

At the General Assembly of the Province of Nova Scotia, begun and holden at Halifax, on the Sixth Day of June, 1770, in the Tenth Year of the Reign of Our Sovereign Lord George the Third, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c. being the First Session of the Fifth General Assembly convened in the said Province.

10 George III – Chapter 1

An Act for the Settlement of the Poor in the Several Townships within this Province.

Whereas it is necessary that the poor in this province should have some fixed place of settlement, to prevent their wandering about the country, and that the towns to which they do not properly belong, should not be put to the expence of supporting them; be it enacted by the Governor, council, and assembly, that from and after the publication hereof, no town or township within this province, shall be obliged to maintain any poor person or persons, unless such person or persons be a native of such town or township, or have served an apprenticeship, or have lived as an hired servant one whole year, next before such persons application for relief, or have executed some publick annual office, or shall have been assessed and paid his or her share of the taxes for the poor of such place, or any publick taxes during one whole year, at one time.

II. And it is hereby declared and enacted, that every person within the said descriptions shall be intituled to a settlement in the respective towns or townships wherein such person or persons shall be so qualified as aforesaid.

III. And be it further enacted, that any person or persons who shall apply to the overseers of the poor for relief, not having obtained a lawful settlement in the township, shall be required to declare on oath before one of His Majesty's justices of the peace for the said township or county wherein such township shall be, his, her or their last place of residence; and if they are found to have gained any lawful settlement within this province, a true copy of the said declaration, attested by the said overseers of the poor, and certified by the said justice of the peace, together with the amount of expence incurred, shall be transmitted to the overseer of the poor of the township to which the said person or persons shall belong, and in case they refuse or neglect to remove the said person or persons, and pay the expences incurred, it shall and may be lawful for any two of his Majesty's justices of the peace for the county or township where such person or persons have become chargeable, by a warrant under their hands and seals, to cause him, her, or them to be removed to the township where they last obtained a lawful settlement, and the overseers of the poor are hereby required to receive such person or persons, and to pay such sum and sums of money as shall have been necessarily expended as aforesaid, to the overseers of the poor of the township from whence such person or persons have been removed; provided always, that in case such overseer or overseers of the poor, shall not have money in their hands wherewith to answer said expence, such overseer or overseers shall stand charged therewith, until the next assessment to be made on the township to which such poor person shall belong.

IV. And be it also enacted, that it shall and may be lawful for any two of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace, on complaint of the overseers of the poor, to bind out any person or persons, who shall be found begging or strolling about, for any term not exceeding one year.

V. And be it also further enacted, that the father and grandfather, mother and grandmother, and the children and grand-children, severally and respectively, of every poor, old, blind, lame, and impotent person, or other poor persons not able to work, being of sufficient ability, shall at his, her, or their charges and expenses, relieve and maintain every such poor person as aforesaid, in such manner as the justices of the peace at their general or quarter sessions shall order and direct, on the penalty of forfeiting and paying five shillings for each person so ordered to be relieved, for every week they shall fail therein, to be sued for, levied and recovered in the usual manner, and to be applied for the use of the poor.

VI. And whereas it sometimes happens, that persons run away, or abscond from their places of abode and legal settlement, and leave their wives and families a charge to the public; although such persons may have some estate real or personal, whereby the place might be eased in whole or in part, which is most just and reasonable; be it therefore enacted, that it shall and may be lawful for the overseer or overseers of the poor of any township within this province, where any husband or father shall absent from, and forsake his wife and children, or any widow shall absent from, and forsake her children, and leave them a public charge; to apply to two justices of the peace, and by warrant under the hands and seals of the said two justices, to take and seize the goods and chattels, and let out and receive the annual rents and profits of the lands and tenements of such husbands, father, or mother so absconding as aforesaid, for and towards the maintaining, bringing up, and providing for such wife, child, or children so left as aforesaid, and so soon as the said seizure shall be allowed of, and confirmed by the justices in their general or quarter sessions of the peace, it shall and may be lawful for the said overseers, or any two of them from time to time, and as the case may require, to sell and dispose of so much and so many of the said goods and chattels at public sale, to the highest bidder, and to apply the money arising thereby towards the maintenance of such poor family so left as aforesaid.

VII. And be it further enacted, that in case of the death of the parents of any child or children, who have gained a settlement in any township as aforesaid, all and every such child or children, shall be supported by such town or township wherein the parents so gained a settlement.

VIII. And be it enacted, that if any town or township, or person or persons whatsoever, shall think themselves aggrieved by any proceedings had in virtue of this act, such town or township, person or persons, may appeal for redress to the next general quarter sessions of the peace held for the county wherein such town or township shall be, or wherein such person or persons shall reside; and the justices thereof are hereby required and empowered to hear and determine all and every such appeal or complaint, and to give redress as they in their judgment shall think equitable, and such their order and judgment shall be final and bind all parties.