

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING:

Canada's Online News Act (C-18)

Canada's Online News Act, enacted on June 22, 2023, is intended to help Canadian news organizations "[reach fair commercial agreements with the largest online platforms](#)." However, many organizations and individuals have expressed significant concerns about the bill, its emphasis on link taxes, and a lack of focus on the needs of smaller publications. The following includes third-party pieces, news articles and research relevant to the legislation, its impact on the online news ecosystem and the negative consequences of C-18.

[Lion Publishers Letter to LION members about the Journalism Competition Preservation Act and the Online News Act](#)

"In a time when more than half of U.S. newspapers, by circulation, are owned by hedge funds or other financial interests, chances are slim that payments would be spent on re-seeding the news deserts that these same conglomerates have spent years withdrawing from. Second, communities have no say in how these dollars would be spent. Many of the news deserts in the U.S. and Canada lost reporting resources because these businesses found those communities less profitable to operate within. Without input from places that are starved for news and information, how exactly do payments to these large conglomerates do anything to preserve journalism?"

[Techdirt, "Canada's Online News Act \(C-18\) Has Been An Unmitigated Disaster: Why Does California Still Want To Move Forward With Its Version?"](#)

"The fundamental premise behind it is to break the open internet, as an obviously corrupt forced wealth transfer from one disfavored industry to an industry that helps get politicians elected. Everything about this concept is bad..."

[CBC Canada, "Student newspaper at UNB Saint John goes back to the future with print editions"](#)

"The Online News Act, which became law last June, requires digital companies to pay news organizations when someone accesses a digital news story through their platforms as a form of revenue sharing. In response, Meta blocked news articles and other content being posted by publishers and broadcasters from being viewed or shared by Canadians on their platforms, including those on campus, Wheaton said."

"So before, we would publish daily on our website and then we would post on Meta and Google platforms, and then students would go through those platforms to our website," she said. "We noticed since we can't post on those platforms anymore, our readership dropped quite a bit."

[Michael Geist, "Why Bill C-18's Mandated Payment for Links is a Threat to Freedom of Expression in Canada"](#)

"I suspect the government fears that Canadians would easily recognize the risks associated with mandated payments for links and fundamental unfairness with the system envisioned by Bill C-18. It is why it has misled on the inclusion of link payments, rejected the Parliamentary

Budget Officer’s estimates on who benefits, and sought to frame Facebook’s concerns as a threat, when the real threat lies in the bill itself. But despite those efforts, make no mistake: Bill C-18 is a law about forcing some platforms to pay for links. It gives the government the power to regulate who pays and which expression is worthy of payment. In doing so, it creates a threat to freedom of expression for all Canadians.”

Michael Geist, “Here Comes the Online News Act: Why the Government’s Media Shakedown is Bad News For Press Independence and Competition”

“Bill C-18 will hand new power to the CRTC [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission] to oversee what are effectively mandatory payments by Internet platforms such as Google and Facebook for the mere appearance of news on their platforms. This represents nothing less than a government-backed shakedown that runs the risk of undermining press independence, increasing reliance on big tech, and hurting competition and investment in Canadian media.”

Software & Information Industry Association, “Is Canada Trying to Break the Internet?”

“One of the country’s most headline-grabbing actions to date was C-18, Canada’s Online News Act. While intended to establish a framework that allows digital news intermediary operators and news businesses to enter into agreements on news content, it is widely seen as part of a crusade against Big Tech and an effort for U.S. tech companies to subsidize smaller Canadian publishers, many of which rely on social media to generate traffic.”

Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, “In Canada’s battle with Big Tech, smaller publishers are caught in the crossfire”

“The aim of Canada’s Online News Act was to bring some of the money that the news industry lost during the online revolution back into the pockets of news organisations...However, the new legislation may make things worse for Canadian outlets, and while public broadcaster CBC or legacy newspapers will unlikely suffer much due to their robust funding models and name recognition, smaller, independent publications are already seeing the impact of the new law.”

Internet Society, “Who Loses When Platforms Don’t Show News to Canadian Users?”

“This is a form of Internet fragmentation that has a very tangible impact on every Internet user in Canada. It fundamentally changes the relationship between people and the Internet, making CRTC [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission] a centralized authority to oversee how people and businesses can use the Internet’s common language and address system. It significantly harms what the Internet needs to exist and thrive, restricting how people and businesses can research, discover, communicate, and innovate on the Internet in Canada.”

The Line, “Jen Gerson: Facebook DGAF”

“What I see, here, is a government that is eager for a showy fight with a major technology firm, and a technology firm that doesn't care. What I see is an exhausted PM and his meh cabinet in a small media market; a government that talks big and does little, deciding to take on a tech giant that is probably more popular with Canadians than they are.”

Reuters, “When Facebook blocks news, studies show the political risks that follow”

“The blocking of news links has led to profound and disturbing changes in the way Canadian Facebook users engage with information about politics, two unpublished studies shared with Reuters found...The lack of news on the platform and increased user engagement with opinion and non-verified content has the potential to undermine political discourse, particularly in election years, the studies' researchers say.”

McGill University’s Max Bell School of Public Policy, “Sue Gardner: Bill C-18 is Bad for Journalism and Bad for Canada”

“Bill C-18—which is really no more than a shakedown of the platforms in order to prop up the dying business models of legacy incumbents—just isn't good enough. It's lazy and it's not in the public interest. Canada deserves better.”

Financial Post, “Postmedia records slightly lower net loss despite revenue decline in second quarter”

“Despite anticipated positive impacts from revisions to the Journalism Tax Credit and implementation of the Online News Act, the media industry in Canada continues to face major challenges as demonstrated by recent announcements of the creditor protection filings of each of Black Press and Saltwire,’ Postmedia chief executive Andrew MacLeod said in a release.”

Information Technology & Innovation Foundation, “Canada’s Attempt to Make News Aggregators Pay for Content Could Lead to Lower-Quality News”

“C-18 and similar bills and laws in other countries...are based on the false premise that governments need to level the playing field between news aggregators and news publishers. Lawmakers ignore the benefits that publishers get from having their stories linked via news aggregators: namely, increased traffic, which leads to increased advertising and subscription revenue. After Google News switched to an opt-out system in Germany, overall traffic to Germany’s largest publishers decreased 40 percent. After Google stopped offering Google News in Spain, traffic to Spanish publishers fell by over six percent, and traffic to smaller publishers fell 14 percent.”

Canadian Taxpayers Foundation, “Journalists should not be paid by the government”

A Trudeau government committee is deciding what a journalist is, what a qualified newsroom is and the government is paying journalists. The term “free press” doesn’t mean newspapers were free to take off a newsstand. It means the press is free from government influence and censorship. Journalists should not be paid by the government. Newsrooms should rely on money from advertising, subscriptions and free-will donations from people who support them.”