

EVIDENCE, &c.

Taken before the Select Committee, appointed to examine and report upon the present system of management of the Public Lands; and the various dues arising therefrom, together with the present mode of Selling, Leasing, and otherwise disposing of the same, with power to send for persons, papers and records.

Letter from FREDERICK WIDDER, Esquire, Chief Commissioner of the Canada Company, at Toronto—to the Committee.

CANADA COMPANY'S OFFICE,
TORONTO, 22nd February, 1855.

SIR,—In November last, I had the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication, wherein, by direction of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly, appointed to enquire into the present system of "Selling, Leasing, and otherwise disposing of Public Lands in this Province," we are requested to reconsider the views expressed in the year 1845, and to inform the Committee whether we are prepared to offer any further remarks or suggestions, on the subjects referred to.

I should as promised, have long since taken up this matter, but the great pressure of business in this Office, and the expectation entertained that Parliament would have adjourned much earlier than it did, induced the postponement of this reply, for which purpose I had contemplated submitting to the Honorable Committee, a statement showing the annual progress made in the disposal of our Lands, and the settlement secured in consequence; but I find that it would be difficult to do so, without entering into a most voluminous detail of figures, which would occupy much labor and time. I shall therefore limit myself to saying, that our system of leasing, in operation upwards of twelve years, has been attended with the most successful consequences, in every point of view, under it. The Company's possessions are now reduced to about 480,000 acres in the Crown Reserves, and Huron Tract Lands together, including large quantities of Lands which, from situation, or badness of soil, are at present worthless, and of course perfectly unavailable for any purpose, and which from necessity, must remain for years, impervious to any principle of settlement.

From this position of the Company's affairs, resulting from our proceedings in operation for so many years, you may easily believe that our experience does not incline us in any manner, to alter our views, but since the Honorable Committee invite any remarks bearing generally upon settlement, I beg to submit a few observations connected with the Public Lands.

Most of the Public Lands that are immediately available, have been disposed of, and any material interference to the prejudice of the recent purchasers, with the system under which the sales were effected might be of doubtful expediency. The Regulations of 1852 call for amendment, limiting the quantity that each person is allowed to purchase to 200 acres, is an obstacle to the introduction of capitalists, and of the numerous, and most desirable class of wealthy settlers, who sell out farms in the improved, and older Townships of the Province, for the purpose of providing themselves and their rising families with future homes, whose anxiety is, to have them on lots adjacent to each other. Excepting