | A website with legal information and education from across BC. The resources available through Clicklaw are designed to be used by the public.  | <a href="http://www.clicklaw.bc.ca">www.clicklaw.bc.ca</a> <sup>[3]</sup>  |
| <b>Dial-a-Claim Centre</b>                  | ICBC's 24 hour phone line to report a claim.  | Phone in Lower Mainland: 604-520-8222<br>Toll-free elsewhere in BC: 1-800-910-4222   |
| <b>Drinking and Driving Laws</b>            | Information from ICBC on the laws relating to impaired driving.   | <a href="http://www.icbc.com/road-safety/safer-drivers/impaired-driving">www.icbc.com/road-safety/safer-drivers/impaired-driving</a> <sup>[4]</sup>            |
| <b>Insurance Corporation of BC (ICBC)</b>   | The Insurance Corporation of British Columbia is a provincial Crown corporation that provides universal auto insurance to BC drivers.   | <a href="http://www.icbc.com">www.icbc.com</a> <sup>[5]</sup>  |
| <b>Insurance Discounts</b>                  | Information from ICBC on insurance premiums and costs.  | <a href="http://www.icbc.com/autoplan/costs/claim-record">www.icbc.com/autoplan/costs/claim-record</a> <sup>[6]</sup>  |
| <b>Learn to Drive Smart</b>                 | A manual from ICBC for new drivers to help them study for the knowledge test.   | <a href="http://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing">www.icbc.com/driver-licensing</a> <sup>[7]</sup>  |
| <b>People's Law School</b>                  | The People's Law School provides people in BC with free public legal education and information. Visit our website or call us to find out how to access the education and information needed to exercise your legal rights and responsibilities. | <a href="http://www.publiclegaled.bc.ca">www.publiclegaled.bc.ca</a> <sup>[8]</sup>  |
| <b>Register Your Car</b>                    | Information from ICBC on registering your vehicle.  | <a href="http://www.icbc.com/registration-licensing">www.icbc.com/registration-licensing</a> <sup>[9]</sup>  |
| <b>Report the Accident Online</b>           | On ICBC's website, you can report some types of claims online.  | <a href="http://www.icbc.com/claims/report-online">www.icbc.com/claims/report-online</a> <sup>[10]</sup>   |
| <b>Road Test</b>                            | Information for new drivers on getting the learner's or novice licence.   | <a href="http://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/new-drivers">www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/new-drivers</a> <sup>[11]</sup>                                       |
| <b>Traffic Fines and Penalties</b>          | Information on the fines and penalty points for BC traffic offences.  | <a href="http://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/tickets">www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/tickets</a> <sup>[12]</sup>   |
| <b>What's the Real Knowledge Test Like?</b> | Prepare for the knowledge test, one of the steps in getting a BC driver's licence.  | <a href="http://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/getting-licensed/pass-veh/opkt">www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/getting-licensed/pass-veh/opkt</a> <sup>[13]</sup> |

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## References

- [1] <http://www.icbc.com/autoplan/basic>
- [2] <http://www.bcaa.com/road-safety>
- [3] <http://www.clicklaw.bc.ca>
- [4] <http://www.icbc.com/road-safety/safer-drivers/impaired-driving>
- [5] <http://www.icbc.com>
- [6] <http://www.icbc.com/autoplan/costs/claim-record>
- [7] <http://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/getting-licensed/pass-veh/roadsense-drivers>
- [8] <http://www.publiclegaled.bc.ca>
- [9] <http://www.icbc.com/registration-licensing>
- [10] <http://www.icbc.com/claims/report-online>
- [11] <http://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/new-drivers>
- [12] <http://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/tickets/paying-disputing/chart-offenceswithfines>
- [13] <http://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/getting-licensed/pass-veh/opkt>

## Glossary for Driving in BC

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crosswalk

A place marked off on the street where people can cross.

impaired driver

Someone who is not able to drive safely because of alcohol or drugs, or being tired.

insurance claim

A written report made to an insurance company saying what happened and why you need money to cover damage to the vehicle and any injuries to yourself or others.

intersection

Where two or more roads cross.

merge

To join a line of traffic.

notarized

Signed by a public official who has the authority to say documents are accurate.

novice

Beginner.

passenger

Anyone in the car who is not the driver.

privilege

A special right or benefit.

full-privilege licence

A licence without the special rules that learners and novices have.

prohibited

Not allowed, not permitted.

valid driver's licence

A licence that allows you to drive.


vehicle

Car, truck, motor bike, van—anything that drives on the road.

yield

In traffic, when you allow another car to go first.

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# About this Wikibook

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## About Driving in BC

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This wikibook from People's Law School is for newcomers and new drivers in British Columbia. It explains the laws relating to getting a driver's licence and driving a car in BC.

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The People's Law School works within budget to keep publications up-to-date. However, the reader or service provider is responsible for using and interpreting information in this publication. *You should not rely on this publication for legal advice. It provides general information only.*

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- Teresa Augustine for publication coordination.
- The ELSA program students, instructors and staff of the People's Law School who reviewed this publication.
- Law Foundation of BC, Ministry of Attorney General, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General: Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch and Notary Foundation, for their funding support.

### The People's Law School

The People's Law School is a non-profit charitable society whose purpose is to provide British Columbians with reliable information about their rights and responsibilities under the law.



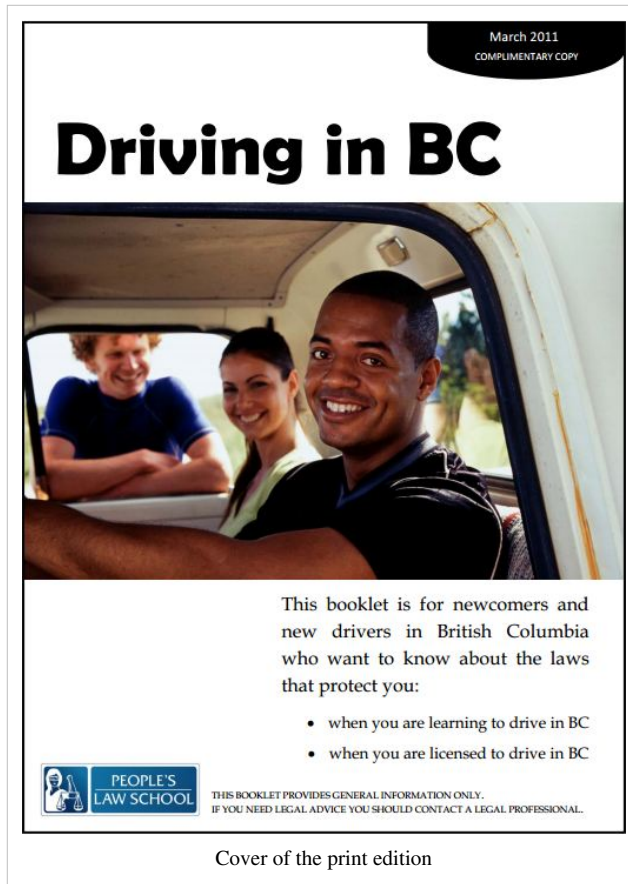
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Email: [info@publiclegaled.bc.ca](mailto:info@publiclegaled.bc.ca)

Website: [www.publiclegaled.bc.ca](http://www.publiclegaled.bc.ca)<sup>[1]</sup>



Cover of the print edition

## References

- [1] <http://www.publiclegaled.bc.ca>