

A reflection on the potential costs and benefits of Bill C-18

To the Editor,

In the midst of multiple deadly forest fires, Meta's decision to halt Canadians from sharing or accessing news via Facebook seems particularly ill-timed. This move comes in response to Bill C-18, the Online News Act, legislation that isn't even in effect yet. The federal government's efforts to compel Meta to compensate news providers appear to have unintentionally restricted social media users from a primary source of news at a critical time.

Information is life-saving in times of emergencies. A well-funded and free press is critical for a healthy democracy. It is easy and probably justifiable to harbour ill feelings towards Meta for this decision.

That said, it is crucial to remember that relying on Facebook for news has always been problematic. The platform curates content not based on quality but on its potential to incite and enrage users. This system creates echo chambers, fractures society, fuels outrage, and nurtures intolerance.

Being compelled to turn to reputable news websites may have its benefits. In an era where some social media users struggle to distinguish between credible news sources and purveyors of misinformation, there could be a silver lining to this corporate cloud. While the timing is indeed unfortunate, given the increasing frequency of emergency events and the challenges posed by changing weather patterns, perhaps there never really is an opportune moment to break free from Facebook's newsfeed.

Perhaps some good will come of us being forced to visit actual news websites to learn what is happening around us. The timing may be awful, but with the increasing frequency of emergency events, exacerbated by changing weather patterns, maybe there is no good time to rip the Facebook newsfeed band-aid off.

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Faraday