

## **PIERRE BOUCHER (1622–1717)**

### ***TRUE AND GENUINE DESCRIPTION OF NEW FRANCE (1664)***

But how can we make money there? What can we get out of it all? This is a question that has often been put to me . . . After having said that the country is a good one, capable of producing all sorts of things, like France, that it is healthy . . . that the country is very extensive, and that without doubt there are great riches in it . . .

Several persons after having heard me speak of New France, whether they felt inclined to come to it or not, have put these questions to me: “Do you think I would be fit for that country? What would have to be done in order to get there? If I took four or five thousand francs with me, could I with such a sum make myself tolerably comfortable?”

You ask me in the first place whether you are fit for this country. The answer I make you is that this country is not yet fit for people of rank who are extremely rich, because such people would not find in it all the luxuries they enjoy in France; such persons must wait until this country has more inhabitants . . .

The people best fitted for this country are those who can work with their own hands in making clearings, putting up buildings and otherwise . . . It would be well for a man coming to settle, to bring provisions with him for at least a year or two years if possible, especially flour which he could get for much less in France and could not even be sure of being always able to get for any money here . . . It would be well also to bring a supply of clothes, for they cost twice as much here as they do in France.

Most of our settlers are persons who came over in the capacity of servants, and who, after serving their masters for three years, set up for themselves . . . They have but little, generally when they set up for themselves, and marry wives who are no better off than they are; yet if they are fairly hard working people you see them in four or five years in easy circumstances and well fitted out for persons of their condition in life.

Poor people would be much better off here than they are in France, provided they are not lazy; they could not fail to get employment and could not say, as they do in France, that they are obliged to beg for their living because they cannot find anyone to give them work; in one word, no people are wanted, either men or women, who cannot turn their hands to some work, unless they are very rich.

Since the seasons are too short and there is much bad weather, it would be desirable that the Church allow the performance of essential works on feast days. There are not ninety working days left from May, when sowing begins, to the end of September, after allowance is made for holy days and bad weather. Yet, the strength of the colony hinges on that period.

Such, approximately, are the results of His Majesty’s first attempt to make of a country that is crude, savage, and pagan the commencements of a province, and perhaps of a kingdom, that is refined happy, and Christian.

**Taken from Pierre Boucher, “True and Genuine Description of New France Commonly Called Canada,” in *A Few Acres of Snow: Documents in Pre-Confederation Canadian History*, ed. Thomas Thorner and Thor Frohn-Nielsen, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 27–34.**