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Meta confirms it will end news availability for Canadians as Bill C-18 passes

Meta said in a statement today that news availability will be ended on Facebook and Instagram prior to the Online News Act taking effect.

The company said, “We have repeatedly shared that in order to comply with Bill C-18, passed today in Parliament, content from news outlets, including news publishers and broadcasters, will no longer be available to people accessing our platforms in Canada.”

Meta also confirmed that the ongoing product test restricting access to news for around 1.1 million Canadians is still in effect.

The bill, which would force Meta and Google to compensate news publishers for linking to their content, received Royal Assent today.

Heritage Minister Pablo Rodriguez said that the passing of the bill “levels the playing field by putting the power of big tech in check and ensuring that even our smallest news business can benefit through this regime and receive fair compensation for their work.”

The Senate passed the bill with 12

amendments last week, most of which the government backed. Rodriguez rejected two, one of which changed the bargaining process, requiring parties to clarify the value that each derives from news content and the portion that would go to the eligible news businesses.

Senator Julie Miville-Dechéne who proposed the change, said in a statement to the Globe and Mail, “This was a pragmatic and reasonable amendment that added clarity to the bill. It was not in any way an amendment proposed by the platforms but it was to try to clarify some of the vagueness that has been talked about by Google.”

Google raised concerns about the vague and broad language of the bill in several proposed amendments, none of which, the company said in a media statement today, was addressed. It added that it is trying “to avoid the outcome no one wants.”

The minister is now reportedly holding talks with Google in a last-ditch effort to prevent it from blocking Canadians’ ability to search for news.

University of Ottawa internet law professor Michael Geist stated in a tweet, “Months of Meta consistently stating it

would exit news in Canada due to Bill C-18. Yet @pablorodriguez still thought it was a bluff and has no Plan B. Now scrambling to see if Google might not block. Everyone loses with this disastrous legislation.”

Spokeswoman for Rodriguez Laura Scaffidi told the Globe and Mail, “Following the Royal Assent of Bill C-18, the government will engage in a regulatory and implementation process. The tech giants do not have obligations under the Act immediately after Bill C-18 passes. As part of this process, all details will be made public before any tech giant is designated under the Act.”

Under one of the amendments passed by the Senate, the legislation only takes effect 180 days after it is passed.

The CRTC, whose expertise to oversee the news sector and whose powers granted to implement the bill were put to question during a senate committee meeting, said it will soon set up the framework for mandatory bargaining between the parties.

[Additional Text]:

Online news on a smartphone and laptop, Woman reading news or articles in

a mobile phone screen application at home. Newspaper and portal on internet.

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