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# Digital services tax sparks new trade dispute as US harts talks with Canada

US President Donald Trump on Friday halted all trade negotiations with Canada over Ottawa's new digital services tax, which will affect American tech giants. Trump described the tax as a "blatant attack" on the United States, escalating political tensions and his ambitions to potentially annex Canada.

"Based on this egregious tax, we are hereby ending all trade discussions with Canada, effective immediately," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. "We will be notifying Canada of the tariff they will be paying to do business with the United States within the next seven days."

Trump has repeatedly expressed his opposition to digital services taxes during trade negotiations with other countries, viewing them as a "non-tariff trade barrier."

Canada's new digital tax is scheduled to take effect next Monday and will be applied retroactively from 2022.

In response, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said Friday that he still wishes to continue negotiations with the United States, but will continue to conduct these complex negotiations in the best interest of Canadians. These are negotiations," he told reporters.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent commented on CNBC on Friday, stating "We knew it was coming and we were hoping it would not be implemented." He added, "We think it's fundamentally unfair to make it retroactive. This is a Trudeau-era issue, so we were hoping as a sign of goodwill that the new Carney administration would at least hold off on the tax during trade negotiations. But apparently, they did not."

Bessent indicated that if the Canadian government proceeds with the tax, Trump is prepared to impose higher tariffs on all Canadian goods, without specifying the rate.

Canada is the largest buyer of American goods, importing \$349bn worth last year, according to US Department of Commerce data. In turn, Canada exported \$413bn in goods to the US, making it the third-largest source of foreign goods for the American market. The imposition of higher tariffs could provoke retaliatory measures from Canada, which some estimates suggest would cause economic harm to both nations.

The government of former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau passed Canada's Digital Services Tax Act in June 2024, with its rules coming into effect the same month.

The federal tax applies to large foreign and domestic companies that must meet two specific criteria: total global revenues of \$750m or more, and annual earnings exceeding \$20m from Canadian sources.

The legislation imposes a 3% tax on digital services revenue exceeding \$20m. It applies retroactively to January 1, 2022, which according to some estimates, means Ottawa could collect billions of dollars.

Taxable revenues include earnings from online marketplaces, digital advertising, social media, and user data, which will primarily affect US tech giants such as Amazon, Apple, and Meta Platforms.

Pierre Poilievre, leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, wrote in a social media post that he hoped both sides would return to the negotiating table. "I am disappointed that trade talks have stalled. Hopefully they will resume soon."

Several Canadian companies and groups have expressed concern about proceeding with the tax, fearing an escalation of trade tensions with the US.



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The United States has strongly opposed the tax from the outset because it primarily affects American tech giants.

US officials have argued that the tax discriminates against American companies. In a rare display of unity, both Democrats and Republicans in Congress have rejected Canada's plan and have been united in their criticism.

Early in his second term, Trump had threatened to impose a 25% tariff on all Canadian exports, with the possibility of raising it further for some products.

To date, most Canadian goods remain exempt from these tariffs, provided they comply with the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which Trump negotiated during his first term.

The most notable exceptions have been a 25% tariff on all foreign cars and parts, steel and aluminum. Trump later doubled the tariffs on steel and aluminum imports to 50%. Canadian goods not compliant with the USMCA faced combined tariffs of 50%.

In response to the auto tariffs, Canada imposed a 25% tariff on non-compliant US cars. It also retaliated against Trump's original steel and

aluminum tariffs by imposing a 25% tariff on nearly \$43bn of US goods, including alcoholic beverages, sports equipment, and home appliances.

Despite Trump's latest tariff threats, US markets ended Friday on a high note. The S&P 500 and Nasdaq, which dipped slightly after Trump's post, rose 0.53% to close at record highs. The Dow Jones Industrial Average also climbed 432 points, or 1%.

The US has said that American companies are obligated to pay Ottawa \$2bn under the digital services tax. In a statement issued in February, Trump said: "America alone should be allowed to tax American companies."

In response to the Canadian rules, tech giant Google is imposing an additional 2.5% fee on advertisements shown in Canada, effective October 2024. Google stated that the surcharge, named the "Canada DST Fee," will cover "a portion of the costs of complying with Canada's DST legislation."

Do Other Countries Apply Similar Taxes?

Yes, France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom, among others, have such tax systems.

According to the Tax Foundation Europe, about half of the European OECD countries have announced, proposed, or implemented a digital services tax. The United States has met these proposals with threats of retaliatory tariffs.

France's Council of State, which advises the government on draft laws, has referred the country's digital services tax to the Constitutional Council for review, marking the first constitutional challenge to a DST since the legislation was passed in 2019.

How Could the United States Respond?

Trump said he would withdraw from bilateral trade negotiations because Canada intends to proceed with the digital services tax, calling the move "a direct and blatant attack on our country." This has cast

doubt on whether a 30-day deadline to reach an agreement in the trade dispute can be met.

The previous administration of President Joe Biden also opposed the tax but sought to resolve the dispute differently. In August 2024, it requested dispute settlement consultations with Canada under the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA).

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## Opella Egypt participated as a Gold Sponsor at Africa Health ExCon

Opella Egypt participated as a Gold Sponsor at Africa Health ExCon 2023, co-hosted by Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), Africa's leading healthcare event. The conference welcomed over 60,000 attendees from 150+ countries, held under the patronage of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

"Towards Sustainable Healthcare" session, held by Opella on June 25, focused on Opella's sustainability, B Corp certification and self-care vision. At the heart of the session was a panel on e-Labeling, a joint ambition by Opella and the Egyptian Drug Authority (EDA) to cut waste and expand access to reliable health information. The takeaway was simple: Digital, eco-friendly tools aren't optional. They're essential for a smarter, more sustainable future.

Opella leaders, experts from the World Health Organization (WHO), the EDA, South Africa's regulatory bodies, and the Global Self-Care Federation (GSCF) contributed valuable insights. The message was clear: Long-term impact starts with informed choices, stronger health literacy, and is bolstered by collaboration. Opella achieved a new milestone on its journey to deliver responsible self-care for people and planet. Certified by B Lab, B Corp recognizes companies that meet rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability.

**Marissa Saresky, Chief Sustainability Officer:** "We are proud to be the first global consumer healthcare company to



achieve B Corp Certification, reflecting our commitment to sustainability and accountability. Our strategy towards a healthier planet and society focuses on decarbonizing our operations and value chain, embedding circularity, driving health literacy and supporting surrounding communities through NGO partnerships. We look forward to working with all partners across the sector to make sustainable self-care a second nature."

**Josephine Fubara, Chief Science Officer:**

"e-Labeling puts more power in the hands of consumers. It empowers consumers by making self-care easier, more accessible, and sustainable—while simplifying healthcare for everyone. To realize its full potential, we need early, open collaboration across regulators, industry/healthcare professionals, and patients."

**Fairouz Elouze, General Manager (AMET):** "Opella's presence at the conference highlights our commitment to

sustainable healthcare systems. We are a dedicated global self-care leader, ready to meet the health needs of consumers. Our independence allows us to innovate faster and stay focused on our mission: making self-care as simple as it should be—for everyone."

The EDA has been leading a multi-phase e-Labeling shift to modernize medicine information and boost sustainability. Launched in 2022, the initiative, launched in 2022, replaces paper leaflets with QR-linked digital formats, starting with hospital-use products. Now in its second phase, it supports health literacy, cuts paper waste, and sets the stage for full digital integration using global standards.

By digitizing the 60 million leaflets provided annually by Opella Egypt, we could save 200 tonnes of carbon emissions and protect 5,400 trees. Recognizing the significance of collaboration and active participation among various stakeholders, Opella is committed to supporting initiatives that facilitate this transition and drive sustainable change.

## Roche and Egypt's UPA sign MoU on sustainable healthcare procurement

Roche Diagnostics Egypt has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Egyptian Authority for Unified Procurement (UPA) to help integrate environmental sustainability into the country's healthcare procurement system.

The collaboration is aimed at supporting the UPA in embedding green procurement principles and sustainability frameworks across all phases of its healthcare procurement lifecycle, from planning and acquisition to waste management. The initiative is aligned with Egypt's Vision 2030 for Sustainable Development and its national goals for environmental stewardship and resource-efficient healthcare.

Under the terms of the agreement, Roche Diagnostics will provide strategic guidance to support the UPA in embedding environmental sustainability across its procurement policies and operations. The partnership will include tailored capacity-building programmes, such as experience exchange initiatives and hands-on workshops, to equip UPA teams and other stakeholders with practical tools and global expertise.

Both parties will also co-develop a comprehensive procurement guidelines, aligned with international practices, to facilitate environmentally responsible decision-making throughout the healthcare supply chain.

Dr. Liliane Kanaan, General Manager of Roche Diagnostics in Egypt and North Africa, commented: "At Roche,



we believe that a sustainable healthcare system is an imperative. This collaboration with UPA showcases our shared commitment to building resilient, environmentally responsible supply chains. Together, we are taking bold steps to create tangible impact by reducing the healthcare sector's environmental footprint, as well as shaping a procurement model that balances progress with planetary responsibility."

The agreement comes as environmental sustainability becomes a greater priority in policy-making and procurement for governments and international organizations, which are increasingly recognizing that responsible sourcing can reduce costs and improve health outcomes.

Environmentally conscious procurement can reduce harmful emissions, waste, and the use of hazardous materials, contributing to a cleaner ecosystem and fewer health risks from environmental degradation.

It can also generate long-term cost efficiencies through streamlined operations and streamlined supply chains, while enhancing the resilience of healthcare supply networks and encouraging innovation in eco-friendly materials and greener manufacturing practices.

The partnership is consistent with Roche's global sustainability strategy, which integrates environmental, social, and economic priorities across its operations. The company has committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and embeds sustainability into its procurement by working with suppliers to reduce emissions and improve supply chain transparency.

Roche stated that most of its total carbon emissions are linked to its supply network, leading to invest in initiatives such as the Sustainability Supplier Engagement Programme, the Sustainable Markets Initiative (SMI), and the Pharmaceutical Supply Chain Initiative (PSCI). These platforms are designed to help Roche and its partners collectively raise industry standards.

The MoU will allow the UPA to access Roche's participation in these global platforms, utilizing international expertise and tested frameworks to support Egypt's sustainability agenda. By drawing on Roche's global networks, the collaboration positions Egypt to adopt procurement strategies that balance public health priorities with environmental stewardship, reinforcing Roche Diagnostics' role as a partner in developing Egypt's healthcare system.

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For general information or advertising inquiries, please contact: **Roche Diagnostics Egypt**  
Phone: +967 11 555 5555  
Fax: +967 11 555 5555  
Email: [info@roche-egypt.com](mailto:info@roche-egypt.com)

For financial information, please contact: **Roche Diagnostics Egypt**  
Phone: +967 11 555 5555  
Fax: +967 11 555 5555  
Email: [info@roche-egypt.com](mailto:info@roche-egypt.com)

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