

The Act also provides that almost all lessees may freehold the land held by them, either for cash or on deferred payments (term up to thirty years). The freeholding price is the present-day value of the Crown's interest as determined by the Land Settlement Board or by the Land Valuation Court on appeal.

In the past the administration of Crown land under the Land Acts has to a large extent been in the hands of the Land Boards, there being a Board for each land district. The administration of land subject to the Small Farms Act was in the hands of the Land Settlement Board in Wellington. The Land Act, 1948, abolished Land Boards, reconstituted the Land Settlement Board with jurisdiction over all Crown land, and provided for the setting up of Land Settlement Committees (at least one for each land district) to whom the Land Settlement Board might delegate any of its powers under the Act. By having more than one Committee in each of the larger land districts it will be possible to utilize the services of persons with the knowledge and experience of local problems and the type of farming in that locality, while the general jurisdiction of the Land Settlement Board in Wellington will enable uniform administration throughout the Dominion.

It stands to reason that a great number of sections in the repealed Acts have been omitted from the consolidation as unnecessary. The whole aim has been to simplify procedure and administration in terms of present-day requirements.

LAND VALUATION COURT ACT, 1948

This Act establishes a Land Valuation Court to adjudicate on all matters relating to the value of land or an interest in land. Previously a Compensation Court (presided over by a Judge of the Supreme Court or a Magistrate) heard claims for compensation under the Public Works Act; the Land Sales Court dealt with applications for consent to transfer under the Servicemen's Settlement and Land Sales Act; an Assessment Court determined appeals against valuations under the Valuation of Land Act for rating purposes; and a Magistrate heard appeals against valuations for gift duty, death duty, or stamp duty. The result of having four different Tribunals was inevitably that varying values were placed on the one piece of land. All these matters will now come before the Land Valuation Court. The establishment of one Court to deal with all matters previously heard by the four Courts is aimed at obtaining more uniformity in the values placed on the one area.

The Court comprises a Judge and two other members. To be appointed a Judge of the Court a person must have the same qualifications as are required for appointment to the Supreme Court, and once appointed he can be removed from office only on the same grounds as those on which a Supreme Court Judge is removable. The other two members are appointed for terms of four years, but may be reappointed.

The Act provides for the appointment of Land Valuation Committees of not more than three members. Such number of Committees may be appointed as the Governor-General in Council considers necessary. Where an application, objection, or appeal against a valuation is filed in a registry, the Registrar refers it to the Land Valuation Committee usually exercising jurisdiction in the district in which the land is situated, and the application is heard by that Committee in the first instance. Any party may appeal from the Committee's determination to the Land Valuation Court, but if no appeal is filed the Committee's order is sealed and becomes the Order of the Court. There is no appeal against an order of the Land Valuation Court.

The Land Act, 1948, also provides that certain matters under that Act may be the subject of appeal to the Land Valuation Court—namely, the purchase-price on an application to acquire the fee-simple of land held under lease, or the renewal rent on the renewal of a lease, or the determination of the Land Settlement Board on an application for a revaluation. An ex-serviceman settled under the Land Act, 1948, or any former Land Act may appeal to the Land Valuation Court for a review of the disposal price. The Tenancy Act, 1948, also empowers the Land Valuation Court to adjudicate on certain matters under that Act.