

The Confidential Relationships Act, 1985

Saint Christopher and Nevis

AN ACT to give sanction to the duty of non-divulgence of information imparted under conditions of business or professional confidence and for purposes connected therewith.

(11th February 1985)

BE IT ENACTED by the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the National Assembly of Saint Christopher and Nevis and by the authority of the same as follows:

1. This Act may be cited as the Confidential Relationships Act, 1985.

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires:-

"bank" means any bank or other financial institution to which the provisions of the Banking Act 1967 apply;

"business of a professional nature" includes the relationship between a professional person and his principal, by whatever term the latter may be described, and also the relationship between a bank and a customer of that bank;

"confidential information" includes information concerning any property, or relating to any business of a professional nature or commercial transaction which has taken place, or which any party concerned contemplates may take place, which the recipient thereof is not, otherwise than in the normal course of business or professional practice authorized by the principal to divulge;

"entitled to possession of confidential information" means so entitled, in the normal course of business or professional practice or by the specific consent of the party who, but for the giving of such consent, would be entitled to require the preservation of the confidentiality of that information;

"Minister" means the person charged for the time being with responsibility for finance;

"Principal" means a person who has imparted to another person confidential information in the course of his business or professional relationship with that other person, and includes a customer or a bank in relation to his business transactions with that bank;

"professional person" includes an accountant, or barrister-at-Law, Solicitor or Attorney (or other legal practitioner by whatever name called), a broker or other kind of commercial agent or adviser, a bank or other financial institution, any public officer or other government official or employee, and such other persons as may be prescribed as being professional persons for the purposes of this Act and whether or not any such person was licensed or authorised, under any law for the time being in force, to act in that capacity; and also includes any person subordinate to or in the employment or under the control of any such person for the purpose of his professional activities;

"property" includes every present, contingent or future interest or claim, direct or indirect, legal or equitable, positive or negative, in any money or money's worth, real personal, movable or immovable, rights, charges and securities thereover and all documents and things evidencing or relation thereto.

3.

(1) Subject to the provisions of sub-section

(2), this Act shall apply to all confidential information with respect to business of a professional nature which arises in or is brought into Saint Christopher and Nevis and to all persons who come into possession of such information at any time thereafter, whether within or without Saint Christopher and Nevis.

(3) This Act shall not apply to confidential information given to or received by-

- a. any person in the course of taking or giving of evidence whether within or without Saint Christopher and Nevis, for the purpose of or in the course of the trial of any person in respect of an alleged criminal offence triable within Saint Christopher and Nevis or which would have been triable if it had been committed within Saint Christopher and Nevis;
- b. a police officer in the execution of his duties whether within or without Saint Christopher and Nevis, investigating any criminal offence committed within Saint Christopher and Nevis or which, if it had been committed within Saint Christopher and Nevis, would have been a criminal offence under the law of Saint Christopher and Nevis;
- c. the Minister or a person exercising powers of examination or investigation under any of the provisions of the Banking Act, 1967 or any law repealing or replacing that Act.

4.

(1) Subject to the provisions of sub-section (2) of section 3, any person who –

- a. being in possession of confidential information however obtained -
 - a. divulges it to any person not entitled to possession thereof; or
 - b. attempts, offers or threatens to divulge it to any person not entitled to possession thereof;
- b. obtains or attempts to obtain confidential information to which he is not entitled, shall be guilty of an offence:

Provided that it shall be a defence for a person charged with an offence under this sub-section if he proves to the satisfaction of the court that, at the time when he divulged, attempted, offered or threatened to divulge or obtained or attempted to obtain (as the case may be), the confidential information in question, he did not know and did not have reasonable grounds to suspect that so doing would be a breach of any express or implied duty to preserve confidentiality or would be contrary to the provisions of this Act.

(2) Any person who, being in possession of information which he knows or has reason to suppose is confidential information, makes use thereof, without the consent of the principal, for the benefit of himself or any other person, shall be guilty of an offence.

(3) Any person who commits an offence under this section shall be liable on summary conviction

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- a. in the case of an individual to a fine of five thousand dollars or to imprisonment for 12 months or to both such fine and imprisonment; or
- b. in the case of a body corporate to a fine of twenty-five thousand dollars;
- c. Provided that where an offence under this section is committed by a professional person, that person shall be liable on conviction -

-i. in the case of an individual to a fine of ten thousand dollars or to imprisonment for 12 months or to both such fine and imprisonment; or

-ii. in the case of a body corporate to a fine of fifty thousand dollars.

(4) Any person who is convicted of an offence under sub-section (1) and is proved to have solicited, received or offered (as the case may be), on behalf of himself or any other person, any reward for doing the act which constituted the offence, shall be liable, in addition to any penalty imposed under sub-section (3), to a further fine equivalent to the amount or value of the reward solicited, received or offered and to forfeit the amount or value of any reward actually received by him.

(5) Where offence under this section is committed by a body corporate and is proved to the satisfaction of the court to have been committed with the consent or connivance of, or to have been attributable to any neglect on the part of any director, manager, secretary or similar officer (by whatever name called) of that body corporate, or by any person purporting to act in any such capacity, he as well as the body corporate shall be guilty of an offence and be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

(6) For the avoidance of doubt, it is hereby declared that, subject to sub-section (2) of section 3, a bank which gives credit reference in respect of a customer, without first obtaining the authority of that customer, shall be guilty of an offence under sub-section (1).

5. Nothing in this Act shall be deemed to affect or derogate from any rule or law or the rights of any person with regard to the civil rights of any person with regard to the civil liability of any person for any breach of any express or implied condition of confidentiality with regard to any business or professional relations or transactions between them.

7. The Minister may make regulations for carrying into effect the provisions of this Act and for prescribing anything which is required to be prescribed under any such provisions.

8. Before any prosecution is instituted under this Act the Director of Public Prosecutions shall advise the Attorney General in writing.