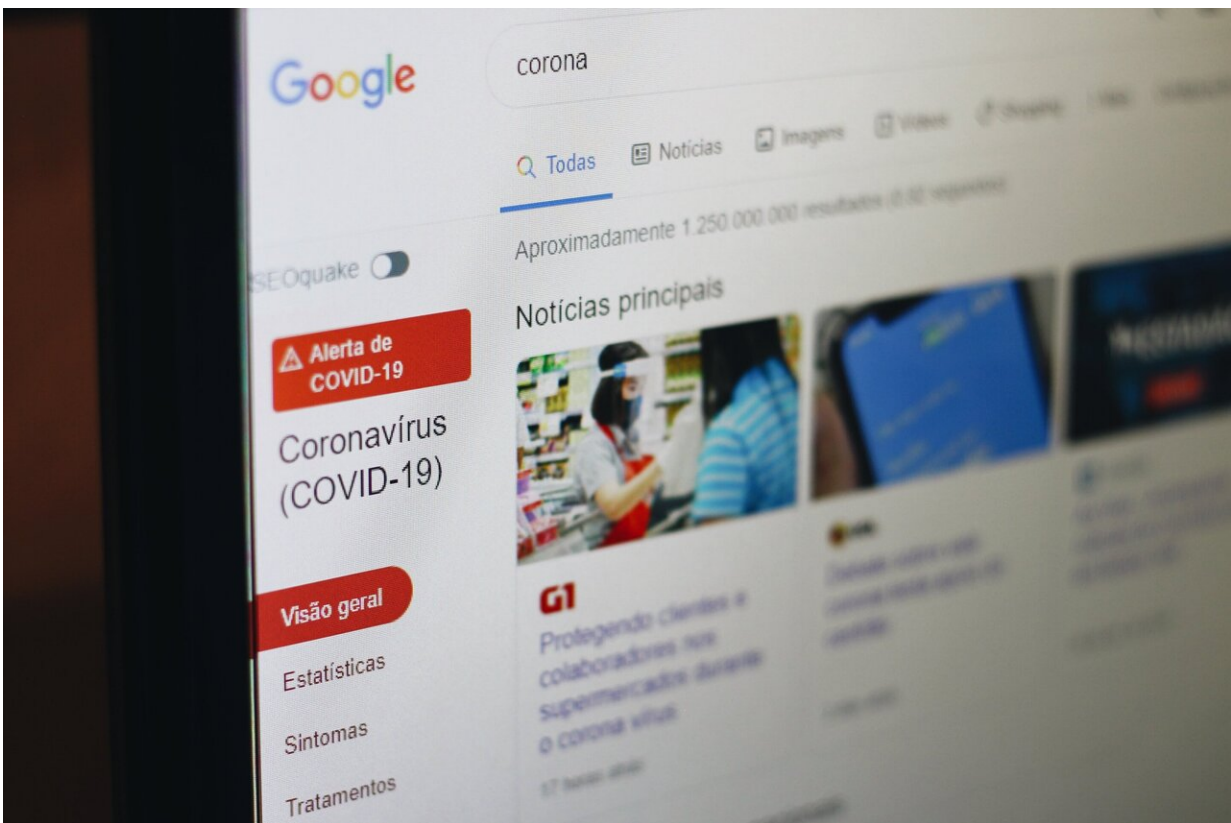


# Google tests blocking news content for some Canadians

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Google is blocking some Canadian users from viewing news content in what the company said Wednesday is a test run of a potential response to a Canadian government's online news bill.

Bill C-18, the Online News Act, would require digital giants such as Google and Meta, which owns Facebook, to negotiate deals that would compensate Canadian media companies for republishing their content on their platforms.

The company said it is temporarily limiting access to [news](#) content for under 4% of its Canadian users as it assesses possible responses to the bill. The change applies to its ubiquitous [search engine](#) as well as the Discover feature on Android devices, which carries news and sports stories.

All types of [news content](#) are being affected by the test, which will run for about five weeks, the company said. That includes content created by Canadian broadcasters and newspapers.

"We're briefly testing potential product responses to Bill C-18 that impact a very small percentage of Canadian users," Google spokesman Shay Purdy said in a written statement on Wednesday in response to questions from The Canadian Press.

The company runs thousands of tests each year to assess any potential changes to its [search engine](#), he added.

"We've been fully transparent about our concern that C-18 is overly broad and, if unchanged, could impact products Canadians use and rely on every day," Purdy said.

A spokeswoman for Canadian Heritage Minister Pablo Rodriguez said Canadians will not be intimidated and called it disappointing that Google is borrowing from Meta's playbook. Last year, that [company](#) threatened to block news off its site in response to the bill.

"This didn't work in Australia, and it won't work here because Canadians

won't be intimidated. At the end of the day, all we're asking the [tech giants](#) to do is compensate journalists when they use their work," spokeswoman Laura Scaffidi said in a statement Wednesday.

"Canadians need to have access to quality, fact-based news at the local and national levels, and that's why we introduced the Online News Act. Tech giants need to be more transparent and accountable to Canadians."

Rodriguez has argued the bill, which is similar to a law that Australia passed in 2021, will "enhance fairness" in the digital news marketplace by creating a framework and bargaining process for online behemoths to pay [media outlets](#).

But Google expressed concerns in a Parliament committee that the prospective law does not require publishers to adhere to basic journalistic standards, that it would favour large publishers over smaller outlets and that it could result in the proliferation of "cheap, low quality, clickbait content" over public interest journalism.

The [company](#) has said it would rather pay into a fund, similar to the Canada Media Fund, that would pay [news](#) publishers indirectly.

The bill passed the Canadian House of Commons in December and is set to be studied in the Senate in the coming months.

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