

# Down to Business English

## 110 - Canada's Budding Marijuana Industry

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*From Tokyo Japan and Auckland New Zealand, this is Down to Business English, with your hosts Skip Montreux and Samantha Vega.*

- Skip: Hi Samantha.
- Samantha: No, I'm not.
- Skip: I said, "Hi Samantha" as in "Hello", not "High Samantha" as in "Are you high?"
- Samantha: Oh, sorry. Now that the Canadian government is legalizing marijuana, I thought you might be checking with all your Canadian friends to see if we were high or not.
- Skip: I see. I thought you were just being a little paranoid.
- Samantha: No, I'm not the paranoid type. But I do seem to attract paranoid people into my life for some reason.
- Skip: Who, me? Are you talking about me? You're not talking about me are you?
- Samantha: No, I'm not talking about you. Why? Are you high?
- Skip: Absolutely not. Marijuana is completely illegal here in Japan, and I would never, ever consider breaking the law in my host country.
- Samantha: A very good policy to follow, Skip. But as we are both Canadians, this new proposed marijuana law that Prime Minister Trudeau has just introduced is something that we both have a stake in.
- Skip: That is true. If it gets through the Canadian Parliament and becomes law, it will certainly change the fabric of society in our home and native land.
- Samantha: Not so sure about that.
- Skip: Well we could have a debate about it, but at the very least, this law will open up a whole new business industry in Canada.
- Samantha: And is that what we're going to talk about today? The legalization of marijuana in Canada and the business surrounding it?
- Skip: That's right.
- Samantha: Excellent, a very interesting topic.
- Skip: So, let's do it. Let's get D2B ... Down to Business with Canada's budding marijuana industry.
- Samantha: Canada's budding marijuana industry. Very cute show title Skip.
- Skip: I thought you would like it, but perhaps you should explain the inside joke just in case some of our listeners didn't quite catch it.
- Samantha: Sure, the adjective "budding" as you used it in 'Canada's budding marijuana industry' means the industry is just starting to grow. It comes from the noun 'bud' which is the stage of a flower or plant just as it comes out of the ground. As marijuana is a plant, one of the many nicknames it goes by is 'bud'. So the show title has a cute, little, double entendre meaning there.
- Skip: Hey man, got any good bud?
- Samantha: If I had a dime for every time I've been asked that in my life.

- Skip: Well, before we **get too off track**, let me ask you this Samantha. Do you know why marijuana is illegal in the first place?
- Samantha: Good question. It hasn't always been that way. As the story goes, hemp, the plant that marijuana comes from was a threat to the cotton and lumber industries in the U.S. It was less costly to make textiles out of hemp than cotton. Also, cheaper to make paper from hemp than wood. But back in the early 20th Century, leading industrialists, otherwise known as some rich, elite, white-guys, were heavily invested in cotton and lumber. And they used their political connections to make sure marijuana **was outlawed**, eliminating the competition so to speak.
- Skip: That is all true. And on top of that, after the period of alcohol prohibition in the U.S. ended in 1929, the government's Bureau of Narcotics needed a new enemy. Marijuana, being a byproduct of hemp, was an easy target.
- Samantha: And most other countries followed in the U.S.'s footsteps and marijuana has been illegal pretty much everywhere around the world ever since hemp **was outlawed** in the U.S. in 1935.
- Skip: So going right back to the beginning, this has always been both a business and a political issue.
- Samantha: I suppose so.
- Skip: But in recent years, the trend in many countries has been toward the decriminalization or legalization of marijuana.
- Samantha: And what exactly is the difference between those two terms, decriminalization and legalization?
- Skip: Decriminalization is allowing people to possess and use marijuana without criminal penalties, but the production and sale of it **is still outlawed**. Legalization on the other hand, allows companies to grow and sell marijuana, and people to use it freely.
- Samantha: That's an important distinction to make. I know that in the U.S. at the national level, marijuana is still an illegal narcotic. But many states have been moving to decriminalize it. And some states, like Colorado and recently California, have gone as far as completely legalizing it.
- Skip: But it is still unclear which level of government is calling the shots. The big difference between decriminalization and legalization, is that if marijuana is only decriminalized, the user needs to still turn to illegal enterprises to buy it.
- Samantha: In other words, gangs and criminals.
- Skip: Precisely.
- Samantha: Well enough about Trumpland, let's get into what's happening in Canada.
- Skip: Sure, in Canada medical marijuana has been legal for almost 20 years now. And in that time, the social **stigma** attached to smoking it has quite quickly diminished, and there have been more and more calls for legalizing it for recreational purposes.
- Samantha: And then back in 2015, Justin Trudeau and his liberal party, made a campaign promise to do just that if elected into power.
- Skip: And now, almost two years later, they have introduced a bill that if passed will legalize marijuana across the nation.
- Samantha: From sea to shining sea. And this proposed law would allow anyone over 18 year of age to legally purchase and use marijuana for recreational purposes.
- Skip: Don't you just love that phrase? 'For recreational purposes'? Sounds like you're renting a boat and going fishing or something.
- Samantha: It does sound quite pleasant. Canadians will also be able to legally carry up to 30

- grams of marijuana on them in public, and grow up to four plants in their home for personal use.
- Skip: Clearly, when and if this becomes law, everything will be out in the open, and there will be a new retail marijuana industry.
- Samantha: That's what it looks like. But it still hasn't been sorted out as to who can sell marijuana, or how much it would cost.
- Skip: Now, I know that Canada imposes quite high taxes on tobacco and alcohol. You would imagine that it would be the same for marijuana.
- Samantha: Maybe not. One reason Trudeau is doing this is to **eliminate** drug-related crime. If tax on marijuana is too high, it would create a black market and keep the criminals in business.
- Skip: I can see that happening.
- Samantha: In fact, the black market tobacco industry thrives in Canada, due to their highly taxed cigarettes.
- Skip: So this really is a good opportunity for Canadian businesses to supply the demand for legal marijuana.
- Samantha: Absolutely, and there are several existing businesses that are well positioned to do just that.
- Skip: Yes, with medical marijuana being available for years, companies like Canopy Growth Corporation of Ontario, and Aurora Cannabis based in Vancouver, are certainly in a good position to start supplying a retail marijuana market.
- Samantha: Ah Vancouver, my old neck of the woods.
- Skip: Great, great city.
- Samantha: I've heard of Canopy Growth though. Did they convert an old Hershey's chocolate factory into a growing facility?
- Skip: Yes, that's correct. In fact, until just recently, it was the largest marijuana growing facility in the world.
- Samantha: It isn't the largest anymore?
- Skip: No, well, yes, well kind of.
- Samantha: What?
- Skip: Currently it is still the largest, but an even larger one is being built in Western Canada at the moment. So when that facility opens Canopy will lose its title.
- Samantha: Well one title that they can't lose is the title of being Canada's first marijuana unicorn.
- Skip: Unicorn? What do you mean by unicorn?
- Samantha: A unicorn is a startup company that receives over a billion dollars in capital from investors speculating on its future success. It's so rare for a young company to raise that much money that, like the mythical horned horse, they're called unicorns.
- Skip: Oh, I get it. But currently Canopy seems to be in a bit of trouble. When the Liberals won the Canadian election back in 2015, Canopy was one of the very few places investors could put their money into the marijuana market. So their stock price really started taking off, and peaked earlier this year.
- Samantha: Sounds good. What's the trouble?
- Skip: In recent months, the founders have been quietly selling their stock, **cashing in** on the high prices.
- Samantha: Well that makes sense. After years of building the company, they're finally reaping the rewards.
- Skip: Yes, but it could also indicate that the companies' financials are not as good as believed, and the owners know that the stock price isn't going to hold. Especially now that legalization is on the way in, and there will be more and more competition.

- Samantha: Interesting.
- Skip: Isn't it? Who would have thought that we'd be talking about marijuana in a business context? Just like any other commodity like oil or gold.
- Samantha: Another example of how we are living in interesting times.
- Skip: And if you live in Canada, they are soon to be interesting high times.
- Samantha: When would this new law take effect, if it's passed?
- Skip: Prime Minister Trudeau says he wants it in place for July 2018.
- Samantha: Next year. Oh, I might have to pay a visit to family and friends back in Vancouver.
- Skip: Well, in the meantime, why don't we get D2V ... Down to Vocabulary.
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- Skip: First up today, let's take a look at a phrasal verb that is very useful in a meeting or in a face to face discussion with a coworker. It is the phrasal verb 'to **get off track**'. When you '**get off track**' you have become distracted from achieving your goal or moving toward your target.
- Samantha: At the beginning of today's report, Skip asked me to explain the double meaning of the adjective 'budding' which I did. But by doing so, our conversation started moving away from our main topic about the new Canadian marijuana laws.
- Skip: So I helped return us to our topic by saying 'Before we **get off track**, let me ask you a question Samantha.' In other words, I was communicating to her that I wanted to ask a question that would lead us back to our discussion of the main topic.
- Samantha: The opposite of '**get off track**' is 'get on track' and it too is very useful. In fact you can use a wide variety of verbs and prepositions in combination with the noun 'track' to express all kinds of situations related to a target or goal. 'Be on track', 'stay or keep on track', 'lose track', 'get back on track'. Skip, can you give some examples of those phrases in action?
- Skip: Sure. It is often difficult for big construction projects to stay on track. They can easily **get off track** due to bad weather slowing the work down. And if the weather isn't a problem, sometimes there are labor strikes or project financing issues that push things off track. But, if the right project management team is in place they can anticipate all kinds of issues, avoid them, and keep everything on track.
- Samantha: And under budget.
- Skip: Yes, and under budget.
- Samantha: Back in Donald Trump's property development days in New York City he was actually well known for taking over projects that were way off track and getting them back on track.
- Skip: Oh, back in the days when he wasn't a danger to the world. How long has he been President now?
- Samantha: I don't know. I've lost track. It seems like forever though.
- Skip: Nice. But let's get back on track with D2V. What is our next word Samantha?
- Samantha: Next, we are going to talk about the verb '**to outlaw**' which can be easily used in either active or passive voice. When a government **outlaws** something, they are making it illegal to have or illegal to do.
- Skip: So in the story we used this word several times.
- Samantha: Yes we did. One instance was when I reported that marijuana **was outlawed** in the US in 1935. In other words, the US

- government made marijuana illegal in 1935.
- Skip: Now should we only use **outlaw** when we are talking about a government's action, or can other things, or people be the subject in the sentence. For example, can I say 'My company **has outlawed** smoking in the workplace.'?
- Samantha: Good question. For the most part only governments **outlaw** things or some type of behavior. It sounds a little strange to me when you say 'My company has **outlawed** smoking'. In a workplace situation, a better verb would be to ban.
- Skip: So, 'My company has banned smoking in the workplace.' would be better?
- Samantha: Yes, that sounds more natural to me.
- Skip: Okay. Can you give us any other examples using the verb to **outlaw**?
- Samantha: One example that comes to mind is the digital currency Bitcoin.
- Skip: Oh yes, it **has been outlawed** in many countries around the world.
- Samantha: Not as many as you think.
- Skip: Really? Well I know that it **is outlawed** in China.
- Samantha: Actually, it is not quite true. The Chinese government **has outlawed** bitcoin from being used by banks, but it is completely legal for Chinese citizens to use Bitcoin. In fact, China is the biggest Bitcoin trading marketplace in the world.
- Skip: I did not know that.
- Samantha: Just goes to show that it doesn't matter how much you know, one can still learn something new everyday. Even at your age Skip.
- Skip: What are you talking about? I am not old, I'm, I'm in the prime of my life.
- Samantha: Just teasing.
- Skip: I know. But in Western culture, I don't know whether this is the same everywhere around the world but, in Western culture there seems to be a **stigma** attached to learning new things when you get past a certain age.
- Samantha: Oh, I don't know about that. Maybe 30 or 40 years ago, but not today really. Lot's of people keep learning new things throughout their life.
- Skip: Okay, you are right, but I'm just trying to segue into our next word – the noun **stigma**.
- Samantha: Oh, sorry. Nice segue.
- Skip: Thanks. Now, a **stigma** is a sense, or a feeling of disapproval toward something that is held by the majority of people in society. In today's report, I said that in Canada, the social **stigma** attached to marijuana has diminished over the last 20 years. A simpler way to say this would be that over the last 20 years, the negative opinion towards marijuana has lessened, or has decreased.
- Samantha: I noticed that you used **stigma** with the verb 'attached'. Are there other verbs that listeners can use with **stigma**?
- Skip: Good question. You could say something has a **stigma** attached to it, or a **stigma** connected to it, or a **stigma** associated with it.
- Samantha: So for example, in some workplaces, there is a **stigma** attached to the millennial generation. Older workers sometimes think of them as lacking motivation or being lazy and uncommitted.
- Skip: Yes, you could say that. Another example is how, even today in the 21st century, there remains a **stigma** associated with women taking leadership roles in a company, or being entrepreneurs. It is often difficult for female entrepreneurs to attract angel investors to their business ideas due to the incorrect belief that

- women can not handle the pressure of starting a company.
- Samantha: Tell that to people like Cher Wang, the co-founder of HTC, or Oprah Winfrey, one of the biggest people in media today. There are many talented and successful business women out there.
- Skip: I don't disagree. What's our next word?
- Samantha: Now let's look at the the verb to **eliminate**. To **eliminate** is the action of completely removing something from someplace. In the story, I mentioned that one reason Canada wants to legalize marijuana is to **eliminate** drug-related crime. In other words, Canada wants to completely remove all crime caused by illegal drugs.
- Skip: The entire purpose of international trade agreements, like the TPP or NAFTA is to **eliminate** import tariffs between countries.
- Samantha: Well, I think that is their goal but in most cases it is impossible to **eliminate** them 100%. But trade agreements do go a long way in reducing trade barriers.
- Skip: True. Can you give us another example using **eliminate**?
- Samantha: We have reported before on the topic of Artificial Intelligence, or AI, and how that technology has the potential to **eliminate** many kinds of manufacturing jobs that are currently commonplace.
- Skip: Another example would be the business strategy of undercutting your competitor's price to try to force them out of the market. That is referred to as **eliminating** the competition.
- Samantha: I personally think the best way to **eliminate** the competition is by providing a better product and higher quality customer service. Do we have another word?
- Skip: Yes. Our final word today is the phrasal verb, to **cash in**.
- Samantha: Oh, I like cash.
- Skip: Everyone likes cash. Now, the direct meaning of **to cash in** is to exchange something for cash.
- Samantha: In the story you told us that the founders of Canopy Growth, the Canadian marijuana company, have recently been cashing in on the high stock prices.
- Skip: Correct. In other words, they have been selling their shares in the company and getting **cash in** return. But you can use this phrasal verb idiomatically as well to simply communicate that you are making money from something, not necessarily a financial investment.
- Samantha: An example would be when a big sporting event or music concert comes to town. All the restaurants and hotels in the area are able to **cash in** on that event.
- Skip: That is a very good example. Here in Tokyo, many hospitality and retail businesses are encouraging their employees to improve their English communication skills before the 2020 Olympics arrive. They are hoping to better **cash in** on the wave of overseas tourists who will be visiting the country.
- Samantha: And being an English teacher in Tokyo, I'd imagine that you might be able to **cash in** on helping those people improve.
- Skip: To some degree I already am as some of my students work in the hospitality industry. But probably the biggest way I can **cash in** on the upcoming Olympics is to leave town.
- Samantha: What?
- Skip: Yeah, leave town and rent out my apartment through AirBnB. Everyone is expecting that room prices are going to go through the roof that summer.



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Samantha: Thanks for that update on the Canadian Marijuana industry Skip. It will be interesting to see how this all develops moving forward. In another 10 or 15 years marijuana might be up there with wheat and canola as one of Canada's major agricultural products.

Skip: Maybe. I don't know exactly how I feel about promoting a harmful drug to Canadians. The impact on society might not be so good.

Samantha: Skip, I'm surprised to hear that coming from a cigarette smoker like you. Tobacco and Marijuana are similar. It sounds like you still attach a **stigma** to marijuana.

Skip: I suppose so. Anyway we are **getting off track**. We are supposed to be wrapping up the show. So, just before we go I'd like to thank all of our D2B members for supporting the podcast!.Your membership is deeply appreciated.

Samantha: Yes, thank you very much. And if you are not a member and you are getting value out of Down to Business English, please consider signing up for one of our convenient membership plans.

Skip: Yes, the more support we get, the more episodes we can produce on a regular basis. Just visit the Down to Business English website, click on the **Membership link at the top of the page** and you can read all about the different membership options.

Samantha: Thanks for listening everyone!

Skip: Yes, thank you very, very much. See you next time.

Samantha: Take care.

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