

Ministry of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development

Compiled by the Ministry of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development in collaboration with the Office of Public Sector Reform, July 2002



Minister: Sen. The Hon. Lynette Eastmond
Permanent Secretary: Mr. Cephas Gooding

Mission

“To encourage economic development, and the improvement of the quality of life of the people of Barbados through the facilitation of commerce, entrepreneurship and the protection of consumers.”

Departments under the Ministry’s portfolio:

1. National Council for Science and Technology
2. Cooperatives Department
3. Office of Public Counsel
4. Department of Commerce & Consumer Affairs (formerly the Price Control Division)
5. Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency
6. Business Development Unit
7. Fair Trading Commission
8. Barbados National Standards Institution

Objectives

Among other things:

- 1) Through the National Council for Science and Technology, co-ordinate research and development in science and technology to contribute to the economic development of Barbados.
- 2) To promote the growth and development of the commercial and business sectors, with particular emphasis on the small business sector.
- 3) To administer the Small Business Development Act 1999-23.

- 4) To promote, implement, and facilitate economic development by establishing national standards through the services of the Barbados National Standards Institution.
- 5) To administer the Control of the Standards Act, Cap.326A and the Weights and Measures Act, Cap.331.
- 6) To administer the Co-operatives Societies Act, Cap.378, the Friendly Societies Act, Cap.379, the Building Societies Act, Cap 377 and the Industrial and Provident Societies Act, Cap.380.
- 7) Through the Fair Trading Commission, administer the Fair Trading Commission Act 2000-31 and the Utilities Regulation Act 2000-30.
- 8) To implement, promote and facilitate consumer protection policies and programmes.
- 9) To administer the Miscellaneous Controls Act, Cap.329.
- 10) To administer the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act 2001 - 34

Public Sector Reform Initiatives

- 1) The installation of an internal communication network system.
- 2) The computerization of the Registry systems which allows for the efficient monitoring and tracking of files.
- 3) The Accounting functions have been recently computerized, with the introduction of SmartStream.
- 4) The Ministry's Internal Reform Committee is currently addressing issues such as the physical plant, and the building of team spirit within the Ministry.
- 5) The restructuring of the Ministry to strengthen its capacity to undertake its functions.

Major Successes

- 1) The completion of productivity workshops: these effectively sought to highlight strategies to promote efficiency and productivity within the working environment.
- 2) Customer Service workshops: the main aim of these workshops was to illustrate to staff how critical customer service is to the organization, and how it affects the Ministry's image to both its internal and external clients.
- 3) The computerization of the Ministry's operational functions such as the registry, accounts and document preparation center.
- 4) The development of a Website for internal communication and for dissemination of information to the general public
- 5) Publication of a Newsletter

Projected Plans

- 1) A revision of the Ministry's Strategic Plan.
- 2) The continued implementation of a rigorous legislative reform programme, with particular attention to Electronic Commerce, Standards Administration, Legal Metrology and the strengthening of the regulatory framework for cooperatives.
- 3) The continuation of training and development to build capacity in particular to the Ministry's human resources.
- 4) The preparation and implementation of an Information and Communications Technology Plan.
- 5) The promotion of the role and functions of the office of the Supervisor of Insolvency.
- 6) Further promotion of Hazzard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Programme.
- 7) The establishment of an interactive Science and Technology Centre.
- 8) The establishment of a National Research and Development Fund



The Ministry of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development is in the vanguard of reform for it has found that its mandate has significantly shifted from the early days of the Ministry's establishment. Today the current trading environment is directed by trade liberalization in direct contrast to the protectionist policies that were established in Barbados in the Post Independence era. The Ministry has been able to refocus and redirect its mandate to prepare Barbados to participate in a global liberalized market and as such it has created the Fair Trading Commission, the Office of Public Counsel and the Office of Supervisor of Insolvency. In addition, it has sought to give a new impetus to such agencies as the Barbados National Standards Institution (BNSI) and the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (formerly the Price Control Division).

It is envisioned that the institutional strengthening of the Barbados National Standards Institution (BNSI) will allow it to rise to the ever-increasing challenge of national and global standardization and allow the BNSI to perform the needed functions required by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The BNSI has successfully established over 46 mandatory national standards that are primarily concerned with health, safety, food matters and others that are considered important for national and economic development. A major area of success for BNSI has been the recognition of over 300 national standards that have been developed on a voluntary consensus basis by all participating stakeholders.

One of the Institution's biggest challenges is the adaptation of the local exporting business sector to the ISO 9000 standards. ISO 9000 is essentially concerned with quality management throughout the production exercise. Today, ten companies in Barbados have become ISO 9000 certified; however as yet, no service organization has gained certification. Other standards that the BNSI are currently examining are ISO14000, which primarily audits environmental management and HACCP a standard which is required for entry into the European Union market. A spokesman for the agency indicated that one of the major hindrances of international standards certification is its cost. She states that in many cases 'many businesses just cannot afford to become certified'. She did indicate however that the agency has sought to advise small business on strategies to overcome the prohibitive cost of certification.

The Deputy Director has indicated that a number of projected plans for the Institution will include, the upgrading and accreditation of the laboratory, increased training of staff, and the upgrading of legislation relating to standards and metrology in Barbados. In addition to the promotion and use of the Barbados' National Building Code, plans include the promotion of the BNSI

certification mark as a marking tool for producers and exporters, and the continuation of monitoring of products that carry the BNSI certification mark.

The Department of Commerce & Consumer Affairs was established as a direct result of the dismantling of the licensing and Price Control regime. The Department has been established to facilitate liberalization with its emphases on consumerism. The Department, headed by a Director, will review trends and developments in Consumer Affairs, Domestic Trade and Commerce. The Department comprises two sections, the Consumer Affairs Division and the Trade Division. The department will also manage and implement commercial policies and monitor the inspection and testing of goods and services to ensure compliance with international standards.

Further Information:

www.commerce.gov.bb