

An Act for the protection of Squatters in the Townships of Lower Canada.

WHEREAS the permanent settlement of wild lands is of the very highest importance, and extensive tracts of land in the Townships of Lower Canada were formerly granted to certain individuals with the view of facilitating such settlement, and many of these persons have never fulfilled the condition stipulated in the letters patent; And whereas a large number of these grants of land have fallen into the hands of persons absent from the country and who have not made themselves known; And whereas the lines separating these grants of land from the Crown Domain were very imperfect and in many cases imperceptible, and a great number of the inhabitants of Lower Canada and of the British Isles have settled upon wild lands the proprietors of which were unknown, under the impression that they were settling upon the lands of the Crown; And whereas these settlers have cleared large tracts of land, have improved them and adapted them for cultivation, have opened roads, erected houses and barns, and constructed fences, bridges, and made other improvements, of great value, and have paid the local taxes and developed the resources of their respective localities; And further, whereas these settlers in many cases are unjustly deprived of the fruits of their labour without any compensation, therefor, and that no one is justified in enriching himself by the labour of another: Therefore, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and Assembly of Canada, enacts as follows:

- I. Any settler or individual who shall have established himself upon any lot or part of lot of land in the townships of Lower Canada, who shall have enjoyed undisturbed possession thereof for a period of five years previous to the passing of this Act, and who shall have improved the same with the view of becoming the *bonâ fide* proprietor thereof, and of settling permanently thereon, shall be entitled to receive the increased value which the improvements made upon such lot or part of a lot shall have given thereto.
- II. Any person who shall thus have held possession of a lot of land and shall have cleared or cultivated the same or any part thereof, shall be deemed to have occupied the same with the permission of the proprietor, and shall be deemed to be a possessor in good faith for all the purposes of this Act.
- III. In all cases in which the settler and the proprietor shall not be able to come to an amicable understanding with respect to the conditions of purchase or sale or of any agreement whatsoever in relation to any such lot of land, the value of the improvements as above mentioned, as also the value of the premises, provided no improvements had been made thereon, shall be ascertained by three *experts* to be appointed by the parties if they

Preamble.

Squatters having had undisturbed possession for five years before this Act, entitled to value of improvements.

They shall be deemed possessors in good faith, etc.

Value of improvements, and of the land without improvement, to be ascertained by experts.