

Bill C-18 battleground

TORONTO, July 6, 2023—A new Maru Public Opinion survey finds that while a majority (58%) of Canadians initially support the federal government and its Bill C-18 that creates a new government oversight for digital giants to negotiate deals compensating media outlets for news content on their platforms, public backing slips (to 55%) upon knowing why the digital tech titans are against the bill, and then tumbles into a minority (45%) territory once knowing that both Meta (that owns Facebook and Instagram) and Google intend to remove links from their search engines so Canadians won't be able to get Canadian news from their platforms.

Based on this iterative knowledge of the combatant battleground, half (51%) of Canadians say the government and the digital tech companies should both signal a truce, go to the negotiating table, and get this apparent quagmire worked out. This compares to those Canadians who continue to ardently support either the federal government and its Bill-18 (29%) or the digital tech companies (20%) in a virtual battlefield standoff.

The survey was completed just before Heritage Minister Pablo Rodriguez announced yesterday that the federal government will be suspending advertising on Meta's Facebook and Instagram as a response to Meta's decision to block news content following the passing of Bill C-18.

At first, a majority of Canadians support the federal government and its Bill C-18

When the federal government's Bill C-18, the Online News Act, comes into effect within the next six months, it will create a new government oversight for digital giants like Meta (that owns Facebook and Instagram), Google, and others to negotiate deals compensating media outlets for news content they share or otherwise repurpose on their platforms.

Upon knowing this, a majority of Canadians support (58%--very much 22%/somewhat 36%) the government and Bill-18 compared to those who are opposed (42%--very much 20%/somewhat 22%) to such an action being taken.

Still a majority, but support slips based on digital tech arguments

The tech companies say the law has no cap on the amount of money they might have to pay, and they need to know what that is, many media outlets already have funding agreements with them, and the news articles on their platforms cause visitor traffic click-throughs to generate exposure for ad revenue and new subscribers for the news outlets themselves.

Based on this further knowledge, support slips but a majority (55%--very much 17%/somewhat 38%) of Canadians still support the federal government and Bill-18 compared to those who oppose (45% very much 26%/somewhat 19%) the undertaking.

Support for government and Bill C-18 tumbles when digital tech companies choke off Canadian news

Meta (that owns Facebook and Instagram) and Google have indicated that if the law goes through, they'll remove Canadian news links from their search engines, so Canadians won't be able to get Canadian news from their platforms, end all agreements where they pay to license news from over 150 local publishers, and cancel journalism fellowships that they fund. Upon knowing this, the ground shifts with a majority of Canadians now opposing (55% --very much 27%/somewhat 28%) Bill-18 eventually coming into force compared to the minority who continue to support (45%--very much 20%/somewhat 25%) the initiative.

Half of Canadians say government and digital tech companies should negotiate, other half splits taking sides

In response to the revelations noted above, half (51%) of Canadians believe the government and the digital tech companies should both signal a truce, go to the negotiating table, and get this worked out. This compares to the hardened supporters for each side who either:

- stand with the government to take whatever steps are necessary to get these very profitable digital tech companies to fund Canadian news outlets and journalists more than they do, even if it means Canadian news is removed from their platforms. These companies will eventually give into the pressure of the government and seek a compromise (29%); or,
- stand with the digital tech companies and how they are reacting because their arguments and tactics against the bill are sound, and the government is not bargaining in good faith. The government will eventually give into the pressure of the companies and seek a compromise (20%).

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Methodology

These are the findings from a [Maru Public Opinion](#) online panel survey undertaken by its sample and data collection experts at [Maru/Blue](#) from June 30-July 3, 2023, among a random selection of 1,530 Canadian adults who are [Maru Voice Canada](#) panelists. The results were weighted by education, age, gender, and region (and in Quebec, language) to match the population, according to Census data. For comparison purposes, a probability sample of this size has an estimated margin of error (which measures sampling variability) of +/- 2.5%, 19 times out of 20. Respondents could respond in either English or French.

Panel and data services provider [Maru Blue](#) is deeply rooted in the Maru/HUB technology platform and offers on-demand, high-quality, highly scalable online community samples of deeply engaged, known respondents. Excerpts from this release of findings should be properly attributed, with interpretation subject to clarification or correction.

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