

# BARBADOS

## **Chapter 8A Ombudsman**

*An Act to provide for the establishment of the office  
of Ombudsman*

1. This Act may be cited as the Ombudsman Act.
2. (1) There shall be an Ombudsman for Barbados who shall, in accordance with this Act, investigate and report upon allegations of improper, unreasonable or inadequate administrative conduct.  
(2) The Ombudsman shall perform his functions in accordance with his own independent judgment but shall be responsible to Parliament for the general discharge of his duties.  
(3) The Ombudsman shall not enter upon the duties of his office until he has taken and subscribed the oath of office in the form set out in the First Schedule.  
(4) The Ombudsman shall not be a member of the Senate or of the House of Assembly and shall not hold any other office of emolument or engage in any other occupation for reward.
3. (1) Subject to subsection (2), the Ombudsman shall be appointed by the Governor-General, by instrument under

the Public Seal, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition.

(2) The Governor-General shall before appointing a person to be the Ombudsman, submit the proposed appointment to each House of Parliament for approval.

(3) The Ombudsman may be removed from office in accordance with the provisions of section 105 of the Constitution which shall apply to his office as if enacted by this Act and the prescribed authority for that purpose shall be the Prime Minister acting after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition.

(4) The Ombudsman shall vacate office on attaining the age of 65 years but may be re-appointed by the Governor-General in the same manner as under subsection (1) for one further period not exceeding 5 years.

(5) The Ombudsman may resign office at any time by written notice to the Governor-General.

3A. (1) There shall be paid to the Ombudsman a salary at such annual rate as the Governor-General specifies by order.

(2) An order made under this section shall be subject to negative resolution.

(3) An order made under this section may contain such supplementary provisions as the Governor-General may consider necessary or expedient for the purposes of the order.

4. (1) Any function of the Ombudsman under this Act may be performed by any officer of the Ombudsman authorised by him for that purpose.

(2) The officers of the Ombudsman shall be public officers appointed in accordance with section 94 of the Constitution.

(3) The Ombudsman may charge such fees in connection with his functions in such amounts and subject to such conditions as the Governor-General may prescribe.

(4) All fees received by the Ombudsman pursuant to subsection (3) shall be paid to the Accountant General.

5. (1) The purpose of an investigation by the Ombudsman shall be to ascertain whether injustice has been caused by improper, unreasonable or inadequate administrative conduct on the part of a government ministry, department or other authority subject to this Act.

(2) The Ombudsman may investigate any course of conduct or anything done or omitted by any person in the exercise of administrative functions respecting any business of the Government, including the administration of any statutory board or department of the Government responsibility for which has been assigned to the Prime Minister or any other Minister pursuant to section 72 of the Constitution, not being functions concerned with a matter specified in the Second Schedule.

(3) The Governor-General may, by order, amend the Second Schedule; but any such order shall be subject to affirmative resolution.

(4) An investigation by the Ombudsman shall not be prevented by any provision in any enactment, other than the Constitution, to the effect (howsoever expressed) that any matter or thing shall be final or conclusive or shall not be disputed, reviewed or called in question.

(5) If any question arises whether the Ombudsman is empowered to make an investigation or to exercise any power under this Act he may, if he thinks fit, apply to the High Court which may determine the question by declaratory order.

6. (1) The Ombudsman shall not make an investigation without first receiving a written complaint in accordance with this Act, unless he is of opinion or either House of Parliament resolves that there are reasons of special importance which make investigation by the Ombudsman desirable in the public interest.

(2) In deciding whether to make, continue or discontinue an investigation authorised by this Act the Ombudsman shall in all cases act in accordance with his own discretion which shall not be questioned; and in particular he may refuse to investigate any matter on the ground that it is trivial or that the complaint is frivolous or vexatious or not made in good faith, or that the complainant has not a sufficient interest therein.

7. (1) Subject to subsection (2), the Ombudsman shall not investigate any case where, in his opinion, the complainant would at any time have had a remedy or right of appeal in a court of law, tribunal or similar body established by the Constitution or by or under any enactment or by or on behalf of Her Majesty.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), the Ombudsman may investigate such a case if he is satisfied that for special reasons the complainant could not fairly be expected to have had recourse to such remedy or right of appeal.

8. (1) A complaint under his Act may be made by any person or body of persons, whether incorporated or not, other than a government department, public authority or body constituted for purposes of the public service or for managing any industry or undertaking in public ownership.

(2) A complaint may be made by the person aggrieved or this duly authorised agent; and where the aggrieved person has died, the complaint may be made on his behalf by his personal representative or by such other suitable person as the Ombudsman determines.

(3) A complainant shall be a citizen or a resident of Barbados (or shall have been such at the time of this death) or shall have been in Barbados or on a ship or aircraft or installation registered in or belonging to Barbados at the time of the act or omission of which he complains.

(4) A complainant who is no longer in Barbados shall, if the Ombudsman so directs, be permitted to re-enter and remain

in Barbados, subject to such conditions as the Minister responsible for immigration may direct, for the purposes of the investigation.

(5) A complaint may not be made later than 12 months from the day on which the complainant first knew of the facts giving rise to his complaint; but the Ombudsman may extend this time if in his opinion there are special circumstances which justify such extension.

(6) The Ombudsman shall determine any question whether a complaint is duly made to him.

9. (1) The procedure of an investigation by the Ombudsman shall, subject to this Act, be such as he shall determine.

(2) An investigation by the Ombudsman shall be held in private and he may make such inquiries from such persons and in such manner as he may think fit.

(3) The Ombudsman may determine whether any person may be represented by an attorney-at-law or otherwise in an investigation.

(4) The Ombudsman shall, before making an investigation give to the principal officer of the department or authority concerned, and to any other person against whom the complaint is made, an opportunity to comment upon the complaint.

(5) No person shall be entitled, as of right, to be consulted or heard by the Ombudsman, except in the manner provided by this Act.

(6) The Ombudsman may, in the manner prescribed, reimburse the complainant and any other person who assists in an investigation for expenses incurred and time lost.

10. (1) Subject to subsection (3), the Ombudsman may, for the purpose of an investigation, require any Minister, officer or

member of the department or authority concerned or any other person (including the complainant) to supply any information, produce any document or thing, attend for examination, or allow access by the Ombudsman to any premises of the department or authority.

(2) The Ombudsman shall, for such purposes, have the same powers as the High Court (including the power to administer oaths and affirmations) but subject to the same rules relating to immunity and privilege from disclosure as apply in the High Court and subject also to the following provisions of this section.

(3) Where the Attorney General certifies that the giving of any information or the answering of any question or the production of any document or thing or the allowing of access to any premises

(a) might prejudice the security, defence or international relations of Barbados or the investigation or detection of offences;

(b) might involve the disclosure of deliberations of the Cabinet; or

(c) might involve the disclosure or proceedings of the Cabinet or of any committee of the Cabinet relating to matters of a secret or confidential nature and would be injurious to the public interest,

the Ombudsman shall not require the information or answer to be given or the document or thing to be produced or access to the premises to be allowed.

(4) Subject to subsection (3), no information, answer, document or thing shall be withheld from the Ombudsman on the ground that its disclosure would be contrary to the public interest.

11. (1) Information obtained by or on behalf of the Ombudsman in the course of an investigation shall not be disclosed in legal proceedings or otherwise except

(a) for the purposes of the investigation and any report thereon under this Act;

(b) for the purposes of proceedings (or possible proceedings) for an offence of perjury connected with an investigation under this Act; or

(c) for the purposes of proceedings under section 12.

(2) The Attorney General may give written notice to the Ombudsman that disclosure by the Ombudsman of any specified information or document, or of any class of information or document, would, in his opinion, be prejudicial to the safety of Barbados or otherwise contrary to the public interest; and in that case the Ombudsman and his officers shall not communicate such information or document to any person or in any manner.

12. (1) If any person without lawful excuse obstructs the Ombudsman or any officer of this in the performance of his functions under this Act or fails to act as lawfully required by the Ombudsman, the Ombudsman may certify the offence to the High Court.

(2) Where an offence is so certified the High Court may, after hearing any person properly desiring to be heard, punish the offender in the same manner as for contempt of court.

13. (1) The Ombudsman shall make a report to each complainant explaining the result of his investigation, or his reasons for not investigating or partially investigating the complaint.

(2) Where the Ombudsman makes an investigation on his own initiative or pursuant to a resolution of either House of Parliament he shall make a report thereupon to that House of Parliament.

(3) In the case of a completed investigation the report of the Ombudsman shall state whether he finds that injustice has

been sustained by reason of improper, unreasonable or inadequate conduct on the part of any person, government ministry or department or other authority subject to investigation under this Act and, in any case where he so finds, what action, if any, he recommends by way of remedy or compensation for the injustice.

- (4) The Ombudsman shall, before making any report, afford an opportunity to be heard to any person, government ministry or department or other authority upon whose conduct he proposes to make adverse comment.
- (5) A copy of each report made by the Ombudsman on a particular case shall be sent by him to the principal officer of the relevant government ministry or department or authority and also, if the Ombudsman thinks fit, to any other person whose conduct is the subject of the complaint or of comment in the report.
- (6) The Ombudsman shall, in each calendar year, prepare for laying before each House of Parliament a general report on his functions under this Act.
- (7) The Ombudsman may, from time to time, prepare for laying before each House of Parliament such other reports as he may think fit, including
  - (a) a report on the inequitable or unreasonable nature or operation of any enactment or rule of law, and
  - (b) a report on any case where in his opinion injustice has been sustained as aforesaid and the injustice has not been or will not be remedied or compensated.
- (8) In making any report the Ombudsman may name or refrain from naming any person as he may think fit.

- (9) The Ombudsman shall submit his reports made under subsections (6) and (7) to the Speaker of the House of Assembly and to the President of the Senate (or, if the office

of Speaker or President is vacant or the Speaker or President, as the case may be, is for any reason unable to perform the functions of his office, to the Deputy Speaker or Deputy President) who shall cause them to be laid before the House of Assembly and the Senate respectively.

14. (1) For the purposes of the law of defamation

- (a) any communication made by or to the Ombudsman for the purposes of a complaint or investigation shall be privileged in the same manner as if it were made in the course of proceedings in the High Court;
- (b) any report of the Ombudsman under this Act shall be deemed to be authorised to be published by both Houses of Parliament;
- (c) any communication between the Ombudsman and a member of either House of Parliament for the purposes of the Ombudsman's functions shall be deemed to be a proceeding in Parliament.

15. (1) The Governor-General may make regulations generally for the administration of this Act and, in particular, for prescribing any thing required to be prescribed under this Act.

- (2) Regulations made under this Act shall be subject to affirmative resolution.

16. All expenses incurred by the Ombudsman in connection with his functions under this Act or the regulations shall be defrayed out of moneys voted for the purpose by Parliament.

*First Schedule*

*Oath for the due execution of the office of Ombudsman*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, appointed Ombudsman of Barbados in accordance with the Ombudsman Act, Cap. 8A, do swear that I

will faithfully and impartially perform the duties of my office.

*Second Schedule*  
*Matters not subject to investigation*

1. Action taken in matters certified by the Minister responsible for Foreign Affairs or the Minister of the Crown to affect relations or dealings between the Government of Barbados and any other Government or any international organisation of States or Governments.
2. Action taken, in any country or territory outside Barbados, by or on behalf of any officer representing or acting under the authority of Her Majesty in respect of Barbados or any other public officer of the Government of Barbados.
3. Action taken by the Attorney General under the Extradition Act.
4. Action taken by or with the authority of the Attorney General or any other Minister of the Crown, the Director of Public Prosecutions or Commissioner of Police for the purposes of investigating crime or protecting the security of Barbados, including action taken with respect to passports.
5. The commencement or conduct of civil or criminal proceeding before any court of law in Barbados, or proceedings under the Defence Act.
6. Action taken in connection with the exercise or possible exercise of the prerogative of mercy under the Constitution or otherwise.
7. Action taken in matters relating to contractual or other commercial transactions, being transactions of a department of government or a statutory board not being transactions relating to
  - (a) the acquisition of land compulsorily or in circumstances in which it could be acquired compulsorily;

- (b) the disposal of surplus land acquired compulsorily or in circumstances in which it could be acquired compulsorily.
- 8. Any action or advice of a qualified medical practitioner or consultant involving the exercise of professional or clinical judgment.
- 9. Any matter relating to any person who is or was a member of the armed or police forces of Barbados in so far as the matter relates to
  - (a) the terms and conditions of service of such member; or
  - (b) any order, command, penalty or punishment given to or affecting him in his capacity as such member.
- 10. Any action which by virtue of any provision of the Constitution may not be enquired into by any court.
- 11. The grant of honors or awards.
- 12. Matters relating to the grant of liquor licences.
- 13. Matters relating to the regulation of public utilities.
- 14. Any function of the Minister under the Immigration Act or the regulations made thereunder.
- 15. Any judicial function not specifically excluded by paragraphs 1 to 14.