



## **ST. CHRISTOPHER AND NEVIS**

### **CHAPTER 18.29**

## **RENT RESTRICTION ACT**

### **Revised Edition**

showing the law as at 31 December 2002

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### **RENT RESTRICTION ACT**

**Act 15 of 1954** ... in force 23rd December 1954

Amended by: Act 4 of 1974

Act 6 of 1976

Act 7 of 1976

Act 9 of 1986

Page

3



**CHAPTER 18.29**  
**RENT RESTRICTION ACT**

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

1. Short title
  2. Interpretation
  3. Application of Act
  4. Appointment of Rent Commissioners
  5. Standard rent of premises pending determination by Rent Commissioners
  6. Fixation of provisional standard rent of new buildings and new building land
  7. Determination of standard rent
  8. Statement as to standard rent and rates and taxes to be supplied
  9. Limitation on increase of rent
  10. Increase of rent
  11. Decrease of rent
  12. Powers of Rent Commissioners
  13. Right of appeal
  14. Rent in excess of standard rent irrecoverable
  15. No premium to be chargeable in respect of tenancy
  16. Restriction of right to possession
  17. False entries in rent books
  18. Variations of standard rent
  19. Powers of Chairperson of the Rent Commissioners
  20. Counsel and solicitors
  21. Fees
  22. Costs
  23. Appointment and duties of Rent Restriction Officer
  24. Offences
  25. Proceedings for offences, how instituted
- SCHEDULE



## CHAPTER 18.29

### RENT RESTRICTION ACT

AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE FIXING OF RENT IN RESPECT OF PREMISES TO WHICH THIS ACT APPLIES; AND TO PROVIDE FOR RELATED OR INCIDENTAL MATTERS.

#### Short title.

1. This Act may be cited as the Rent Restriction Act.

#### Interpretation.

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires—

“building land” means land let to a tenant for the purpose of the erection thereon by the tenant of a building used, or to be used, as a dwelling, or for the public service or for business, trade or professional purposes, or for any combination of such purposes, or land on which the tenant has lawfully erected such a building; but does not include agricultural land to which the Agricultural Small Holdings Act, Cap. 14.02, applies;

“dwelling-house” means a house, or part of a house separately let, or a room separately let, which at the material date was or is used mainly as a dwelling, and includes land occupied therewith under the tenancy, but does not include a house, part of a house or room when let with agricultural land;

“furniture” includes fittings, machinery and other articles used in premises not being fixtures;

“landlord” includes any person deriving title under the original landlord and any person who is entitled to the possession of the premises;

“let” includes sub-let;

“let furnished” means let at a rent which includes payment for the use of furniture;

“new building” means a dwelling-house or a public or commercial building which was first let after the prescribed date;

“premises” includes building land, dwelling-houses and public or commercial buildings;

“prescribed date” means the 3rd day of September, 1939;

“public or commercial building” means a building, or part of a building separately let, or a room separately let, which at the material date was or is used mainly for the public service, or for business, trade or professional purposes, and includes land occupied therewith under the tenancy but does not include a building, part of a building or room when let with agricultural land;

“Rent Commissioners” means the persons appointed under section 4;

“standard rent” in relation to any premises let at the commencement of the Act, or hereafter let, means the standard rent of such premises ascertained in accordance with this Act and appropriate to the category of letting in which the premises are let, and in relation to any premises of which an increase or a decrease of rent has been sanctioned in accordance with this Act means the rent as so increased or decreased;

“tenant” includes a sub-tenant and any person deriving title from the original tenant or sub-tenant, as the case may be;

“tenancy” includes “sub-tenancy”.

#### **Application of Act.**

3. (1) This Act shall apply to all land which is building land at the commencement of this Act or becomes building land thereafter, and to all dwelling-houses and public or commercial buildings whether in existence or let at the commencement of this Act or erected or let thereafter:

Provided that this Act shall not apply to any dwelling-house *bona fide* let at a rent which includes payment in respect of board, attendance or use of furniture; or to building land while let on a building lease, or a renewal or continuance of a building lease, for a term of twenty-five years or more.

(2) All building land, dwelling-houses and public or commercial buildings to which this Act for the time being applies are hereafter referred to as “premises to which this Act applies”.

#### **Appointment of Rent Commissioners.**

4. (1) The Governor-General may, for the purpose of carrying into effect the provisions of this Act, appoint three fit and proper persons, one of whom shall be a government officer, to be Rent Commissioners for the State.

(2) The Governor-General shall appoint one of such persons to be Chairperson of the Rent Commissioners.

(3) No person shall act as a Rent Commissioner in respect of any matter in which, if he or she were a Judge, he or she would not be entitled to act on the ground of interest.

(4) The Rent Commissioners, other than the government officer, shall receive out of funds provided by the National Assembly for the purpose, a fee to be prescribed by the Minister for every application heard by the Commissioners.

*(Amended by Acts 6 of 1976, and 7 of 1976)*

#### **Standard rent of premises pending determination by Rent Commissioners.**

5. Subject to the provisions of sections 9, 10 and 11, until the standard rent of any premises in relation to any category of letting has been determined by the Rent Commissioners under sections 6 and 7, the standard rent of those premises in relation to that category of letting shall be the rent at which they were let in that category of letting on the prescribed date or, where the premises were not let on that date, the rent at which they were last so let before that date or, in the case of premises first so let after the prescribed date, the rent at which they were, or are hereafter first so let:

Provided that in the case of premises let at a progressive rent payable under a tenancy agreement or lease the standard rent shall, until the tenancy is determined, be the maximum rent payable under the tenancy agreement or lease.

#### **Fixation of provisional standard rent of new buildings and new building land.**

6. (1) Where any new building or new building land is intended to be let without having previously been let, it shall be lawful for any person proposing to let the same to apply to the Rent Commissioners, before the commencement of the tenancy, to fix provisionally the rent which will be the standard rent of the said premises when they are so let and the Rent Commissioners may fix such provisional standard rent accordingly.

(2) For the purposes of an application under this section, the applicant shall disclose to the Rent Commissioners the terms and conditions of the proposed letting and every circumstance which will affect the standard rent of such premises and, if those premises are later let substantially on such terms and conditions and in such circumstances, the provisional standard rent fixed by the Rent Commissioners shall be deemed to be the standard rent of the said premises determined by the Rent Commissioners.

#### **Determination of standard rent.**

7. (1) The landlord or the tenant of any premises to which this Act applies may at any time, unless the standard rent of such premises has already been determined by the Rent Commissioners, apply to the Rent Commissioners to determine the standard rent thereof.

(2) It shall be lawful for the Rent Commissioners at any time, by notice in writing served on the landlord, to require him or her to appear before them, within a time to be specified in the notice, for the determination of the standard rent of any premises to which this Act applies, and if the landlord shall fail so to appear, he or she commits an offence against this Act and shall be liable, upon summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding one thousand five hundred dollars or to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for a term not exceeding six months and the Rent Commissioners may determine such standard rent as though he or she had so applied.

*(Amended by Acts 7 of 1976 and 9 of 1986)*

#### **Statement as to standard rent and rates and taxes to be supplied.**

8. The landlord of any premises to which this Act applies shall, on being requested in writing by the tenant thereof, supply him or her with a statement in writing as to what is the standard rent of such premises and also with a statement in writing showing all particulars of rates and taxes payable on such premises, and if without reasonable excuse he or she fails within fourteen days to do so, or supplies a statement which is false in any material particular, he or she commits an offence against this Act and shall be liable, upon summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding one thousand five hundred dollars or to imprisonment with or without hard labour for a term not exceeding six months.

*(Amended by Acts 7 of 1976 and 9 of 1986)*

#### **Limitation on increase of rent.**

9. Subject to the provisions of section 18, and save as hereafter in this section provided, it shall not be lawful for a landlord to increase the rent of any premises to which this Act applies beyond the standard rent thereof other than in the case of—

- (a) any new building or new building land and unless the increase is sanctioned by the Rent Commissioners;
- (b) any premises to which this Act applies, other than a new building or new building land, to an amount which exceeds the standard rent by more than fifteen *per centum* unless the increase is sanctioned by the Rent Commissioners,

in accordance with the provisions of section 10.

**Increase of rent.**

**10.** (1) On the application of the landlord and subject to the provisions of subsection (2), the Rent Commissioners may sanction an increase of the rent of—

- (a) any new building or new building land to which this Act applies;
- (b) any building land or dwelling-house or public or commercial building to which this Act applies, other than a new building or new building land by an amount which exceeds the standard rent by more than fifteen *per centum*.

(2) The Rent Commissioners may—

- (a) where the landlord has since the prescribed date incurred, or hereafter incurs, expenditure—
  - (i) on substantial improvements or structural alterations to a dwelling-house or public or commercial building other than ordinary repairs;
  - (ii) on substantial improvements made to the roadway adjacent to the land other than necessary maintenance and drainage;
  - (iii) in providing a suitable water supply or the extension of such a water supply from which the tenant derives benefit,

sanction an increase of rent by an amount calculated at a rate per annum not exceeding eight *per centum* of the amount so expended.

- (b) where the landlord has since the prescribed date incurred, or hereafter incurs expenditure in an amount exceeding two hundred dollars on repairs to a dwelling-house or public or commercial building, sanction an increase of rent by an amount calculated at a rate per annum not exceeding twenty *per centum* of the standard rent.
- (c) where the rates and taxes payable by a landlord in respect of any premises to which this Act applies have been increased, sanction an increase of rent by an amount not exceeding the amount of the increase in the rates and taxes payable by the landlord in respect of such premises.

(3) If the premises are occupied, a copy of an application under this section shall be served by the landlord on the tenant at least six days before the hearing of the application.

**Decrease of rent.**

**11.** (1) The Rent Commissioners may, on the application of a tenant, sanction a decrease of the rent of any premises to which this Act applies and may on the hearing of such application take into consideration *inter alia* the locality in which such premises is situate and the state of repairs in which such premises is maintained.

(2) A copy of an application under this section shall be served by the tenant on the landlord at least six days before the date of the hearing of the application.

**Powers of Rent Commissioners.**

**12.** On the hearing of any application under sections 6, 7, 10 or 11, the Rent Commissioners shall give all interested parties an opportunity of being heard and of adducing evidence and shall try the whole matter of the application and give

judgment or make any order thereon, and shall give any direction they may consider necessary to enable them to give a final judgment or to make an order, and may from time to time adjourn the hearing of the application.

**Right of appeal.**

**13.** (1) If any party to any proceedings before the Rent Commissioners under sections 6, 7, 10 or 11 is aggrieved by the decision of the Rent Commissioners such party may appeal therefrom to a Judge of the High Court by way of summons in Chambers within fifteen days from the date of the decision and shall serve a notice on the Chairperson of the Rent Commissioners of his or her intention to appeal against such decision:

Provided that notwithstanding the lapse of such period of fifteen days any such party may appeal against the said decision if he or she shows to the satisfaction of a Judge that owing to absence from the State, sickness or other reasonable cause, he or she was prevented from appealing within such period, and that there has been no unreasonable delay on his or her part.

(2) Such summons shall be served by the appellant on the other party (if any) to the proceedings two clear days before the return thereof and shall state concisely the grounds of appeal.

(3) On receipt of the aforesaid notice the Chairperson of the Rent Commissioners shall without delay transmit to the Registrar all papers relating to such appeal.

(4) The Judge may adjourn the hearing of the appeal and may upon the hearing thereof confirm, reverse or modify the decision of the Rent Commissioners or make such other order in the matter as he or she may think just.

(5) The costs of the appeal shall be in the discretion of the Judge hearing the appeal and may be a sum fixed by the Judge.

**Rent in excess of standard rent irrecoverable.**

**14.** Where after the commencement of this Act, the rent of any premises to which this Act applies exceeds the standard rent by more than fifteen *per centum* and the excess is not sanctioned by the Rent Commissioners the amount by which the rent exceeds the standard rent as increased by fifteen *per centum* shall notwithstanding any agreement to the contrary, be irrecoverable from the tenant and if it is paid by the tenant shall be recoverable by him or her from the person to whom it was paid or his or her personal representatives and may, without prejudice to any other method of recovery, be deducted from any rent or money due or subsequently becoming due from the tenant:

Provided that no amount paid before the commencement of this Act shall be recoverable.

**No premium to be chargeable in respect of tenancy.**

**15.** A landlord shall not, as a condition of the grant, renewal or continuance of a tenancy of any premises to which this Act applies, require payment of any fine, premium or other like sum, or the giving of any consideration, in addition to the rent; and where any such payment or consideration shall be paid or given after the commencement of this Act, the amount or value thereof shall be recoverable by the tenant by whom it was made or given, and without prejudice to any other method of recovery be deducted from any rent payable by him or her to the landlord.

**Restriction of right to possession.**

**16.** (1) No order or judgment for the recovery of possession of any premises to which this Act applies, or for the ejectment of a tenant therefrom, shall, whether in respect of a notice given or proceedings commenced before or after the commencement of this Act, be made or given unless—

- (a) some rent lawfully due from the tenant has not been paid for at least sixty days after it has become due;
- (b) some other obligation of the tenancy (whether expressed or implied) has been broken or not performed and, in the case of non-performance of any such obligation by the tenant, the tenant has been in default for at least thirty days;
- (c) the tenant or any person residing or lodging with him or her or being his or her sub-tenant has been guilty of conduct which is a nuisance or annoyance to adjacent or adjoining occupiers, or has been convicted of using the premises or allowing the premises to be used for an immoral or illegal purpose, or the condition of the premises has, in the opinion of the Court, deteriorated or become insanitary owing to acts of waste by, or the neglect or default of, the tenant or any such person and, where such person is a lodger or sub-tenant, the Court is satisfied that the tenant has not, before the making or giving of the notice to quit, taken such steps as he or she ought reasonably to have taken for the removal of the lodger or sub-tenant;
- (d) the premises, being a dwelling-house or a public or commercial building, are reasonably required by the landlord for—
  - (i) immediate occupation as a residence for himself or herself or for some person wholly dependent on him or her or for any person *bona fide* residing with him or her, or for any person in his or her whole-time employment;
  - (ii) use by himself or herself for business, trade or professional purposes; or
  - (iii) a combination of the purposes in sub-paragraphs (i) and (ii) above; or
- (e) the premises, being building land, are reasonably required by the landlord for—
  - (i) the erection of a building to be used for any of the purposes specified in paragraph (d) of this section;
  - (ii) use by himself or herself for business, trade or professional purposes not involving the erection of a building; or
  - (iii) a combination of such purposes; or
- (f) the premises, being a dwelling-house or a public or commercial building, are required for the purpose of being repaired, improved, or rebuilt, and an undertaking is given that the landlord will, immediately after the completion of the repairs, improvements or rebuilding, give the tenant an opportunity for renewing his or her tenancy at such rent as the Rent Commissioners may order;
- (g) the premises are required for public purposes;

- (h) the dwelling-house, or the public or commercial building, or the building erected by the tenant on building land, as the case may be, is required by law to be demolished;
- (i) the tenant has sub-let, or parted with the possession of, the whole or any part of the premises without either obtaining the consent of the landlord or being expressly authorised by or under the tenancy agreement or lease so to do;
- (j) the tenant of a dwelling-house, or of building land on which the building erected by the tenant is used or is intended to be used mainly as a dwelling, uses the house or building mainly for business, trade or professional purposes without either obtaining the consent of the landlord or being authorised by or under the tenancy agreement or lease so to do;
- (k) in the case of building land the building erected thereon has been sold under distress for rent;
- (l) the dwelling-house has been let to a tenant in the employment of the landlord on condition that the tenancy shall subsist only during the continuance of such employment, or only until the expiration of a period not exceeding one month after the termination of such employment, and the employment has terminated, or such period has expired as the case may be; or
- (m) the dwelling-house has been let to a tenant in the employment of the landlord in consequence of that employment, and the employment has determined or the landlord has offered the tenant suitable alternative accommodation,

and unless in addition, in any such case as aforesaid, the court asked to make the order or give the judgment considers it reasonable to make such order or give such judgment.

(2) An order or judgment shall not be made or given—

- (a) on the ground specified in paragraph (a) of subsection (1) if the court asked to make the order or give the judgment is satisfied that at any time before the expiration of the said period of sixty days the landlord has refused to accept a portion of the said rent;
- (b) where the premises being a dwelling-house or a public or commercial building are reasonably required by the landlord for immediate occupation as a residence, unless the court asked to make the order or give the judgment is satisfied—
  - (i) in a case where such premises are required for the occupation of a person *bona fide* residing with the landlord, that such person was *bona fide* residing with the landlord for not less than six months immediately before the date of the service by the landlord upon the tenant of the notice to quit;
  - (ii) in a case where such premises are required for the occupation of a person in the landlord's whole-time employment, that having regard to all the circumstances of the case less hardship would be caused by granting the order or judgment than by refusing to grant it; and such circumstances are hereby declared to include the question whether other accommodation is available for the tenant.

(3) A court asked to make such an order or give such a judgment may—

- (a) adjourn the application from time to time;
- (b) stay or suspend execution of the order or judgment, or postpone the date of possession for such period as it thinks fit, and from time to time grant further stays or suspensions of execution and further postponements of the date of possession.

(4) Any such adjournment, stay, suspension or postponement may be granted subject to such conditions, if any, as the Court thinks fit, and, if such conditions are complied with, and the order has been made or the judgment given, the Court may discharge or rescind the order or judgment.

(5) Nothing in this Act shall prevent the making of an order for the ejection of any person where, in the opinion of the Court asked to make the order, the ejection is expedient in the interest of public health or public safety.

(6) If, after a landlord has obtained an order or judgment for possession or ejection under this section, it is subsequently made to appear to the Court that the order was obtained by misrepresentation or the concealment of material facts the Court may order the landlord to pay to the former tenant such sum as appears sufficient as compensation for damage or loss sustained by the tenant as a result of the order or judgment.

(7) In granting an order or giving judgment under this section for possession or ejection in respect of building land, the Court may require the landlord to pay to the tenant such sum as appears to the Court to be sufficient as compensation for damage or loss sustained by the tenant, and effect shall not be given to such order or judgment until such sum is paid.

(8) Whenever a landlord has obtained an order or judgment for possession of any premises to which this Act applies on any ground specified in paragraphs (d) or (e) of subsection (1), and the order or judgment is executed or the tenant voluntarily gives up his or her tenancy in consequence of that order or judgment, the landlord commits an offence against this Act and shall be liable, upon summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding one thousand five hundred dollars or to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for a term not exceeding six months if—

- (a) without first obtaining the permission of the Rent Commissioners, he or she uses or permits to be used or occupies or permits to be occupied or lets the premises at any time for any purpose other than the purpose which constituted the ground on which the order was made or the judgment was given; or
- (b) having obtained permission as aforesaid, he or she fails to comply with any terms or conditions which the Rent Commissioners may have attached to that permission,

and the Rent Commissioners may decline to grant any such permission as aforesaid in any case in which the landlord has failed to take such steps (if any) to renew the tenancy of the former tenant as the Rent Commissioners may have directed, or in any case in which the Rent Commissioners are not satisfied that the premises will be used, occupied or let to good advantage having regard to any prevailing shortage of similar accommodation.

*(Amended by Acts 7 of 1976 and 9 of 1986)*

(9) Where a landlord has obtained an order or judgment for possession or ejection under paragraph (f) of subsection (1), and it is subsequently made to appear to the Court that the landlord has failed to carry out his or her undertaking, the Court

may order the landlord to pay to the tenant such sum as appears sufficient as compensation for damage or loss sustained by the tenant as the result of the failure on the part of the landlord to carry out such undertaking.

#### **False entries in rent books.**

17. If any landlord makes or omits to make any entry in any rent book or similar document so that such rent book or similar document shows or purports to show that any tenant is in arrear of more rent than is due with respect to any premises to which this Act applies, then that landlord commits an offence against this Act and shall be liable, upon summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding one thousand five hundred dollars or to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for a term not exceeding six months.

*(Amended by Acts 7 of 1976 and 9 of 1986)*

#### **Variations of standard rent.**

18. Where premises let as a dwelling-house on or before the prescribed date have subsequently to that date been let for business, trade or professional purposes, or for the public service, the rent agreed to be paid on the first letting of the premises after the prescribed date, for business, trade or professional purposes or for the public service, shall be regarded as the standard rent and the provisions of section 9 shall not apply in such case.

#### **Powers of Chairperson of the Rent Commissioners.**

19. The Chairperson of the Rent Commissioners shall have all the powers of the High Court for the purpose of enforcing the attendance of witnesses, compelling the production of documents and material subjects, administering oaths and taking evidence and amending any defect or error in any proceedings.

#### **Counsel and solicitors.**

20. On the hearing of any application under this Act any interested party may appear and be heard or may be represented by counsel or solicitor.

#### **Fees.**

21. In proceedings under this Act before the Rent Commissioners the fees specified in the Schedule shall be collected by means of stamps and affixed to the relative documents.

#### **Costs.**

22. (1) The costs of any proceedings under this Act before the Rent Commissioners shall be in the discretion of the Rent Commissioners and shall be limited to the fees payable under section 21 in addition to any reasonable sum not exceeding fifteen dollars by way of compensation for the attendance, loss of time and legal or other expenses of parties and witnesses.

(2) The amount of such costs shall be recoverable by suit as a civil debt.

#### **Appointment and duties of Rent Restriction Officer.**

23. (1) The Governor-General may appoint a fit and proper person to be Rent Restriction Officer for the State or any part thereof.

*(Amended by Act 6 of 1976)*

(2) It shall be the duty of the Rent Restriction Officer to see that the provisions of this Act are observed by landlords and he or she may for that purpose require the landlord or the tenant of any premises to which this Act applies to furnish him or her with such information as he or she may require in relation to the said premises.

**Offences.**

24. (1) Every person who wilfully refuses to furnish any information which he or she may be required by the Rent Restriction Officer to furnish or, who knowingly furnishes false information, required as aforesaid, commits an offence against this Act and shall be liable, upon summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding one thousand five hundred dollars or to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for a term not exceeding six months.

(2) Every landlord who shall demand or receive a rent in excess of that which is authorized by this Act commits an offence against this Act and shall be liable, upon summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding one thousand five hundred dollars or to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for a term not exceeding six months.

*(Amended by Acts 7 of 1976 and 9 of 1986)*

**Proceedings for offences, how instituted.**

25. All proceedings before a Magistrate for an offence against this Act shall be taken in the name of the Rent Restriction Officer.

**SCHEDULE**

*(Section 21)*

Application to sanction an increase or decrease of rent; to determine provisional standard rent, or to fix standard rent .....	\$5.00
Application to summon witnesses—for every witness .....	\$1.00

*(Amended by Act 7 of 1976)*