

SESSIONAL PAPER No. 18

PETITIONS FOR THE REPEAL OF THE QUEBEC ACT.¹

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

THE PETITION of your Majesty's most loyal and dutiful your ancient Subjects settled in the Province of QUEBEC,

MOST HUMBLY SHEWETH

THAT We upon the Faith of your Sacred Majesty's Royal Proclamation bearing Date the Seventh Day of October which was in the Year of Our Lord One thousand seven Hundred and Sixty three Did come and Settle ourselves in the said Province purchasing Houses and Lands and carrying on extensive Trade Commerce and Agriculture whereby the Value of the Land and Wealth of it's Inhabitants are more than doubled during all which Time, We humbly crave leave to say that we have paid a ready and dutiful Obedience to Government and have lived in Peace and Amity with your Majesty's new Subjects. Nevertheless we find and with unutterable Grief presume to say that by a late Act of Parliament intituled "An Act for the making more effectual Provision for the Government of the Province of QUEBEC in North America" We are deprived of the Franchises granted by Your Majesty's Royal Predecessors and by us inherited from our Forefathers THAT We have lost the Protection of the English Laws so universally admired for their Wisdom and Lenity and which we have ever held in the highest Veneration and in their Stead the Laws of CANADA are to be introduced to which we are utter Strangers disgraceful to us as Britons and in their Consequences ruinous to our Properties as we thereby lose the invaluable Privilege of TRIAL by JURIES. THAT in Matters of a Criminal Nature the HABEAS CORPUS Act is dissolved and we are Subjected to arbitrary Fines and Imprisonment at the Will of the Governor and Council who may at Pleasure render the Certainty of the Criminal Laws of no Effect by the great Power that is granted to them of making Alterations in the same.

¹ Canadian Archives, Q 11, p. 98. This is also given in Maseres' "An Account of the Proceedings" &c., p. 239. Only the petition to the King is given in the State Papers, but those to the Lords and Commons are also given by Maseres. The British element in the Province, for the most part, on learning the nature of the Quebec Act, which deprived them of the protection of the writ of Habeas Corpus and of trial by jury, under the restored French Law, set about procuring petitions for its repeal or amendment. They formally appointed Maseres as their agent in London, and to him they sent the three petitions to the King, Lords, and Commons. "These petitions were received by Mr. Maseres about the 12th or 13th of last January, 1775; and the first of them, that to the King's majesty, was delivered by him to the Earl of Dartmouth, his majesty's secretary of state for America, on the 18th of the same month; and those to the House of Lords and House of Commons were some time after delivered to the Lord Camden and Sir George Savile, who, approving the contents of them, undertook to present them to their respective houses of parliament." "An Account of the Proceedings," &c., p. 238.