

SESSIONAL PAPER No. 18

"hundred and seventy-three;¹ humbly praying, that he would be graciously "pleased to require his governour or commander in chief to call a general assem- "bly, in such manner, and of such constitution and form, as to his majesty's "royal wisdom should seem best adapted to secure the peace, welfare, and good "government of this province. Wherefore with deep concern they observe, "that in certain examinations taken before your honourable house, the "British subjects here have been grossly abused and misrepresented, as "well as to their numbers as in their importance in this province. For the "number of the new subjects has, we humbly conceive, been greatly exaggerat- "ed, it being, by the last computation, about seventy-five thousand; whereas, "by an enumeration of the British subjects, they amount at this time to "upwards of three thousand souls, besides many that we cannot immediately "ascertain that are dispersed in the Indian countries carrying on traffick "with the savages, besides the merchants and traders with their families "settled at Detroit and its dependencies, and at the fisheries below Quebeck. "And whereas an act of parliament has lately passed, intituled, "*An act "for the making more effectual provision for the government of the province of "Quebeck in North-America,*" which is said to have been passed upon the "principles of humanity and justice, and at the pressing instance and "request of the new subjects, signified to his majesty by an humble petition² "setting forth their dislike to the British laws and form of government, and "praying, in the name of all the inhabitants and citizens of the province, "to have the French institutes in their stead, and a total abolition of trials "by jury, together with a capacity of holding places of honor and trust "in common with his majesty's ancient subjects. We crave leave to inform "your honourable house, that the said petition was never imparted to the "inhabitants in general (that is) the freeholders, merchants and traders, "who are equally alarmed with us at the Canadian laws being to take place, but "was in a secret manner carried about and signed by a few of the seigneurs, "chevaliers, advocates, and others in their confidence, at the suggestions, "and under the influence of their priests; who, under colour of French "laws, have obtained an act of parliament which deprives his majesty's "ancient subjects of all their rights and franchises, destroys the Habeas "Corpus act, and the inestimable privilege of trial by juries, the only "security against the venality of a corrupt judge, and gives unlimited power "to the governour and council to alter the criminal laws; which act has "already struck a damp upon the credit of the country, and alarmed all "your humble petitioners with the just apprehensions of arbitrary fines "and imprisonment, and which, if it takes place, will oblige them to quit "the province, or, in the end, it must accomplish their ruin, and impoverish "or hurt their generous creditors, the merchants in Great-Britain, &c. "To prevent which, your petitioners most humbly pray that the said act "may be repealed or amended, and that they may have the benefit and

¹ See p. 495.² See p. 554.