



## 5 Minutes for Business

**COVID-19**  
*edition*

### New Years Resolutions for the Canadian Cannabis Industry

There was a lot of economic optimism and excitement when Canada became the first large, developed country in the world to legalize recreational cannabis for adult use in 2018. While this new industry and governments alike have accomplished an incredible amount in the two years since, it was anything but smooth sailing for cannabis businesses even before the COVID-19 pandemic added even more challenges. So as 2020 (finally) comes to a close, here are some New Years resolutions for the industry looking ahead to 2021.

- 1. Move on from 2020.** Despite being mostly excluded from government loan programs, producers can be proud of keeping their doors open and employees safe during the pandemic. In the face of uncertainty over provincial essential service designations, retailers fought strongly for the ability to offer curbside pick-up and delivery in the provinces they needed to. Ancillary businesses and other industry partners can be proud of that as supply chains adjusted and withstood the disruptions of the pandemic. But 2020 sucked and let's just move on.
- 2. Seriously, move on from 2020.** Get rid of your pandemic sweatpants (you know the ones) and let's take on 2021.
- 3. Keep telling the economic story to those who need to hear it.** The industry has led to the creation of thousands of new jobs, hundreds of millions in infrastructure investment, reinvigorated retail areas and spurred new innovative technologies, processes and products. Yet, this story is not well known by Canadians and governments have been largely reluctant to acknowledge the economic impacts of the industry. The economic footprint of cannabis in Canada is continuing increase and the industry must find new ways of sharing this good news.
- 4. Keep investing energy in educating governments and advocating for sensible policy changes.** In a new, highly regulated, and stigmatized sector, all orders of government have been cautious and reluctant in their approach to cannabis policies. Issues such as retail restrictions, marketing and branding limits, licencing challenges and all kinds of red tape have frustrated cannabis entrepreneurs. The industry must continue to speak strongly with a unified voice to help governments improve the most problematic policies that are holding back the regulated industry and indirectly prop up the illegal market.



- 5. Be prepared early for the federal review of the Cannabis Act.** Health Canada is required to start a review of the Cannabis Act in October 2021 which provides an important opportunity for industry and the federal government to learn what has worked and what has not worked well through three years of recreational legalization. In advance of October 2021, [the Canadian Chamber's National Cannabis Working Group has launched an industry led review of the Act](#). Three public consultations have already taken place with [more to follow in the new year](#). This review will inform a robust public and political advocacy campaign.
- 6. Work with governments to continue to tackle the online illegal market.** There are hundreds of illegal websites, from which Canadians continue to purchase untested products. These sites often appear to be legitimate and are a major contributor to the fact that [roughly 40 percent of the cannabis market share still belongs to the illegal market](#). Continued collaboration with governments, law enforcement, financial institutions and other stakeholders is going to be required to eliminate these sites as an unsafe alternative to licensed retailers.
- 7. Look for more opportunities in a growing global market.** [Despite some hiccups](#), Canada is a global leader in medical cannabis exports. As attitudes continue to shift and countries around the world continue to advance medical cannabis access and consider recreational liberalization there is a huge opportunity for Canadian companies to apply their products, services and knowledge in new

markets. [Earlier this year the National Cannabis Working Group launched the International Cannabis Council](#) to support Canada's leadership in the development of international cannabis trade, rules, and regulations.

- 8. Keep a close eye on the U.S.** [A recent Gallup poll](#) found 68% of Americans support cannabis legalization. 47 states have voted to legalize cannabis in some form (medical and/or recreational) and US President-Elect Biden has pledged to decriminalize cannabis once in office. Continued change south of the border is going to create more opportunities and more competition for Canadian companies.
- 9. Help lead Canada's economic recovery.** Hundreds of thousands of Canadians have lost their jobs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and more businesses are closing their doors permanently every day. As governments look to use all of their policy levers to support Canada's economic recovery, Canada's fast-growing cannabis industry is well-positioned to help lead this effort. Canada has a head-start in this high-growth sector that is creating good jobs in communities of all sizes across the entire country. It's time for the industry and governments to come together to realize this opportunity at a time when the economy needs it most.

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