

Meta tests blocking news content on Instagram, Facebook for some Canadians

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Facebook's Meta logo sign is seen at the company headquarters in Menlo Park, Calif. on Oct. 28, 2021. Meta said Thursday, June 1, 2023 is prepared to block access to news content for some Canadians on Facebook and Instagram as part of a temporary test that is expected to last through the end of June. Credit: AP Photo/Tony Avelar, File

Meta is temporarily blocking some Canadian users from accessing news content on Facebook and Instagram as part of a temporary test that is expected to last through the end of June, the tech giant said Thursday.

The block—which follows a [similar step taken by Google](#) earlier this year—comes in response to a proposed bill that will require [tech giants](#) to pay publishers for linking to or otherwise repurposing their content online. Bill C-18, the Online News Act, is currently being considered in the Senate and could be passed as early as this month.

Meta also said it is prepared to permanently block news content on Facebook and Instagram for Canadians if the bill passes.

Canadian Heritage Minister Pablo Rodriguez called Meta's move "disappointing" and said Canadians will not be intimidated by these tactics.

The temporary block announced Thursday will affect one to 5% of its 24 million Canadian users, with the number of those impacted fluctuating throughout the test, said Rachel Curran, head of public policy for Meta Canada.

Randomly selected Canadian users will not be able to see or share news content in Canada either on Instagram or Facebook.

The block could include news links to articles, reels—which are short-form videos—or stories, which are photos and videos that disappear after 24 hours.

International news companies including the New York Times or BBC could also have their content blocked in Canada during the test if they are randomly selected.

Meta said it is picking random news publishers that will be notified that some users in Canada will not be able to see or share their [news content](#) throughout the test. Users will still be able to access their accounts, pages, businesses suites and advertising.

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 the advertising industry, eclipsing smaller, traditional players.

Meta, which is based in Menlo Park, California, has taken similar steps in the past. In 2021, it briefly blocked [news](#) from its platform in Australia after the country passed legislation that would compel [tech companies](#) to pay publishers for using their [news stories](#). It later struck deals with Australian publishers.

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