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ONTARIO'S NEW MINING LAWS.

The mining laws of the Province of Ontario were amended in some important particulars during the Session which ended on the 5th instant. Three measures were introduced at an early period of the Session, one of which provided for the staking out of mining claims, another for the reserving of minerals in all future sales of public or agricultural lands, and a third for amending in some particulars the general Mining Act.

The first of these Bills appears to have been carefully framed, and had it become law, we are disposed to think that it would have been gladly accepted by the class whose interests it was intended to serve, viz.: the mining prospectors. In some respects, perhaps, it should have gone more largely into detail, and we think also that the working conditions were out of proportion to those required of persons who might acquire locations in another way. But these are matters which could have been worked out in committee, and was it not for the general anxiety of the Legislature to bring its labors to a close, owing to the lateness of the Session, the Bill could no doubt have been framed into a law. The Commissioner of Crown Lands has, however, had the benefit of a free discussion of its provisions, and he will, it may be assumed, have less hesitancy in dealing with it more vigorously next year.

The Act which amends the Public Lands Act is a veritable "looking backward," for it returns to the policy which prevailed in the olden time in the Province of Ontario with respect to the Crown's interest in patented lands. It provides that in any letters patent for lands hereafter granted for agricultural purposes all mines, minerals and mining rights are reserved to the Crown, unless otherwise provided in the patent, and are a property separate from the soil. The Act declares that they shall "continue to be the property of the Crown and be public property, independent from that of the soil above it," unless the proprietor of the soil had acquired it from the Crown as a mining location or otherwise. It will be remembered that previous to the Act of 1869, all ores of gold and silver in lands patented in Ontario were reserved to the Crown in the grant; but by that Act all such rights or claims on the part of the Crown were abandoned. The present Act proposes that henceforth the Crown shall part with its surface

rights only, reserving to itself every other ore and mineral as well as gold and silver. We do not notice that any provision is made for the sale of the property so reserved to any other party, nor to the right of such party to go upon the land and sink shafts or otherwise explore for minerals or operate the mines; and this looks like an important omission. It does not, however, appear to be the intention to apply this provision of the Public Lands Act generally, for it is provided that the Governor-in-Council may by order set apart any tract of the Province not being mineral lands, in respect of which the grants or patents shall expressly vest in the grantee the minerals and mining rights, or such of them as may be specifically mentioned in the order or patent. Of course, it will be understood that the reservation applies to future sales under the statute, and is in no sense retroactive.

The amendments to the General Mining Act deal with five different subjects, viz.: the prices of mining locations; conditions of occupation; royalties upon ores or minerals payable to the Crown; leasehold tenure of mining lands, and the establishment of a Bureau of Mines.

The Act of 1869 underwent but one alteration from that year to the present, and that consisted in raising the price of mining locations from \$1 to \$2 per acre. The activity in mining operations during the past two or three years, and notably the boom created by the discovery of great bodies of nickel ore in the country north of Georgian Bay, appears to have convinced the Government that an increase in price could be borne by the parties anxious to invest in mining lands, and that a step in this direction was desirable in the public interest. Accordingly, we find that the new Act makes a very substantial advance in selling prices; but, unlike the former provision, the figures are graduated on a basis of assumed values. Thus, in the whole of that part of the Province above the French and Mattawa rivers and Lake Nipissing, in the districts of Nipissing, Algoma, Thunder Bay and Rainy River, the prices of mining lands or locations are fixed as follows:

If within a surveyed township and within 12 miles of any railway	\$4 50 per acre.
If within twelve miles of any railway, but in unsurveyed territory	4 00 do
All other mining lands in surveyed territory..	3 50 do
All other mining lands in unsurveyed territory	3 00 do