

THE CONSUMER AFFAIRS SECTION CONT.

Investigation of Complaints

Consumers are actively encouraged to seek the assistance of officers in the Section. In doing so, a number of our objectives can be achieved. These are:

- to effectively monitor, regulate or control the whole sale and retail prices of basic goods,
- to endeavor to reduce as far as possible, unfair trading of basic goods and services,
- to investigate and seek to correct trade practices which appear likely to adversely affect consumers' economic interest, their health and safety or otherwise,
- to promote the education of the public and make adequate information accessible to them so that they can acquire the knowledge and skill to be informed consumers, conscious of their rights and responsibilities,
- to raise public awareness of the roles and functions of the Division of Prices and Consumer Affairs,
- to establish or maintain a legal and/or administrative measure to enable consumers to obtain redress through formal or informal procedures that are expeditious, fair, inexpensive and accessible.

Complainants are required to visit the office in the Prices & Consumer Affairs Division located on the ground floor of the Cecil George-John Building at Redcliffe Street and Corn Alley, St. John's, Antigua.

All relevant documents and items related to the complaint must accompany the complaint. At this stage an officer will be assigned to the case and he/she will follow the progress of the investigation in an effort to obtain a satisfactory conclusion.

Education Programme

In order to create an awareness of consumers' rights and responsibilities in the area of consumer protection, lectures are offered to schools, adult groups and other organizations. These are delivered on request from those requiring the Division's services.

THE INFORMATION SECTION

The Information Section is responsible for the planning, organizing and execution of programmes for consumer awareness, education and protection through the facilities of:-

- Radio and Television/The Press
- Lectures with schools, community and voluntary groups.
- Seminars and exhibitions

The duties of the Section also include research and preparation of consumer educational materials such as leaflets, brochures and posters as well as publicity materials and press releases.

WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY

The Division of Prices and Consumer Affairs celebrates World Consumer Rights Day with the International Community of consumer advocates on March 15th each year. This is a very special occasion when attention is focused on the rights and responsibilities of consumers.



PRICES AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS DIVISION

MINISTRY OF TRADE, INDUSTRY & COMMERCE
Cecil George-John Building
Redcliffe Street & Corn Alley
St. John's, Antigua

LOCAL TEL: (268) 462-0834 / 4347 / 562-2732/3

INTERNATIONAL TEL: (268) 462-4183

FAX: (268) 562-7556

EMAIL: CONSUMERAFFAIRS@AB.GOV.AG

VISION STATEMENT

To become a model government organization, striving to educate, inform, protect and improve the quality of life for all consumers, through a dependable, knowledgeable and helpful staff.

MISSION STATEMENT

To be enthusiastic and diligent in providing reliable, accurate and valid information to consumers in Antigua and Barbuda, while administering an effective consumer protection policy.

The Prices and Consumer Affairs Division became operational in 1976. Prior to this, the Department was called the Price Control Department and dealt with matters strictly related to Price Control.

In 1976, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, cognizant of the need to protect the wider interests of consumers extended the scope of the department to embrace consumer protection, hence the Division of Prices and Consumer Affairs.

FUNCTIONS

The functions of the Division of Prices and Consumer Affairs are as follows:

- To maintain, control or regulate supplies of basic and essential goods, so as to ensure their equitable distribution and their availability at fair prices.
- To seek to protect consumers as far as possible against unfair trading practices in relation to goods and services.

- To promote and protect the general interests of consumers, whether such interests are economic, health, safety or otherwise.

ROLES

The Division is headed by the Director of Prices and Consumer Affairs who administers the Division with the assistance of a Deputy.

The Division is divided into three (3) sections as follows:

1. The Price Control Section
2. The Consumer Affairs Section
3. The Information Section

1. THE PRICE CONTROL SECTION

The Price Control Section is staffed with a Senior Price Control Officer who is responsible for supervising the work of one (1) Price Control Officer, one (1) Senior Price Control Inspector and ten (10) Price Control Inspectors. There is one Price Control Inspector in Barbuda.

The Section is responsible for enforcing the **DISTRIBUTION AND PRICE OF GOODS ACT (CAP. 138) Revised Edition 1992**, in terms of ensuring that the basic and essential goods named under the Act, are marked with their selling prices in clear and legible manner when displayed for sale, and that their wholesale and retail prices are not in excess of the maximum selling price.

The maximum prices of those goods are fixed by a percentage profit margin, i.e. 10% in most cases on the landed cost of wholesale, and 15% on the wholesale cost or retail.

This is accomplished through the inspection of the said goods in the market place on a regular basis by the Price Control Officers and by the prosecution of traders who contravene the regulation.

2. THE CONSUMER AFFAIRS SECTION

The Consumer Affairs Section is the primary link between the public and the business sector. The Section is staffed with a Consumer Affairs Officer who is responsible for the supervision of four (4) Liaison Officers.

The Liaison Officers are required to receive and investigate consumer complaints and answer queries relating to consumer welfare. They are also responsible for educating the public on all consumer matters by the use of print and/or electronic media as well as attending related meetings throughout Antigua & Barbuda.

The Section seeks to promote the marketing of safe products and to encourage demand for high quality goods and services.

This section further seeks to give guidance to consumers and traders alike in order to ensure fair trading of goods and services, thereby encouraging a more harmonious relationship between both parties.

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