

Meta to end news access in Canada over publisher payment law

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Meta has begun the process to end access to news on Facebook and Instagram for all users in Canada, the company said on Tuesday. The move comes in response to legislation in the country requiring internet giants to pay news publishers. Meta's communications director, Andy Stone, said the changes will roll out in the coming weeks. Canada's heritage minister, Pascale St-Onge, who is in charge of the government's dealings with Meta, called the move irresponsible. "[Meta] would rather block their users from accessing good quality and local news instead of paying their fair share to news organizations," St-Onge said in a statement. "We're going to keep standing our ground. After all, if the government can't stand up for Canadians against tech giants, who will?" Canada's public broadcast CBC also called Meta's move irresponsible and said that it was "an abuse of their market power". The Online News Act, passed by the Canadian parliament, would force platforms like Google's parent company, Alphabet, and Meta to negotiate commercial deals with Canadian news publishers for their content. The legislation is part of a broader global trend of governments trying to make tech firms pay for news. Canada's legislation is similar to a ground-breaking law that Australia passed in 2021 and had triggered threats from Google and Facebook to curtail their services. Both the companies eventually struck deals with Australian media firms after amendments to the legislation were offered. In the US, the state of California has also considered a similar law. In that case, too, Meta has threatened to withdraw services from the state if the legislation goes through. On the Canadian law, Google has argued that it is broader than those enacted in Australia and Europe as it puts a price on news story links displayed in search results and can apply to outlets that do not produce news. Meta had said links to news articles make up less than 3% of the content on its users' feed and argued that news lacked economic value. Canada's prime minister, Justin Trudeau, had said in May that such an argument was flawed and "dangerous to our democracy, to our economy".