

Chatterbox #43 – Another Canadian Winter

Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone! This is Harp.

Maura: And Maura.

Harp: And we're here at Culips.com.

Maura: With an exciting English learning podcast for you.

Harp: Make sure you go to the website, because there you can become a member and have access to the learning material, which includes a complete transcript, detailed explanations, and even a quiz.

Maura: And if you're listening on iTunes, go check out the website too.

Harp: So today, we're here bringing you a Chatterbox episode.

Maura: And in Chatterbox episodes, we chat about some interesting topics, we chat about English culture, or English expressions, or something interesting that's happening right now.

Harp: Yes. And what's happening right now?

Maura: Winter's happening right now in Canada.

Harp: That's true. It's wintertime. So today, we're gonna talk about winter in Canada.

Maura: Yeah, surviving the winter in Canada.

Harp: Exactly. We're gonna break it down into escaping the winter.

Maura: And then we're gonna talk about **hibernation**, which means staying inside during the winter.

Harp: And then we're gonna talk about enjoying the winter.

Maura: Yes, which is also important to remember. So first, we should clarify what a Canadian winter is like.

Harp: Yes, because surviving winter in Canada is **tough business**.

- Maura: Right. Many countries have winter, but the temperature doesn't get quite as cold as it does here. Now, depending where you are in Canada, the temperature is a bit different. But in winter, the temperature is almost always **below 0°C**.
- Harp: Yes. And usually quite a bit below. Minus ten, -15°C. But many times it goes to -20°C or -25°C.
- Maura: Oh, -20°C. It makes me feel cold just talking about it. But you're right. It's always **below 0°C** and often much **below 0°C**.
- Harp: Yes. I remember one time in Edmonton, for a full week, it was about -40°C.
- Maura: That's extreme.
- Harp: Yup, people's cars couldn't start. It was really cold.
- Maura: So that's why this is a very important topic: surviving this cold weather.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: So, we were inspired to make this episode because, Harp, you were just escaping winter.
- Harp: Yes. I recently went to Florida. And Florida is in the Southeast of the US. And it's warm there, even in the winter. When I was there, it was plus 24°C, even up to plus 30°C, I think.
- Maura: Yup, that sounds nice. That sounds like summer in Canada.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: And tell us more about it. How long did you go? What did you do there?
- Harp: I went for about five days. And one of my friends, his parents live there, so they have a condo, and just went to the beach, and they played golf. I just drove the golf cart. And just really spent a lot of time outside in the sunshine.
- Maura: So, you didn't have to wear a coat?
- Harp: Nope. I didn't even have to wear a sweater, just a T-shirt.
- Maura: Wow, I'm so jealous. That sounds great.

- Harp: It was so lovely. But it seems so long ago.
- Maura: Now that you're back in a **winter wonderland**?
- Harp: Yes, it's really cold right now.
- Maura: So, what you did, Harp, is what so many Canadians do, and also Americans who are from the northern part, close to Canada. And that is, they go south in the winter. They go to where it's warm and sunny and nice to be.
- Harp: Yes. And some people are so lucky that they can spend most of winter somewhere warm in the South.
- Maura: Yeah, especially retired people, I find. After they've already worked and they're free to do what they want with their time, they go south for the winter. Maybe in November, December, January, they leave, they **go down** to where it's warm, and they don't come back until the spring.
- Harp: Yes. And these people are called **snowbirds**.
- Maura: Yeah. They have a special little term that was made up for them, because there are so many of them. That is a **snowbird**.
- Harp: Yes. So my friend's parents, who live in Florida during the winter, they're called **snowbirds**.
- Maura: Yeah, because when they see the snow, they go south. And in Canada, when the winter starts, many birds actually fly south, so that's the connection with *bird*.
- Harp: Yes, exactly.
- Maura: I hope that when I'm older, I'm lucky enough to be a **snowbird**.
- Harp: You know, I think I might retire and be a **snowbird** right now.
- Maura: Oh, nice!
- Harp: I wish!
- Maura: So, some people **travel down** and they stay in a hotel or they rent a house, but other people **drive down** and then they live in the **RV** that they **drove down** in.

- Harp: Yes. So an **RV** stands for **recreational vehicle**, which is basically like a small house on wheels.
- Maura: Yeah. It looks like a really big van or a truck. And inside of it, you have a very small kitchen and a bathroom and a place to sleep.
- Harp: Yeah. They're very interesting. I think the kitchen tables sometimes turn into beds, because they're small spaces.
- Maura: Right, so they have to be creative. But, again, these are pretty popular with people who like to travel around, and especially popular with **snowbirds**.
- Harp: Yup. They **drive down** in the beginning of winter and they don't come back **till** it's warm again in Canada.
- Maura: Right. The most popular place that **snowbirds** like to go is Florida.
- Harp: Well, I think that's true for Quebec, but my parents, when they retire, they wanna go to Arizona.
- Maura: Oh, another warm place.
- Harp: Yeah, it depends on where you are in Canada, I would say.
- Maura: Yeah. But most of the **snowbirds** go to the southern US. Other people who just like to get away for a week and like to go to an **all-inclusive resort** might go to a country in the Caribbean, like Cuba or the Dominican Republic.
- Harp: Yup, exactly.
- Maura: [crying sounds]
- Harp: What's wrong, Maura?
- Maura: Harp, we have to change the topic now, because I'm not going anywhere warm this winter.
- Harp: All right. Let's go to the second topic, which is **hibernation**.
- Maura: Yes, **hibernation**. A big word that really means *staying inside*.
- Harp: And we say **hibernation** because it comes from bears, because bears **hibernate**.

- Maura: Yeah, most bears in Canada, when the winter comes and when it gets cold, they don't walk around, they don't hang out outside. They go into their cave and they sleep for the whole winter. And it's called **hibernation**. So, we use this same word when we talk about humans staying inside, although we don't sleep for the whole winter, we still have to wake up and go to work.
- Harp: Yes. I **hibernate** a lot.
- Maura: Yeah. I think a lot of people in Canada at this time stay inside more than usual. And when they stay inside, they watch more TV and they watch more movies. I know I watch more movies in the winter.
- Harp: Yeah. I catch up on all the good movies from the summer in the winter.
- Maura: It gets so cold here sometimes that, really, I just can't **bear** to go outside.
- Harp: I know. I go outside because I have to for work, but I can spend a whole weekend at home in the winter.
- Maura: And it takes so long if you're going to go out. You have to put your boots on and tie up your boots and maybe put an extra layer of clothes on and then your jacket and a scarf and a hat and mitts. **You see?** It's even tiring just explaining the clothes you have to put on.
- Harp: Yeah, it really requires a lot more time.
- Maura: Yup. Sometimes, I'm at home and I think about something I would like to eat at the grocery store, but I just tell myself, "Nope, you're not gonna have it tonight. You're not going outside."
- Harp: Just eat whatever you have in the house.
- Maura: Exactly. Anything to **hibernate** and stay inside.
- Harp: When I do leave my house, though, I tend to only go places that are still warm.
- Maura: Oh, for sure. When it gets really cold, I don't wanna be outside, so you come from somewhere inside, like the subway or a car and then you go directly into another building.

- Harp: Yeah. In a previous episode, I talked about **West Edmonton Mall**, which is a shopping centre in my hometown. And it's big and I would spend the whole day there. I would go to the movie theatre, I'd go bowling, I'd shop. But in Montreal, they have **the Underground City**.
- Maura: Yes, which has hallways and tunnels that connect different shopping centres or different office buildings in Montreal. And it's really a big place.
- Harp: Did you know that **the Underground City** in Montreal is the largest underground complex in the world?
- Maura: No. I'm impressed now.
- Harp: It has over 32 km of tunnels, spread over more than 12 km.
- Maura: I think there is a lot I have not explored yet.
- Harp: It's huge.
- Maura: **I have to say**, I used to work downtown a lot, and so I do know some of the tunnels. And I'm always happy to show people where to go, because it's not always obvious. You cut through a shopping centre, then you turn right and you go downstairs, and then you have to go upstairs. It's not really straightforward.
- Harp: No, it's not. There's the main section, which has all the malls, and that's, I think, easy to go through, but there's so much more!
- Maura: And you gotta love it in the winter, because you don't have to go outside. It's great.
- Harp: Yeah, 12 km that you can go underground without having to go outside. It's quite nice when it's -30°C or -40°C outside.
- Maura: For sure. So, even though people (like me) want to escape winter and the rest of us like to **hibernate**, it is also important to get outside and enjoy it.
- Harp: Yes, definitely. I agree with you.
- Maura: So, what kind of things, Harp, do you do to enjoy winter? Do you do anything?

- Harp: Well, the first big thing I had to do was get proper winter clothes. I have good boots now, a big jacket. So I even actually enjoy walking outside in the winter.
- Maura: Yup. I remember a few years ago, I was at the **Ice Hotel**, near Quebec City. And it was really great and exciting and fun to visit. It's an actual hotel made out of ice. Except my boots were in really bad condition and my feet were so cold. Ever since then, I promised myself that I would have a good pair of boots.
- Harp: Yeah. Did you sleep in the **Ice Hotel**?
- Maura: No, I didn't sleep there. Nope, I like to be warm too much. But I just visited during the day and had a fun time during the day.
- Harp: Yeah, I've never been. I've seen pictures. It looks cool.
- Maura: It is. It's really great, except, like I said, I always remember how important it is to have a good pair of boots. And if you wanna know more about the **Ice Hotel**, check out our extra learning materials, and we'll explain more about the **Ice Hotel** there.
- Harp: Now, what are some winter activities you like to do?
- Maura: Well, I like to go snowshoeing, mostly.
- Harp: I love snowshoeing as well. I've only been once, though.
- Maura: Oh really? It's very calm and peaceful. And really, it's just like hiking, but in the snow.
- Harp: Can you explain to me a little bit more about snowshoeing? Just for the listeners out there who have never gone snowshoeing?
- Maura: Well... Well they're not actually shoes. So, it's a special kind of attachment that you put on top of your boots and then it creates a really big base of your boot, so that when you walk on the snow, you don't sink down into the snow, because it can be very deep. But you stay on the top. And of course, you don't do this in the city. You do it in natural areas, where the snow is untouched. So you're walking up mountains and in forests.
- Harp: Ooh, it's so nice. I went once in **Jasper**. It was lovely.
- Maura: Yeah, that would be a good place to go.

- Harp: Yeah, because with snowshoes, you can walk in places that you normally can't if you're just wearing your boots. So we got, actually, really close to this lake. It was beautiful.
- Maura: Oh, nice. Something else that I like to do is skating.
- Harp: Me too. I love it.
- Maura: **To be honest**, I just started doing it again a few years ago. I hadn't done it since I was a kid and I was a bit nervous, because it's a little bit difficult because you're always slipping and sliding around. But it's easy enough to give it a try.
- Harp: Yeah. And the best thing, I find, in Montreal, is that they have so many outdoor rinks, so you can just can grab your skates and go out for an hour or two skating.
- Maura: Yeah, and even if you don't have your own skates, you can usually rent them. And, like you said, in different parks around the city, it's free.
- Harp: It's a fun winter activity, I think.
- Maura: Last year, I actually went skating on the **canal in Ottawa**, which is a really famous place in Canada to go skating, because you really skate through the whole city. It's really great.
- Harp: Yeah. I've done that before too. It was really nice.
- Maura: Yeah. So, even though we talked about escaping winter and **hibernating** from it, there are some really great things about winter too.
- Harp: Yes, there are. And I think, with winter, we appreciate spring and summer so much more.
- Maura: I really agree. Spring is such an exciting time, when the weather starts to warm up a little bit and you see the sun, and maybe you can take your winter coat off.
- Harp: Yes. It's coming soon, Maura.
- Maura: Yeah, just talking about it's got me excited for it.
- Harp: All right. So, today we talked about surviving winter in Canada. And we broke it down into our first theme, of escaping the winter.

Maura: And then **hibernating** from it, so, staying indoors.

Harp: And then we talked about enjoying the winter.

Maura: So, shall we go and enjoy our winter a little bit more, Harp?

Harp: Yes, we should.

Maura: Okay. Now, don't forget to go to our website, Culips.com, that's CULIPS.com, listen to our old episodes, check out our blog, or read our profiles.

Harp: Yeah. And we just want to say thanks for all the donations. They help us make great podcasts for all of you out there.

Maura: Yes, thank you so much. And thanks for all your emails too, we appreciate them.

Harp: This has been Harp.

Maura: And Maura.

Harp: Bye everyone!

Maura: Bye!

Detailed Explanation

Tough business

There are a few expressions that we make by putting an adjective before the word *business*. In this case, *tough* means *difficult*, and *business* refers to the action you must do. *Business*, in this phrase, doesn't mean the act of buying and selling for profit, as it's more commonly used. ***Tough business*** means that what you have to do is difficult. In this episode, we talk about how surviving the Canadian winter is difficult.

Here's another example with ***tough business***:

Ivana: I have so much work to do for my math class.

Ricardo: Math is ***tough business***. I had to work so hard when I took that class last year.

You might also hear *serious business*, which means that the situation is serious. *Funny business* means improper actions or behaviour.

Below 0°C

Canada, like most countries, uses degrees Celsius (also written as °C) to measure the temperature outside. So when we talk about the weather being **below zero** (or **below 0°C**), it means that it's so cold that things freeze and that it could snow.

When we talk about a specific temperature **below 0°C**, as we do in this episode, we say *minus* before the number, like *minus 5*, which can also be written as -5°C. If we're talking about warmer weather, we might say *plus 5*, which can be written as *plus 5°C* or just 5°C.

We only have to be specific and use the word *plus* when it could be above or **below 0°C**, like in the fall or the beginning of spring. In the late spring and summer, people don't need to say *plus*, because the temperature doesn't go **below 0°C**. In this case, we might say *degrees* following the number, like *4 degrees*, which could also be written as 4°C.

When the temperature is **below 0°C**, you always have to say *minus* or *below*, like *minus 20* (-20°C) or *20 below* (also -20°C).

Here are a couple of dialogue examples talking about temperature:

Oscar: It's so cold! I want spring to arrive.

Deena: Didn't you hear? It's supposed to be *plus 7* next week.

Oscar: Oh good! The temperature's going to go up a lot. Today it's *minus 10*.

Dylan: We've had a strange summer this year, haven't we?

Fiona: Yeah! Sometimes the temperature went as low as 12°C.

A winter wonderland

When we call a place a **winter wonderland**, it means that it's snowy and wintry. It also refers to the Christmas song titles **Winter Wonderland**, which was written by Felix Bernard and Richard B. Smith in 1934. It's a Christmas classic and many different versions have been recorded.

Snowbirds

This is a name given to people who leave cold places and go somewhere warm for most of the winter. Like we say in this episode, most **snowbirds** are retired or have a job that they can leave for months at a time to go down south. Some popular places for Canadian and American **snowbirds** to go are Florida, California, Arizona, Texas, and Mexico. People usually rent houses or condominiums or drive down in their RVs.

RVs

Some snowbirds have **RVs**. **RV** stands for **recreational vehicle**. These vehicles are also called *mobile homes* or *trailers*. An **RV** is a home that can be driven to different locations. Some people travel a lot with their **RVs** and others keep their **RVs** in one place and live there.

Some people live in trailers permanently. Others use them to travel around in the summer. Many snowbirds drive trailers to a warmer climate in the winter. Some people keep their trailers parked somewhere nice, like beside a lake, and just visit them during the summer months.

To go down/to travel down/to drive down

When we talk about driving or travelling, we often add the prepositions *up* or *down*. We say **drive down** when we talk about driving south and we say **drive up** when we're talking about driving north. There's really no need to be so specific, but in common, everyday conversations, people often speak like this. Some people might also say **to drive over**, which doesn't indicate a particular direction.

Here are a couple of examples with **drive down** and **drive over**:

Andre: What are you doing this weekend?

Farha: We're **driving up** to the cottage.

Kyle: **Drive over** to my place first, and then we'll go to the movie from there.

Camille: Okay. I'll be there soon.

Till

This word has exactly the same meaning as the word *until*, which means that something continues to a certain time. **Till** and *until* are synonyms and both are fine to use, but *until* is generally seen as more formal and so it appears in writing more often. Many people think that **till** comes from *until*, but they're actually completely separate and very old words.

There's another variation on this word: *'til*, which is a short form of the word *until*. Some people argue that this is not a real word, but it's often used in things like advertisements.

An all-inclusive resort

All-inclusive resort vacations are very popular in North America and Europe. During the winter months, people fly to warmer countries and stay at resorts on the beach. The price for this vacation includes the flight, the hotel, and all the food and drinks that you have while you're there. **All-inclusive** means that the price includes everything you need for the time you're there.

Hibernation

Bears and some other animals literally **hibernate**. They stay in a sleep-like state during the winter months. We can also say that people **hibernate** by staying inside where it's warm and cozy, but this is only a figure of speech.

To bear

This verb is not connected to the animal. There are many ways that you can use the verb **to bear**. Maura says that she can't **bear** to go outside when it's so cold. This means that she can't tolerate or can't stand going outside when it's cold. **To bear** in this case means *to tolerate*. The verb *to bear* is most often used in a negative context, with something you **can't bear**.

Here are a couple of examples using **to bear**:

Hannah: I'm so busy with schoolwork. I hate it.

Bill: You'll just have **to bear** it for another couple of weeks.

Sara: She's so mad at him. She can't even **bear** to be around him anymore.

Victoria: I hope they make up soon.

You see/I have to say/to be honest

You see, **I have to say**, and **to be honest** are different common ways of starting a sentence that act as a type of introduction before you speak. There are all kinds of these short phrases in English and in lots of other languages too. Often, people use these phrases without thinking about the meaning behind them.

Saying **you see** is a way of introducing that you're about to explain something further. The verb *to see* is often used to mean *to understand*, as it is in this case.

I have to say and **to be honest** are quite similar. These expressions are used when the speaker is about to give their opinion or to say something that may contradict what others are saying, or that may be somewhat embarrassing for the speaker.

Always remember that these expressions are often used without any real meaning. In this episode, Maura says, "**I have to say**, I used to work downtown a lot." There's no real reason why she says, "**I have to say**."

The West Edmonton Mall

This mall, in Edmonton, Alberta is very unique! It's a mall for shopping, but it also has amusement park rides, a water park, a hotel, and more, all right there inside the mall. In total, the mall is 5.3 million square feet in total!

Montreal's Underground City

In Montreal, there's a system of tunnels and walkways that connects many places in the downtown area. This "**Underground City**" is open to the public and is especially appealing in the winter, because you don't have to go outside to get around the city. Many shopping centres, subway stations, businesses, and universities are connected by the **Underground City**. It's the largest underground complex in the world.

The Ice Hotel

In Quebec City, the month of February is the time for the Quebec Winter Carnival, or *Carnaval* in French. At this time, there's a hotel made out of ice, the **Ice Hotel**, or **Hôtel de Glace** in French, just outside of the city. Some people stay the night in one of its rooms, but most people just visit the hotel during the day. There's a chapel, a bar, and many rooms to visit. And it's actually warm inside!

Jasper

In this episode, Harp says that she went snowshoeing once in **Jasper**. **Jasper** is in the province of Alberta, in the Canadian Rocky Mountains. It's a popular destination for tourists as there are lots of outdoor activities to do.

Skating on the Rideau Canal in Ottawa

Another winter activity to do in Canada is ice skating. The **Rideau Canal** is about 200 km long and passes right through Ottawa, the capital city of Canada. In the winter, the **canal** is open for skating, and many people spend the afternoon or evening skating along the **canal** and through the city. There's a stage with live music and little places to eat set up along the **canal**. It's a super fun way to spend some time outdoors in the winter!

Quiz (see the answers at the bottom of this Lipservice)

1. Which of the following is the definition of a snowbird?

- a) someone who moves from a warm climate to a colder one during the winter
- b) someone who moves from a cold climate to a warmer one during the winter
- c) someone who likes to fly in the winter
- d) someone who drives an RV

2. What does *RV* stand for?

- a) rest vehicle
- b) rest vice
- c) recreational vice
- d) recreational vehicle

3. What are 2 other words that mean the same thing as *till*?

- a) until and 'til
- b) tilde and until
- c) 'til and tiller
- d) until and under

4. What adjective is used to describe a resort whose price includes the flight, hotel room, and all food and drinks?

- a) non-inclusive
- b) exclusive
- c) all-inclusive
- d) included

5. Kathleen: I hate horror movies. I don't like watching them at all. I went to see one in the theatre a few years ago and I had to leave half way through.

Which of the following is definitely true about Kathleen?

- a) She loves horror movies.
- b) She can't bear to watch horror movies.
- c) She doesn't get scared by horror movies.
- d) She finds horror movies boring.

6. Brian: I have to say, I think we should drive instead of taking the train.

Why does Brian say, “I have to say”?

- a) He's forced to say it.
- b) He's introducing his opinion.
- c) He has no specific reason for saying it.
- d) b) and c) are both possible.

7. Which of the following is NOT true about Montreal's Underground City?

- a) It's great to use in the winter when it's cold outside.
- b) It connects many places in the downtown area.
- c) There are no shops in the tunnels.
- d) There are subway stations connected by the tunnels.

8. Which winter activity is NOT mentioned in this episode?

- a) skating
- b) snowshoeing
- c) watching movies indoors
- d) skiing

Answers: 1.b 2.d 3.a 4.c 5.b 6.d 7.c 8.d