

LEVELLING THE DIGITAL PLAYING FIELD

MEDIA ASK FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S HELP FROM TECH GIANTS

News Media Canada, of which this publication is a member, is asking the Canadian government to implement new measures that would save media companies from being bled dry by tech giants such as Google and Facebook.

Google and Facebook control approximately 80 per cent of the digital advertising market in Canada, News Media Canada says.

Advertising dollars are what keep traditional news organizations running, but those monies are going to foreign-owned companies instead.

Tech companies are able to present locally produced news content on

their own platforms and sell advertising around it, without compensation to the media company that produced the articles.

Furthermore, even when advertisers pay specifically to advertise on a news site, Google and Facebook keep most of that revenue, while at the same time gathering data on news media site readers and advertisers for their own purposes.

This needs to change, News Media Canada says, and it could change if the federal government implements the Australian model here.

"Some of our readers and advertisers do not realize that their local newspaper is also affected by the web giants. Our local content can be picked up for use and consumed for free without any consideration of the efforts that went in to producing a story," said

DEFANGING BIG TECH

Kelly Montague, Torstar Vice President of Community Brands. "Local journalism is expensive to produce. Local investigative journalism costs even more. And local journalism is so important to communities."

The Australian model would allow publishers to collectively negotiate compensation from tech companies for the use of their content, a code of conduct would stop web monopolies from using new algorithms and other technologies to expand their market dominance, and web giants would be subject to fines in the millions of dollars for a single infraction. None of these actions would have a cost to the taxpayer.

"Our local advertisers



Torstar graphic

Torstar is among the national news organizations seeking government assistance against tech giants.

are really surprised when we point out how the tech giants make money from our efforts and essentially take money out of local communities," Montague said. "Google and Facebook swipe our content, place ads around it (ads that at one time appeared in our newspaper) and make money off of our local stories."

"Many of our partners do not make an immediate connection, though under-

stand once we explain and understand why we are upset."

News Media Canada represents more than 90 per cent of news media readership in Canada. Its membership includes Torstar, Glacier Media, Black Press, Postmedia, the Globe and Mail, La Presse, Quebecor and Brunswick News.

Minister of Canadian Heritage Steven Guilbeault said the government recognizes the market im-

balance between content creators and those who benefit from its use, and that the government is committed to creating a comprehensive and fairer digital regulatory framework.

"It is about fairness: those who benefit from the Canadian ecosystem must also contribute to it, whether they operate in the broadcasting sector or are involved in news content sharing."

"This means ensuring that our online environment does not unduly disadvantage Canadian news publishers and allows them to continue to do their essential work which is to empower and inform our communities, in times of crisis and beyond, for the benefit of our democracy," he said in an emailed statement.

Guilbeault added the government is looking at other jurisdictions, including Australia and France, in discussions for a made-in-Canada framework.

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