Meta will test blocking news for some Canadians ahead of new law

Meta will test blocking news content for some users in Canada in response to the country's Online News Act, the company has announced. The test is expected to impact between one and five percent of the company's users across Facebook and Instagram, according to *ABC News*, with affected users being unable to see or share news content on the platforms. Both Canadian and international news outlets will be impacted.

The tests come ahead of a permanent block if the Online News Act passes. The legislation, also known as Bill C-18, is designed to force platforms like Meta and Google to negotiate with Canadian news publishers to pay them for content, but Meta has said it would rather block news content in the country entirely rather than be compelled to pay for it.

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Canadian Heritage Minister Pablo Rodriguez told *Reuters* that Meta's tests were unacceptable. "When a big tech company… tells us, 'If you don't do this or that, then I'm pulling the plug' – that's a threat. I've never done anything because I was afraid of a threat," Rodriguez said.

"All we're asking Facebook to do is negotiate fair deals with news outlets when they profit from their work," Rodriguez said in comments reported by *Reuters* in March. "This is part of a disappointing trend this week that tech giants would rather pull news than pay their fair share."

The company previously knows as Facebook has publicly claimed that its approach in Canada will be different from the one it took in Australia, *CBC News* previously reported. “It’s absolutely our intention to not make the same errors in Canada that we made in Australia,” Rachel Curran, head of public policy for Meta Canada, told Canada’s House of Commons heritage committee last month.

“Some of the things that were mistakenly scoped in Australia, we’re working very hard to make sure we do not do that this time,” Curran said, noting that Meta is working to exempt pages from government bodies, emergency services, and community organizations from any potential block.

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