

Google set to remove news links in Canada over online news law

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The Google logo is displayed at their offices, Nov. 1, 2018, in London. Canada's Senate on Thursday, June 22, 2023, passed a bill that will require Google and Meta to pay media outlets for news content that they share or otherwise repurpose on their platforms. Credit: AP Photo/Alastair Grant, File

Google said Thursday it will remove links to Canadian news on its

platforms across Canada over a new law that will require digital giants to compensate media outlets for content they share or otherwise repurpose.

The tech giant said it will remove Canadian news links from Google News—a personalized aggregator service available by web or app that highlights local news—and from Google Discover, a feature on mobile phones that helps people find content.

Canadian Heritage Minister Pablo Rodriguez accused Google of trying to bully Canadians, but added that "big tech isn't bigger than Canada."

"Big tech would rather spend money changing their platforms to block news from Canadians instead of paying a small share of the billions they make in advertising dollars," Rodriguez tweeted.

Google said it informed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal government of its decision. It did not say exactly when it would begin to remove news, but indicated it would happen before the law takes effect by the end the year. That law was passed last week.

Only Canadian news will be blocked, so Canadian users will still be able to see content from outlets like Fox News or BBC, for example.

Meta made a similar announcement last week, saying it would remove news from its social media platforms Facebook and Instagram before the law comes into force. It is also ending existing deals with local publishers.

Meta is already [running a test to block news for up to 5% of its Canadian users](#). Google ran a similar test earlier this year.

Kent Walker, president of global affairs for Google and its parent company, Alphabet, said the law is "unworkable."

In a blog post published to Google's website Thursday, Walker said the bill creates a price on links, resulting in an uncapped financial liability "simply for facilitating Canadians' access to news from Canadian publishers."

"We don't take this decision or its impacts lightly and believe it's important to be transparent with Canadian publishers and our users as early as possible," Walker wrote.

The Online News Act requires both Google and Meta to enter into agreements with news publishers to pay them for news content that appears on their sites if it helps them generate money.

Google had been seeking assurances about how much that could cost it and how the bargaining process would unfold. Those details are likely to become clear after the bill's regulatory process is complete.

Legacy media and broadcasters have praised the bill, which promises to "enhance fairness" in the digital news marketplace and help bring in more money for shrinking newsrooms. Tech giants including Meta and Google have been blamed in the past for disrupting and dominating advertising, eclipsing smaller, traditional players.

Rodriguez had previously expressed hope the government could come to a positive resolution with both companies to prevent them from removing news. He also said the government would continue to support newsrooms if Google and Meta pulled news from their platforms, though he did not say exactly how that would be done.

Since 2008, nearly 500 newsrooms have closed across Canada, Rodriguez said.

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