

Premier Ford

It's Time to Stand Up for Journalism



Dear Premier Ford:

I am writing to you on behalf of journalists from news organizations in Ontario and across Canada.

We know you agree, journalism is essential to democracy.

And we've been reminded during this terrible pandemic how journalism is essential to our very lives.

In the last 14 months, journalists have analysed and reported on the containment of community spread, the challenges of the vaccine rollout and the tragedy in long-term care homes. Imagine where we'd be without news organizations sounding the alarm across the country.

But Canadian journalism is under dire threat. Not from government oppression, but from the financial ruin visited on news organizations by Google and Facebook's outrageous monopoly over digital ad dollars (80% of the market) and their domination of the biggest distribution networks for news, namely their own platforms.

The salt in the wound is that Google and Facebook scrape online news content from Canadian news organizations - without permission or by dictating one-sided terms - to feed their endless appetite for personal data and the gigantic ad revenue that comes from that.

Mr. Premier, as an MPP who meets with the Queen's Park press corps every day, you know that news organizations have been shrinking year after year. Journalists can't break news if they are laid off and there are 45% fewer Canadian journalists today than there were in 2014.

Safe as the Silicon Valley monopolists think they are behind American borders, sovereign governments are fighting back to save journalism.

Australia recently adopted tough rules requiring Google and Facebook to negotiate with Australian publishers and broadcasters, subject to binding arbitration. Facebook and Google's notorious attempt to bully the Australian government into withdrawing the law failed.¹ Australia's legislation has resulted in a more equal revenue split between Big Tech and news organizations.²

Canada can do it, too. The federal government says it's ready to act. It must be a non-partisan effort or we risk Google and Facebook's divide and conquer tactics will win out.

We ask you as the leader of our nation's biggest province to put your shoulder to the wheel and speak out in favour of a fair deal for journalism.

Jerry Dias
Unifor National President

¹Sydney Morning Herald, Feb 18, 2021, 'A real shock': Media companies slam Facebook's Australian news restrictions

²Sydney Morning Herald, March 16, 2021 "News Corp Australia, Nine strike Facebook content deals."