

Netflix to block services that bypass local content rules

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Netflix says it's planning on cracking down on users who use virtual private networks and proxy services to view content not available in their countries.

Many of the company's distribution deals with major studios and content providers are negotiated on a regional basis, meaning certain titles are only available to users in certain countries.

Some Canadians use VPN services to stream Netflix movies and TV shows available in the United States, which according to the website Netflixable has around twice as many available titles.

The U.S. version of Netflix also features more Hollywood blockbusters and recent seasons of popular network shows than its Canadian counterpart.

In a blog post, David Fullagar, Netflix's vice-president of content delivery, said the company is making progress in licensing content across borders but is now implementing new measures to end the use of so-called unblockers and other proxy services.

The company has always been against the use of such services and has said it takes measure to shut them down, but Fullagar said the company is "evolving" its approach to the problem and the new strategy will be in place in the coming weeks.

According to a April 2015 report by Media Technology Monitor, roughly two in five English-speaking Canadians has a subscription to the video-streaming service, with nearly one-third saying they had accessed the American version of the service.

Meanwhile, Bell Media finally announced that Crave TV, its subscription video-on-demand service is now available for all Canadians for \$7.99. The service had previously been only available for Bell subscribers for \$4 a month, but will rise to \$6 on March 1st.

Last June, in her first public speech after taking the job, Bell Media president Mary Ann Turcke, spoke about the evils of people using VPN, telling a story about her daughter using one to an audience at the Canadian Telecom Summit.

"She is 15 ... and she was stealing," Turcke was reported as saying at the time. "Suffice to say, there is no more VPNing."

She went on to add: "We have to work together as an industry to make sure people understand the value of creative content... We have to get engaged and tell people they are stealing."