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Canada launches new process to welcome skilled newcomers with work experience in priority jobs as permanent residents

Ottawa—With employers eagerly seeking to fill countless vacant positions across the country, immigration emerges as a vital piece to solving this puzzle. Recognizing this reality, the Government of Canada is building an immigration system that acts as a catalyst for growth, empowering businesses, helping address their labour needs and strengthening French communities. When combined, these efforts will ensure Canadians benefit from economic and social prosperity for years to come.

The Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, today announced the first-ever launch of category-based selection for Canada's flagship economic immigration management system, Express Entry. Category-based selection will allow Canada to issue invitations to apply to prospective permanent residents with specific skills, training or language ability. Further details on the timing of invitations for individual categories and how to

apply will be announced in the coming weeks.

This year, category-based selection invitations will focus on candidates who have

- a strong French language proficiency or
- work experience in the following fields:
 - o healthcare
 - o science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) professions
 - o trades, such as carpenters, plumbers and contractors
 - o transport
 - o agriculture and agri-food

By allowing us to invite more skilled workers in these professions, category-based selection supports Canada's commitment to welcoming in-demand professionals into communities across the country. Additionally, by placing a special focus on Francophone immigration, the Government of Canada is ensuring that French communities can continue to live their life in Canada in the official language of their choice.

Category-based selection will make Express Entry more responsive to Canada's changing

In Toronto, about 200 residents of a highrise are on strike - they're refusing to pay rent. It's their form of protest against the owners of the building, where longtime tenants have experienced six above-guideline rent increases in the past decade.

In another part of the city, more than 100 tenants in an apartment complex have stopped paying rent to protest proposed above-guideline increases of almost 10 per cent over the last two years, according to a tenant advocacy group.

The strikers are saying enough is enough. And it's not the first time tenants in Canada have staged a rent strike.

More than 300 tenants in 12 buildings in the Toronto neighbourhood of Parkdale went on strike for three months in 2017 - and successfully fought a substantial rent increase. It happened again in Hamilton, Ont., the following year, though with different outcomes.

Rent strikes in Canada are on the increase - and with good reason, says Ricardo Tranjan, a political economist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in Ottawa.

"It's a bold movement," Tranjan, author of *The Tenant Class*, said in an interview with CBC News. "I think it speaks to how much they have been pushed to the limit by the overall housing situation and by a specific landlord that they would take such bold movement to withhold rent."

But such strikes are not without risks. Here's what a rent strike entails, and what one could mean for tenants.

What's a rent strike?

A rent strike can be as simple as a group of tenants refusing to pay their rent until their conditions are met.

Often times, they involve tenants

What are rent strikes and do they work?



of a building banding together to take action on their own. Other times, tenants officially form a union and collaborate with housing advocates or other activists. Their efforts can be financially supported through donations or membership dues.

In the case of one of the groups of tenants currently on strike in Toronto, the York South-Weston Tenant Union is an umbrella group of smaller tenant associations. It invites people to become members for free but also encourages optional contributions.

The tenants on strike are asking their landlord to drop an application for another above-guideline rent increase, along with compensation for services they have lost during construction.

Maintenance is also a common issue for tenants who wage rent strikes.

Are rent strikes new?

Rent strikes have a long history in Canada and other countries. In the 1860s, tenant farmers on Prince Edward Island formed a union and waged a rent strike against absentee

farmers; the Island's government eventually took over the land.

Tenants have staged strikes throughout the world, and throughout history, including strikes in Glasgow's tenement buildings in the 1880s, in Barcelona in 1931 and in Harlem, N.Y., in 1963-4. And in the United Kingdom, university students launched a string of rent strikes between 2015 and 2018.

Rent strikes surfaced again as an issue in Canada and the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many lower-income workers lost their jobs and could not afford their rent. Ontario's labour movement got involved in a "no COVID evictions" campaign.

The pandemic was a galvanizing moment, Tranjan said.

"It became a very clear moral conundrum," he said. "Should we allow people to be evicted because we had to shut down the economy for public health reasons?"

Are rent strikes successful?

Success can be difficult to measure but generally, yes, Tranjan said. Tenants don't always get what they

Canada welcomes over 13,500 new Canadians during Citizenship Week

Ottawa—Every year, Citizenship Week is a chance to celebrate new citizens and all that is meant to be Canada.

The Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, is proud to announce that, over the past week, Canada hosted 105 citizenship ceremonies and welcomed more than 13,500 new Canadians to all provinces and territories. This was nearly double the average of new Canadians welcomed per week throughout the year.

Minister Fraser attended citizenship ceremonies in Halifax and Vancouver, where he welcomed new Canadians and highlighted Canada's tradition of supporting vulnerable people and the role and responsibilities that Canadian citizenship entails.

Citizenship ceremonies are an emotional and meaningful experience for those receiving their citizenship, for their friends and family, and for all those who have the chance to take part in these momentous occasions.

Quebec

"It was a great honour to participate in welcoming over 13,500 new members to our Canadian family. In fact, it is one of the best parts of my job. Citizenship Week 2023 has given me the chance to reflect on everything that being Canadian means: the freedom to live as our authentic selves, the connection to our natural world, and the opportunity to reach our full potential no matter where we came from.

While rent strikes are noble, they do come with risks. Tenants could face eviction or lower credit scores if they refuse to pay rent - not to mention the stress they endure, often for months at a time.

But Pater said it's worth it.

"It's risky, but so is not taking collective action of that sort," he said.

"I mean, a lot of people who are in the position to do an action that is that extreme are in a position where if the rent goes up, they're going to lose their home anyway. If you lose your home, that can put you in a situation where you're not really too concerned about your credit score."

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Canadians spending 30 per cent more on travel compared to pre-pandemic levels

Canadians are continuing to spend more money on travel as the industry rebounds slowly from pandemic disruptions, according to RBC Economics - but many are opting for closer destinations, with travel to the U.S. on the rise.

Spending on travel has risen almost 30 per cent above pre-pandemic levels, according to an RBC Proof Point report published at the end of May.

In January 2022, Canadians were spending roughly 60 per cent less on travel than they did before the pandemic began. But that number soon shot up, and has remained high.

Between January and April 2023, more than 19 million Canadians took trips abroad, which is a seven per cent increase compared to the same period in 2019.

Last summer, hotels and tours were much more expensive than they were



in 2019, with flights more than 30 per cent more expensive and rental cars priced 50 per cent higher.

The costs associated with these specific activities have dropped slightly, but Canadians have been dealing with increased food and shelter costs amid soaring interest rates this year. However, this hasn't stopped Canadians from investing in travel.

According to RBC, when travelling, more Canadians decided to fly rather than drive so far in 2023. In the first part of the year, the number of Canadians returning from a trip by plane increased 42 per cent.

A higher percentage of these flights are now to the U.S. rather than destinations further away, however. Around 134 per cent more Canadian residents returned to the country from

China defends buzzing American warship, Canadian frigate in Taiwan Strait

the U.S. by plane between January and April 2023, compared to 2019. The report theorized that price played a role in this, as shorter trips are cheaper.

However, price isn't the only motivator for Canadians seeking to travel right now. The report also looked at Google Trends and found more Canadians were searching the word "best" more often when googling travel related queries, as opposed to the word "cheap." Before the pandemic, and in 2020 and 2021, the gap was smaller between those searching "best" versus those searching "cheap," but the gap has increased in the past year.

Within Canada, travel trends are shifting east, with Atlantic Canada experiencing bigger increases in interest according to Google Trends compared to any other region in the country. At the same time, the eastern provinces have been increasing in population, potentially due to the sustained level of remote work.

The report predicts that while there will likely be a dip in travel spending soon as Canadians tackle the increasingly expensive world, we're unlikely to see demand crash dramatically.

China's defence minister defended sailing a warship across the path of an American destroyer and Canadian frigate transiting the Taiwan Strait, telling a gathering of some of the world's top defence officials in Singapore on Sunday that such so-called "freedom of navigation" patrols are a provocation to China.

In his first international public address since becoming defence minister in March, Gen. Li Shangfu told the Shangri-La Dialogue that China doesn't have any problems with "innocent passage" but that "we must prevent attempts that try to use those freedoms of navigation [patrols], that innocent passage, to exercise hegemony of navigation."

U.S. Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin told the same forum Saturday that Washington would not "flinch in the face of bullying or coercion" from China and would continue regularly sailing through and flying over the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea to emphasize they are international waters, countering Beijing's sweeping territorial claims.

Canadian Defence Minister Anita Anand said Canada would continue to sail where international law allows, including the strait, and that "actors in this region must engage responsibly."

Concerns accident could lead to escalation. On Saturday, a U.S. guided-missile destroyer and a Canadian frigate (HMCS Montreal) were intercepted by a Chinese warship as they transited the strait between the self-governed island of Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, and mainland China.

The Chinese vessel overtook the American ship and then veered across its bow at a distance of about 140 metres in an "unsafe manner," according to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.

Additionally, the U.S. has said a Chinese J-16 fighter jet late last month "performed an unacceptably aggressive manoeuvre" while intercepting a U.S. Air Force reconnaissance aircraft over the South China Sea, flying directly in front of the plane's nose.

Those and previous incidents have raised concerns of a possible accident occurring that could lead to an escalation between the two nations at



a time when tensions are already high.

Li suggested the U.S. and its allies had created the danger, and should instead focus on taking "good care of your own territorial airspace and waters."

"The best way is for the countries, especially the naval vessels and fighter jets of countries, not to do closing actions around other countries' territories," he said through an interpreter. "What's the point of going there? In China we always say, 'Mind your own business.'"

In a wide-ranging speech, Li reiterated many of Beijing's well-known positions, including its claim on Taiwan, calling it "the core of our core interests."

"Meddling in China's internal affairs" He accused the U.S. and others of "meddling in China's internal affairs" by providing Taiwan with defence support and training, and conducting high-level diplomatic visits.

"China stays committed to the path of peaceful development, but we will never hesitate to defend our legitimate rights and interests, let alone sacrifice the nation's core interests," he said. "As the lyrics of a well-known Chinese song go: 'When friends visit us, we welcome them with fine wine. When jackals or wolves come, we will face them with shotguns.'"

In his speech the previous day, Austin broadly outlined the U.S. vision for a "free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific within a world of rules and rights."

In the pursuit of such, Austin said the U.S. was stepping up planning, co-ordination and training with "friends from the East China Sea to the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean" with shared goals "to deter

aggression and to deepen the rules and norms that promote prosperity and prevent conflict."

Li scoffed at the notion, saying "some countries take a selective approach to rules and international laws."

"It likes forcing its own rules on others," he said. "Its so-called 'rule-based international order' never tells you that the rules are and who makes these rules."

By contrast, he said, "we practise multilateralism and pursue win-win co-operation."

Li is under American sanctions that are part of a broad package of measures against Russia - but predate its invasion of Ukraine - that were imposed in 2018 over Li's involvement in China's purchase of combat aircraft and anti-aircraft missiles from Moscow.

The sanctions, which broadly prevent Li from doing business in the United States, do not prevent him from holding official talks, American defence officials have said.

Still, he refused Austin's invitation to talk on the sidelines of the conference, though the two did shake hands before sitting down at opposite sides of the same table together as the forum opened Friday.

Handshake no substitute for engagement, U.S. says Austin said that was not enough. "A cordial handshake over dinner is no substitute for a substantive engagement," Austin said.

The U.S. has noted that since 2021 - well before Li became defence minister - China has declined or failed to respond to more than a dozen requests from the U.S. Defence Department to talk with senior leaders, as well as multiple requests for standing dialogues and working-level engagements.

Housing affordability in Canada just saw the biggest improvement in almost 4 years

Stable interest rates and a continued cooling in home prices helped give housing affordability in Canada its biggest jump in almost four years in the first quarter of 2023, according to a new report.

On Thursday afternoon, National Bank of Canada released its quarterly housing affordability monitor, which it tracks through mortgage payments as a percentage of income (MPP).

Mortgage payments as a percentage of income reached 60.9 per cent in the quarter, down 3.2 percentage points from the previous period and down 5.4 percentage points from recent highs. Q1's affordability boost was the best improvement in the last 15 quarters tracked by National Bank.

Affordability was better for the second quarter in a row in Canada, according to the report. Each of the 10 markets monitored by National Bank showed improvement, the first time that has happened in two and a half years.

National Bank noted that while there has been improvement in MPP, it remains elevated, and has not retraced the massive rise in unaffordability observed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Canadians looking to enter the housing market in a major urban centre now need to save an average of just over \$50,000, which National Bank estimates requires 73 months of saving. The historic average since 2000 is 40.5 months of saving.

The bank cited a continuing price decline in the first quarter as helping Canadians better afford their homes. National Bank said median home prices were down for a third consecutive quarter, marking an overall decline of 7.3 per cent, which the bank called "the biggest drawdown in a generation."

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Veteran actress Sulochana Latkar passes away at 94

Veteran actress Sulochana Latkar, known more as Sulochana Latkar, passed away today in Mumbai. She was suffering from respiratory illness since last few months. Her condition had deteriorated recently after which she was admitted in Sushrushta Hospital in Dadar where she took her last breath.

Sulochana Latkar was admitted for a similar condition in March this year as well. At that time, the cost of her treatment was taken care of by Maharashtra's Chief Minister Eknath Shinde from the Chief Minister's fund.

The veteran actress did over 250 films in Hindi and Marathi. She started acting when she was in her teens in the mid-1940s and was active till the mid-1990s. Some of her notable Hindi films include Sujata (1959), Naya Kadam (1958), Danyas Na Man (1959), Bharat Milay (1965), Main Sundar Hoon (1971), Dharmatma (1975), Farar (1975), Asha (1980), Yashna (1981), etc. In the latter stage of her career, she was known for playing Amritabh Bachchan's mother in a number of films.

She was considered a legend in



Marathi cinema. Some of her famous characters in the language appeared in films like 'Vahitriya' Hangdya (1953), 'Maza Ghar Maghi Manasa' (1956), 'Molkari' (1963), 'Marathi Tituka Melava' (1964), etc.

In an old interview with Cineestaan, Sulochana Latkar was asked to name her most satisfying

Sara Ali Khan to be paired with ex-boyfriend Veer Pahariya in Sky Force

Ashley Kumar is teaming up with director Sandeep Kewlani and Abhishek Kapur in the Dinosh Vign and Jio Studios Production, Sky Force. The film went on floors in the month of May with Ashley Kumar and will be shot over a period of three months at various locations. The shoot is currently in progress in London, wherein the team has recreated certain parts of India. Sara Ali Khan and Veer Pahariya. On Koffee with Kareen, Sara and Jashvi had confessed to dating two brothers, and the brothers in question were Pahariya brothers - Veer and Shikhar. While Jashvi is still going strong with Shikhar, as he has been spotted several times with her father-in-law, Sonney Kapoor, Sara is all set to reunite with Veer on his launch pad, Sky Force.



role is integral to the screenplay," revealed a source close to the development of Bollywood Hangama. Dinosh Vign has pulled off this casting coup as he believes that casting the right people is very important to escalate the buzz of a film in the present time and age. The cast now comprises Ashley Kumar with Veer Pahariya and

Aishwarya Rai Bachchan Praised For Her 'Class Act' As Her Lookalike Sneha Ullal's Old Interview Surfaces On Social Media

Aishwarya Rai Bachchan is on cloud nine with the success of Ponniyin Selvan 2. Her portrayal of Nandini, inspired by the book of Kalki Krishnamoorthy, received critical acclaim. Aishwarya certainly never fails to impress her fans, and they want her to do more movies. Nevertheless, an old interview with Sneha Ullal, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan's lookalike, has resurfaced on Reddit.

The video featured how beautifully the Lucky No Time For Love actress speaks about Aishwarya Rai Bachchan.

Sneha shared that she met Aishwarya Rai Bachchan at an award show and she warmly welcomed her to the family, which is the Hindi film industry. Ullal also said that she was very nervous as the media compared her to the former Miss World.

Incidentally, Aishwarya and Sneha have green eyes, which make them so distinct and magnetic.

Sneha told the actress not to hate on her. She said that Aishwarya Rai Bachchan is a warm, touched her and that she knows the diva will meet her nicely if they ever bump into one another.

Sneha Ullal took her retirement from Bollywood and film as she was diagnosed with an auto-immune disorder. The blood-related illness made her sick and it took her four years to bring it under control.

BD call up uncapped duo for Afghanistan Test



DHAKA: Bangladesh on Sunday called up uncapped batsman Shahad Hossain and fast bowler Mushfik Hasan for the one-off Test against Afghanistan this month.

The Afghan Test side will arrive on June 10 to play the match, which starts on June 14 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in the capital Dhaka.

Chittagong Division's 21-year-old first-class debutant in 2021 and scored 1,265 runs from 20 first-class games, with two hundreds and 10 fifties.

Mushfik, a 20-year-old fast bowler, took 49 wickets from 13 first-class matches, including three five-wicket hauls, after he burst onto the scene in the 2022 first-class season for Rangpur Division.

Both Shahad and Mushfik impressed for Bangladesh A in the just-concluded series against the West Indies A team.

Uncapped Shahadat blends in after maiden training session

Bangladesh's new batting prodigy Shahadat Hossain Dipu certainly looked to be in his own skin as he joined the national training camp for the first time in his career at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on Monday.

Former Bangladesh Test skipper Mominul Haque took him under his wings considering he knows him from his childhood as they are both from the same region. Shahadat, known to be quite reserved, managed to make Chandika Hathuringsingh notice him with a fluent drive against a pace. He already has a reputation in the domestic circuit for handling the slower bowlers.

Hathuringsingh applauded the young right-hander after he completed his maiden net session and he will certainly now feel confident that he belongs at this level. Shahadat certainly knows by now what the national dressing room looks like considering a couple of his Under-19 World Cup winning team mates have played at the senior level that includes Shoriful Islam, Shamim Patwary, Towhidul Islam amongst others.

Shahadat made his first-class debut in 2021 and so far scored 1,265 runs from 20 games with two hundreds and 10 half-centuries. He caught the eye with his half-century against India A in Sylhet as he scored 109 runs in two innings during the second four-day match against them in December last year. He also made an impression in the last edition of the Dhaka Premier League, country's traditional list A tournament, for Prime Bank Cricket Club scoring 480 runs in 13 innings with an average of 36.92 including one hundred and one fifty. He was the highest scorer for Prime Bank Cricket Club.

However, Shahadat showed his real temperament in the second game of the three-match series against West Indies A scoring successive half-centuries to make a strong claim for the Test squad. "I want to play as per the situation. Everyone talks about skill but I feel you need to be mentally strong to do well here," Shahadat told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on Monday.

Sri Lanka square ODI series with 132-run win over Afghanistan



HAMBANTOTA: Quick bowler Dushantha Chamara stormed back into the Sri Lankan team to power their 132-run win over Afghanistan at Hambantota on Sunday and square the three-match one-day international series.

Having amassed a total of 324, the Sri Lanka bowlers skittled out the tourists for 191 inside 43 overs for their biggest win in ODIs over Afghanistan.

Chamara, returning to the side after a seven-month layoff after ankle surgery, bowled a couple of hostile spells to finish with two for 18.

Sri Lanka will be buoyed by the return of their main strike bowler, as they head to Zimbabwe straight after the series to play World Cup qualifiers.

"We are very happy that Chamara is back; injury kept him out for a while but I am glad he is firing on all cylinders," skipper Dasun Shanaka said.

"Dimuth Karunaratne is back as well, and he adds more stability to the batting - and obviously he's very experienced. These are good signs looking forward for the World Cup qualifiers." There are no such problems for Afghanistan, who have already qualified for the World Cup later this year in India. Chamara was well backed up by part-time off-spinner Dhananjaya de Silva, who finished with three wickets, including first-match hero Ibrahim Zadran.

Leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga picked up his first claiming three for 42. Zadran, who had top scored in the first ODI with 98, was again amongst the runs with 54.

But the scoreboard pressure got to him as he edged an attempted cut that was well taken by Kusal Mendis behind the stumps.

Captain Hashmatullah Shahidi top scored with 57 runs, before being trapped leg before by de Silva.

After that, there was little resistance by the Afghan batters as they lost six wickets for 23 runs.

"I don't think that was our best performance, we were bit sloppy on the field," Shahidi said after the match. "We have got one more game, and we will try and bounce back."

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Canadian military plane subjected to 'unsafe' Chinese intercepts, DND says

A Canadian military patrol plane was repeatedly intercepted by Chinese military aircraft while deployed to the Indo-Pacific region last month, just as Defence Minister Anita Anand was preparing to announce a significant increase to Canada's military presence in the region.

The intercepts, some of which were described as dangerous by the Department of National Defence, mark at least the second such cluster of interactions between the two countries' air forces since the fall.

The recent interactions between the Canadian maritime patrol plane and the Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force mostly "took place in a safe and professional manner," a spokesperson for the Department of National Defence said Monday, "however, some were deemed unsafe."

National Defence initially refused to confirm the intercepts in mid-May, citing security concerns as the CP-140 Aurora patrol plane, which had been deployed to Kadema Air



Base in Japan, was still operating in the region.

But in a statement to CTV News on Saturday, the department confirmed the Chinese had intercepted the Canadian plane as it flew more than a dozen sorties as part of a multinational mission to enforce United Nations sanctions against North Korea.

"When interactions are deemed unsafe, Canada addresses them directly with China through the appropriate channels," a National Defence spokesperson said.

The Chinese defence ministry did not respond to repeated requests for comment from CTV News.

The confirmation of the intercepts came on the same day that a Chinese navy vessel cut across the path of an American destroyer and a Canadian frigate in the Taiwan Strait, forcing the U.S. vessel to slow down to avoid a collision.

The U.S. military says the incident occurred as the USS Chung-Hoon and HMCS Montreal were conducting a so-called "freedom of navigation" transit in the strait between Taiwan

and mainland China.

A statement Saturday from the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command says the Chinese guided-missile destroyer overtook the U.S. ship, crossing its bow at 150 yards and forcing it to slow to 10 knots to avoid a collision, in violation of maritime rules for safe passage in international waters.

The interaction occurred as Canada's defence minister was in Singapore announcing a new military operation to replace the Asia-Pacific portion of Canada's existing Operation Projection.

The new Operation Horizon will see one additional warship deployed to the Indo-Pacific region from Canada's West Coast, starting this summer.

Canada will also increase its participation in international exercises and strengthen its relationships with regional security partners, Anand said.

"As we forge ahead with a strong, multidimensional approach [in] this important region, we will challenge China when we ought to, and we will cooperate when we can," National Defence said in a news release concluding the Singapore trip on Saturday.

"We will continue to work alongside allies and partners in the region to promote a stable, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific," respectively.

Surviving's highest complaints levels over the winter likely stem from the disruptions the airline saw during that time period, Gradek said.

The biggest airlines tended to have the highest number of total passenger complaints, even though the smaller ones are seeing higher averages per 100 flights.

In the CTA's report for 2021-2022, Air Canada saw 3,245 complaints and WestJet had 3,288, while Flair had 239 and Sunwing 884.

Gradek said there's stiff competition between Canada's discount carriers, but there may not be room in the market for all of them.

"There is a place for discount carriers, no doubt about it," he said. But Gradek said the real test is not how they fare during peak times, but how they do when demand is lower.

"Will they have enough cash in the bank to survive the fall?" he said. "And will they have enough cash to transition to Christmas?"

Air Canada and WestJet have also both seen recent turbulence, albeit after the CTA's report's timeline.

Air Canada cancelled and delayed flights beginning last Thursday due to technical problems, while WestJet narrowly avoided a pilot strike over the May long weekend but still had to cancel a number of flights.

Facebook and Instagram are about to start blocking news for random Canadians. Here's what it will look like if you're targeted

OTTAWA—Meta, the tech giant that owns Facebook and Instagram, will soon start blocking the sharing and posting of news content for some Canadians on those platforms as part of a testing strategy that could become permanent - and rolled out nationwide - if Ottawa's online news bill passes unchanged.

In the coming days, Meta will introduce the tests in preparation for the potential passage of Bill C-18, or the Online News Act, which it opposes.

The bill would force digital giants like Meta and Google to enter into deals with Canadian media publishers for directing their users to and sharing online news. The federal government has framed the bill as an attempt to create a more balanced relationship between news outlets and the digital platforms Ottawa says unfairly dominate the digital advertising market. Forstar, which owns the Toronto Star, supports the bill, and currently has deals with both platforms for news sharing.

Meta's move follows a similar tactic employed by Google earlier this year, which saw the global search giant quietly launch a test that filtered out Canada and international news content for some of its users in Canada.

"When a big tech company, whatever the size is, the amount of money and the powerful lawyers they have, they come here and they tell us, if you don't do this or that, then I'm pulling the plug - that's a threat and that is unacceptable," Heritage Minister Pablo Rodriguez said in a statement in response to the news.

"I never did anything because I was afraid of a threat, and I will never do it."

Here's what else Canadians can expect, and why Meta is taking the controversial step.

The test will run for "several weeks" and will see one to five per cent of Canadian Facebook and Instagram users - who will be chosen at random - blocked from viewing, sharing or posting certain news content on Facebook and Instagram.



The company won't disclose the total number of Canadians set to be affected. It says 24 million people in Canada use its apps, which include Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.

Those selected will find out they've been enrolled when they try to share news content and receive a notification informing them they cannot do so.

Affected users also won't be barred from sharing every news story. Instead, they'll be blocked from sharing content from specific news publishers.

Meta told the Star that selected users on the platforms could "experience the news less differently, and that the number of people affected could fluctuate over the course of the test."

What does this mean for news outlets?

News accounts affected by the test will also be chosen at random, but they'll be plucked from a list of outlets that match the criteria outlined in the bill over what constitutes an "eligible news business."

Those are outlets that have been deemed a "qualified Canadian journalism organization" and that produce "news content of public interest." Among other criteria, eligible outlets should employ two or more journalists within Canada and should operate in Canada.

Rachel Curran, Meta Canada's head of public policy, says that means international news publishers that partially operate in Canada could also be included in the test.

"The New York Times or the Wall Street Journal or the BBC or any of those outlets that have a presence in Canada... their content will also not

be viewable or shareable by users in Canada," she told the Star.

When the test commences, Canada users of its apps, which include Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, won't be restricted from posting content. The company will instead restrict the viewability and shareability of news content on those pages for any users targeted in the test.

"Tell me more about this bill - and why Meta is pushing back."

A key argument underpinning the government's motivation for introducing C-18 last spring is that it says the web giants are "gatekeepers" that "derive significant financial benefit for their operations in Canada."

Ottawa has also been critical of Meta and Google's attempts to restrict news content online in response to similar legislative moves in other countries. Canada's bill is based on Australia's News Media Bargaining Code, which saw Facebook pull news from its platform in that country for seven days. MPs and senators, meanwhile, have questioned whether removing trusted news sources from online platforms would allow misinformation to spread unchecked.

Meta and Google have argued for months that news content only accounts for a small percentage of the queries - and revenue generated - on their platforms.

"News content represents less than three per cent of what's in-feed," Curran said.

Meta says that rather than siphoning advertising dollars away from news publishers, it sends more than a billion clicks to their sites in a year, representing hundreds of

millions in revenue.

The company has put forward a series of amendments it wants to see backed by senators and MPs as the bill enters what could be its final weeks of study.

"We don't want to pre-empt the Senate's work. We're appreciative, very appreciative of the fact that I think they're taking a close look at amendments and really doing a policy dive into the bill," Curran said.

"This is really about preparing for the possibility of Bill C-18 passing substantively so drafted, and in order to prepare properly for that passage, we have to start testing now."

Members of the Senate committee currently looking at the bill expressed a range of reactions to the news.

"The fact that it is happening right when we are in the absolute throes of holding public hearings on the bill, well, the timing could be considered by some to be uncomfortable," said Independent Alberta Sen. Paula Sawun.

"If they're trying to intimidate me, I don't intimidate very easily. But maybe they're not trying to intimidate people. Maybe they're legitimately test-driving their blocking, but I don't think one can read this as politically neutral."

Simons, a former journalist who on Thursday began informing her online followers where else they could find her if they were scooped into the test, said she was disappointed "Facebook is going to be neutered in this way."

"It's really sad and I am not quite sure that this is going to work out for either the government or for Facebook," she said.

Ontario Independent Sen. Donna Dasko told the Star it's "legitimate" for companies to conduct such tests, but said that "nevertheless, Meta's moves was 'provocative.'"

"The context is fraught with conflict between them and the government on the bill. So therefore, it's not just like any ordinary market test, because it's taking place in this environment."

Conservative Quebec Sen. Leo Housakos said Meta's decision should serve as a wake-up call to the government that C-18 is ill-advised, and that journalists will wind up "punished" because of it.

Federal Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre echoed that sentiment Friday, stating that by introducing the bill, the Liberal government was "hurting our media outlets."

"I don't believe that either big tech or big government should censor what people see and say online," he told reporters.

Flair tops Canadian airlines with average number of complaints per 100 flights: CTA

Flair Airlines Ltd. has the highest number of complaints per 100 flights of all the major airlines in Canada, according to the Canadian Transportation Agency, as airlines have had a rocky recovery year with delayed and cancelled flights.

Between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023, Flair saw an average of 15.3 complaints per 100 flights according to the report published in late April.

Sunwing Airlines Inc. came second at 13.8 complaints per 100 flights, and Swoop Inc. was third at 13.2. Meanwhile, WestJet had 6.6 complaints per 100 flights, Air Canada had 4.3 and Air Transat averaged 3.3 complaints.

Flair saw four of its leased planes sit in March because of overdue payments, causing hundreds of cancelled flights.

John Gradek, a lecturer at McGill University's aviation management program, theorized that the debacle for

Flair was a symptom of cash flow issues at the airline. He said Flair had overcommitted itself and passengers were complaining about issues related to compensation.

This dealt a blow to the airline's reputation, he said. However, as demand has crept up, Gradek said Flair is charging higher fares and therefore is likely generating more revenue.

"Their cash position has improved significantly," he said.

"They're now able to address any compensation claims that are being made by passengers, whether it's for bags or whether it's for delayed flights or cancelled flights."

As demand for air travel has soared in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, airlines have at times struggled to keep up and the past year has seen headlines about cancellations, delays and chaotic airports.

According to the CTA, the average

number of complaints was lower for all the major airlines for the first three-month period of the report from April to June 2022, with Air Canada seeing an average of one complaint per 100 flights, Flair seeing 9.3, Swoop seeing 6.7 and WestJet seeing 3.9.

However, as the summer travel season began last year, the airlines tended to see complaints rise. During the peak July through September summer travel season last year, Swoop jumped to 18.5 complaints per 100 flights to have the highest of all airlines, while during the October through December stretch Sunwing was the worst with 20.7 complaints per 100 flights.

Flair peaked at 20.9 between in the January to March 2023 period when it saw its planes sit, while WestJet also peaked at 10.7 during the same period. Swoop and Air Canada both peaked between July and September last year, at 18.5 and 6.3,

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