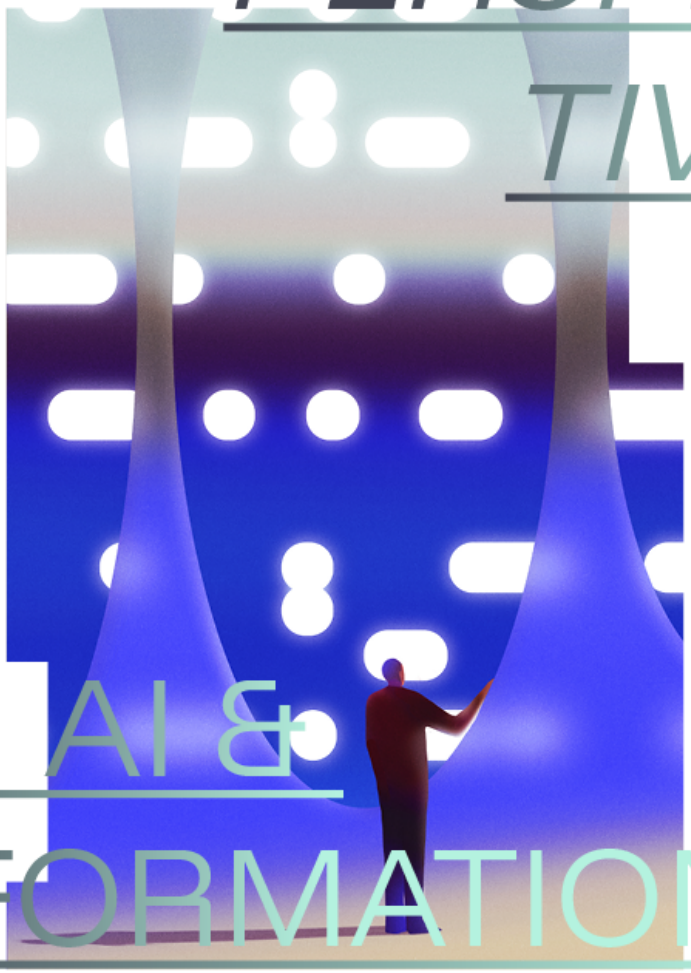
GEN Z AI.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON AI & INFORMATION INTEGRITY



FORUM REPORT

Youth voices,
AI futures

GEN Z AI.

With the advent of AI, information integrity is being challenged, and there is still little regulation in place. Young people are feeling this the hardest, especially as trust in the information they see online continues to decline.

Our second forum on AI and information integrity tackled these critical issues directly. This generation is approaching the topic from lived experience and thinking about the kind of future they want to shape. This second forum builds on this momentum and continues the important youth-led policy work of Gen(Z)AI.

-Alexander Martin

Report Author and Lead Youth Fellow, Gen(Z)AI Forum on AI & Information Integrity

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The Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy is an interdisciplinary research organization housed at the Max Bell School of Public Policy at McGill University. Its work is dedicated to understanding and responding to the social, political, and policy challenges posed by the evolving information ecosystem and digital technologies.

DoT

Dialogue on Technology Project
SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue

The Dialogue on Technology Project (DoT) is the SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue's flagship initiative on technology and artificial intelligence. Drawing on the Centre's deep expertise in design, facilitation, consensus building, and conflict engagement, DoT brings together diverse stakeholders—community members, researchers, policymakers, industry, and civil society—to better understand and shape how AI and related technologies are transforming our lives and societies.

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FOREWORD

Fergus Linley-Mota and Helen Hayes
Gen(Z)AI Co-Leads

This report summarizes the second chapter of Gen(Z)AI's national process, which was held in Montreal, Quebec, Canada on January 30 - February 1, 2026. At this forum, which focused on AI and Information Integrity, young people articulated a clear and urgent diagnosis of today's digital environment. They described an information ecosystem increasingly shaped by the volume and sophistication of AI-generated and misleading content—content that can overwhelm users, blur the lines between authentic and synthetic expression, and erode confidence in reliable information. Participants emphasized that these dynamics do not affect all communities equally: vulnerable populations often bear the greatest burden.

They also identified structural forces that amplify these harms. Algorithmic recommendation systems, optimized for engagement, can reinforce information echo chambers and intensify social and political polarization. At the same time, engagement-driven information environments contribute to declining trust in news media, government, and other public institutions. For these young participants, these are lived realities that shape how they learn, connect, and participate in public life.

Alongside the entire Gen(Z)AI process—including one forum held in 2025 and two more to be hosted in 2026—thousands more youth will engage with the drafted policy recommendations from each forum using Make.org's civic dialogue platform. We're hopeful that extending this participation will help to refine and build consensus about the future of AI governance in Canada. Following this iterative, participatory process, our Gen(Z)AI participants will present their finalized recommendations to policymakers, public servants, and politicians in Ottawa.

Gen(Z)AI is a reminder that democratic innovation happens when people are trusted as partners in the development of governance mechanisms for technologies that will define their futures. Their insights, values, and lived experiences are not just relevant to AI policy, *they are indispensable to it*.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gen(Z)AI is a first-of-its-kind youth assembly that focuses on artificial intelligence (AI), bringing together 100 young Canadians aged 17–23 from across the country to contribute directly to discussions on the future of AI governance in Canada. The initiative is jointly organized by the Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy and the Dialogue on Technology Project, in partnership with Mila, Quebec's AI Institute.

This report outlines the purpose, methodology, and key findings of the second Gen(Z)AI forum, held in Montreal and focused on AI & information integrity. The Montreal forum was one of four regional forums, alongside sessions on chatbots, privacy, and age assurance in AI. Over three days, participants engaged with expert speakers, took part in workshops, and deliberated on policy challenges and opportunities related to AI & information integrity. A consolidated final report will be released in May 2026, following the completion of all four regional forums held across Canada.

Forum Focus: Information Integrity and AI

Information integrity refers to the accuracy, reliability, and trustworthiness of information as it is produced, circulated, and consumed. Generative AI has intensified existing challenges for information integrity by enabling the large-scale creation of convincing synthetic text, images, and audio, while algorithmic recommendation systems shape which content is amplified and seen. Together, these dynamics influence how information is interpreted and trusted, with direct implications for public discourse and democratic processes.

Public concern about information reliability in Canada is high. National survey data show that 59 percent of Canadians are very or extremely concerned about online misinformation, while 64 percent report low trust in social media content that is not affiliated with recognized government, scientific, or news organizations. Many Canadians also report frequent exposure to misleading or false information and increasing difficulty distinguishing between true and false content online.

Participants in Gen(Z)AI emphasized that these challenges disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, including children and youth. Risks discussed included exposure to misleading or harmful content, algorithmic recommendation systems that reinforce echo chambers, declining trust in institutions, and heightened polarization driven by engagement-based platform incentives. While other jurisdictions have begun to respond through policy and regulation, participants noted that Canada has been slower to adopt a comprehensive approach.

The second Gen(Z)AI forum on AI and information integrity combined expert briefings, preparatory resources, interactive workshops, and deliberative policymaking sessions. Participants engaged with perspectives on platform design, independent media, mis- and disinformation practices, and AI-enabled manipulation before working collaboratively to identify priority concerns and policy directions. Across discussions, participants expressed dissatisfaction with the status quo and agreed that current approaches to information integrity and AI governance do not adequately address emerging risks.

Participants identified three core issues of concern, captured in the following issue statements:

1. The volume and sophistication of AI-generated and misleading content, which can overwhelm users and undermine confidence in reliable information, with disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations.

1. Algorithmic recommendation systems that reinforce information echo chambers and contribute to social and political polarization.

1. Engagement-driven information environments that contribute to declining trust in news media, government, and other public institutions.

In response, participants developed policy recommendations to address harms related to AI & information integrity, which fell into the following broad categories:

1. Reactive policy mechanisms, including clear reporting pathways, remedies, and institutional responses when AI-enabled mis- disinformation or deceptive content causes harm.
2. Design and system-level mechanisms, focused on embedding safeguards and limits on deceptive or manipulative practices within AI systems and information environments.
3. Participatory and literacy-building mechanisms, aimed at strengthening user agency, media and AI literacy, and transparency across government and platform actors.

This forum was the second of four national Gen(Z)AI engagements. Subsequent forums in Vancouver and Halifax will focus on data privacy and age assurance. Following each forum, youth-developed policy recommendations will be shared with thousands of young Canadians through Make.org's civic dialogue platform to support broader deliberation and consensus-building. Once all four forums are complete, participants will reconvene in a hybrid setting in Ottawa on April 30, 2026 to present their final recommendations to government officials, policymakers, civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

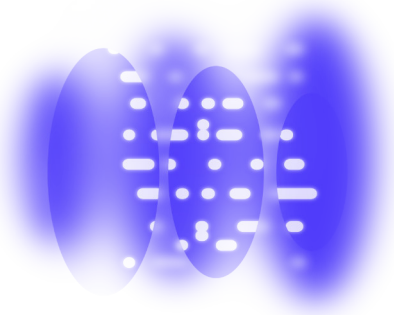
Gen(Z)AI engages 100 young Canadians between the ages of 17 and 23 in a national program focused on artificial intelligence and its growing influence on Canada's social and democratic landscape. The program is jointly led by the Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy and the Dialogue on Technology Project, in collaboration with Mila, Quebec's AI Institute.

Information integrity refers to the accuracy, reliability, and trustworthiness of information across its creation, circulation, and consumption, and to the systems and practices that shape how information is interpreted and trusted in the public sphere. New technological developments, particularly generative AI, have heightened these challenges by making it much easier to produce realistic text, images, and audio at scale, while recommendation systems influence what content gains visibility. As a result, the ways that people interpret and place trust in information are increasingly shaped by these systems, with significant consequences for public opinion and democratic life.

These concerns are not limited to Canada. The World Economic Forum has identified mis- and disinformation, increasingly amplified by synthetic media, as among the world's top global risks, pointing to the growing difficulty of distinguishing between AI-generated and human-generated content at scale.

Public concern about online information is widespread in Canada. In a national survey conducted by Statistics Canada, 59 percent of respondents reported being very or extremely concerned about online misinformation, while 64 percent reported low levels of trust in social media content that is not affiliated with recognized government, scientific, or news organizations.

Coupled with frequent exposure and declining trust, Canadians are navigating an increasingly uncertain information environment. Notably, 43 percent say it has become harder to distinguish between true and false information online in recent years, and 47 percent report encountering misleading or false information at least weekly, including 17 percent daily, according to The Harris Poll. These challenges are increasingly compounded by AI-enabled deception, including deepfakes, which heighten risks for vulnerable populations such as children and youth by undermining critical thinking and trust in credible information. While many countries have begun to respond through policy and regulation, Canada has been slower to adopt a comprehensive approach.



Forum Objectives

The second Gen(Z)AI forum on information integrity aimed to:

1. Identify key issues and concerns held by young Canadians related to the accuracy, reliability, and trustworthiness of information online.
2. Elevate lived experiences and involve youth directly in discussions on AI & information integrity.
3. Develop youth-driven recommendations to strengthen information integrity in Canada.

Participants discuss in small breakout groups.

Nonso Morah leads a values-mapping exercise.

METHODOLOGY

To ensure participants entered the process with the foundational knowledge needed to engage meaningfully, they were provided with a preliminary package in advance of the forum. This included a logistics and welcome guide outlining how a citizen's assembly works and what to expect over the three-day forum, including how participant input would shape the final outcomes of the Gen(Z)AI project. Participants also received a resource pack containing a technical overview of the topic, a short literature review, a scan of the Canadian policy landscape and relevant international approaches, as well as an introduction to core policymaking concepts and policy tools. These materials were designed to be accessible and digestible, laying a shared foundation for learning and informed discussion.

As with all four Gen(Z)AI forums, the second forum followed a hybrid participation model. On the first day, all 100 participants gathered virtually to hear from three expert speakers:

- **Alex MacIsaac**, Senior Research Coordinator, Samara Centre for Democracy
- **Melanie Walker**, Executive Director, Canadian International Council (CIC)
- **Halyna Padalko**, Fulbright Scholar, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

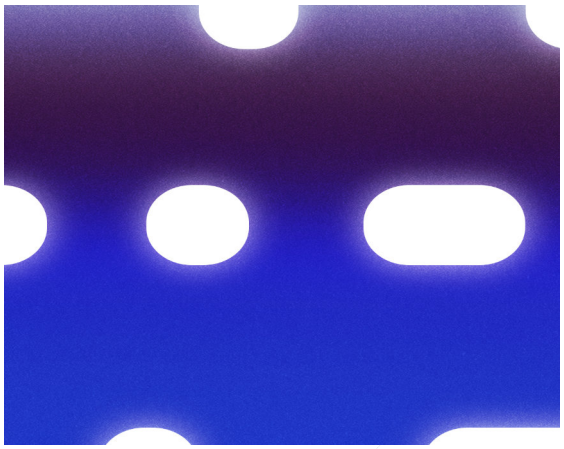
Together, the speakers offered a broad overview of information integrity, highlighting how AI, gaps in journalism, foreign interference, and platform dynamics shape how information spreads and is interpreted. This expert speaker day, combined with the accompanying resource package, provided participants with relevant background information to support informed discussion throughout the forum.

Alex MacIsaac explored the implications of generative AI and platform design for democratic participation and public discourse. Key takeaways included that:

- Generative AI interacts with existing social media dynamics to intensify mis- and disinformation, harassment, astroturfing[1], and affective polarization[2] in online political spaces.
- Manipulated and synthetic media can erode trust by making false content appear credible while simultaneously casting doubt on authentic information.
- Platform design choices and algorithmic incentives shape what information is visible, amplified, and perceived as legitimate, often privileging engagement over accuracy.
- Strengthening information integrity requires a combination of digital and media literacy, greater platform transparency, and governance approaches that prioritize democratic values and public trust.

Melanie Walker laid a foundation for understanding the relationship between information integrity, independent media, and democratic trust. The discussion highlighted:

- Information integrity as a prerequisite for democratic participation, as citizens rely on credible information to engage meaningfully in public life.
- How independent media play a central role in maintaining trust by providing verified information, holding power to account, and countering mis- and disinformation and propaganda.
- Structural pressures on journalism, including financial fragility, platform dependency, and declining audience trust, have weakened the resilience of the information ecosystem in Canada, raising clear policy challenges for media sustainability and democratic accountability.
- Algorithmic amplification and engagement-driven platform design contribute to polarization, news avoidance, and the rapid spread of misleading or false content.



Halyna Padalko examined how AI-enabled technologies are reshaping information manipulation and disinformation practices. Main takeaways included:

- Information manipulation predates AI, but generative tools significantly increase its scale, speed, and plausibility while lowering costs and barriers to entry.
- AI-enabled tactics include identity falsification, narrative manipulation, algorithmic exploitation, coordinated amplification, and the production of synthetic text, images, audio, and video.
- Human ability to reliably detect manipulated or synthetic content remains limited, making verification and attribution increasingly difficult.
- Emerging risks include efforts to influence not only human audiences but also digital systems, such as search engines and large language models, by seeding manipulative content into training data and information pipelines.

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

During days two and three of the forum, 25 participants gathered in Montreal at McGill University for in-person deliberations. These sessions included a range of engagement activities, such as values mapping,[3] Q&As,[4] workshops,[5] breakout groups, and deliberative policymaking exercises.[6] All activities were facilitated by the Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy's Youth Fellows and led by Gen(Z)AI co-leads, Helen Hayes and Fergus Linley-Mota.

On the third day, an additional 75 participants from across Canada joined through hybrid engagement sessions. Full-group discussions brought together all 100 participants and ensured that those joining remotely were included in key moments of the forum and able to engage meaningfully with their peers. In-person youth presented issue statements to online participants, ensuring they remained involved in the process. Youth Fellow–facilitated virtual breakout groups gave online participants space to review prioritized issues and recommendations, ask questions, and offer feedback. Remote participants were also given time to reflect independently and submit written input, ensuring that perspectives from those participating virtually were fully incorporated and considered.

Following the conclusion of the second forum, the issue statements and policy recommendations developed by participants were shared with thousands of young people nationwide through Make.org's civic dialogue platform, providing additional insights. This national engagement process is ongoing and will remain publicly accessible until April 2026.

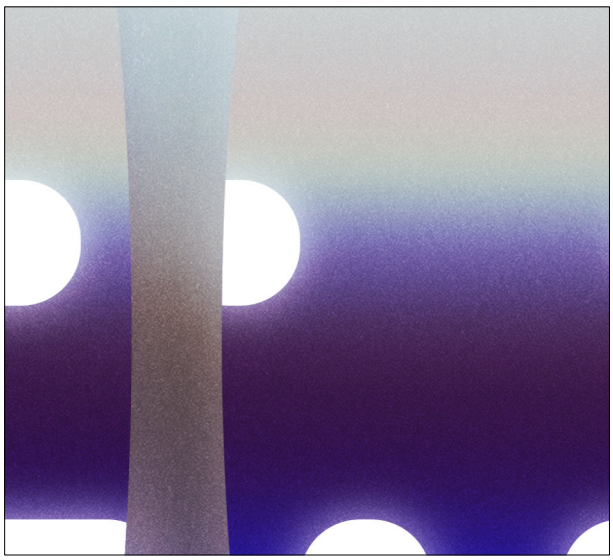
The key issues identified by participants were summed up in the following issue statements:

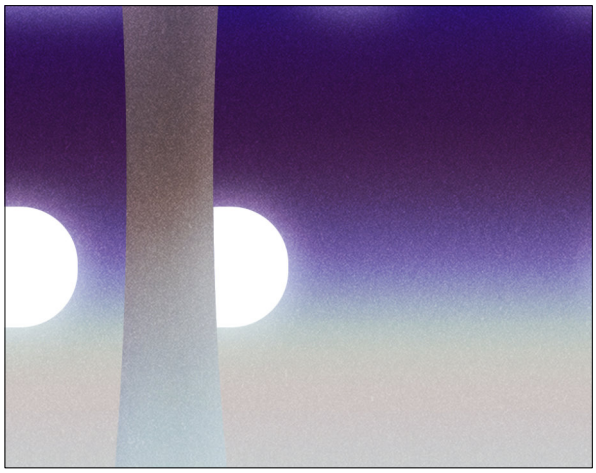
1. AI-generated content, including mis- and disinformation, overwhelms users and undermines confidence in reliable and accurate information, which has distinct and disproportionate effects on vulnerable populations.
2. AI recommender systems push content that is ideologically extreme and reinforces information echo chambers, resulting in social and political polarization with effects in both on- and off-line spaces.
3. An information environment driven by engagement-based incentives and flooded with mis- and disinformation contributes to mistrust in news, government, and other traditional institutions.

By identifying pressing AI and information integrity issues, participants were able to develop a set of policy recommendations to help address them. These recommendations were created and deliberated on by all 100 participants and will be further considered and weighed by thousands of other young Canadians through Make.org's civic dialogue platform.

There was a strong consensus among participants that the current status quo around AI and information integrity is neither acceptable nor does it meet their needs. Participants' recommendations call for clearer design requirements, stronger safeguards and accountability when harms occur, and greater user agency, choice, and access to information to support informed decision-making.

The final recommendations from the forum will be shared publicly in April 2026, following the completion of the project and the remaining forums. Findings will be presented to government, policymakers, civil society, and other key stakeholders.





In general, participants applied three broad policy mechanisms to address harms related to AI & information integrity:

1. **Reactive policy mechanisms:** These include policy tools that establish clear reporting pathways, remedies, and institutional responses when AI-enabled mis- and disinformation or deceptive content causes harm.

2. **Design and system-level mechanisms:** These approaches focus on addressing risks within the design of information systems and AI technologies, embedding safeguards and limits on deceptive or manipulative practices before harms occur.

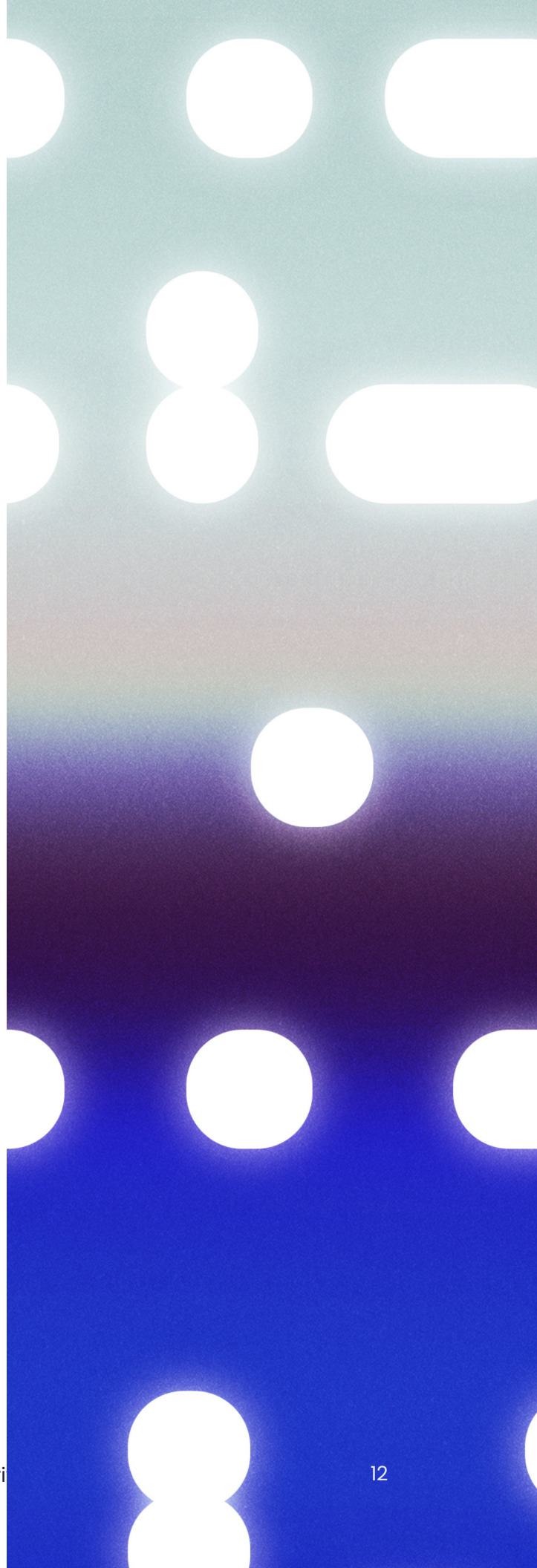
3. **Participatory and literacy-building mechanisms:** These recommendations emphasize strengthening user agency and resilience through media and AI literacy, alongside greater transparency and participation by governments and technology companies.

NEXT STEPS AND CONCLUSION

This forum was the second of four national Gen(Z)AI forums. The next forum will take place in Vancouver, with a focus on AI and data privacy, followed by a forum in Halifax on AI and age assurance. Each forum follows the same overall structure, combining in-person regional participation with hybrid cross-regional engagement to support collaborative discussion among young people from across Canada.

Once all four forums are complete, the recommendations and findings will be brought together into a publicly available report. Participants will then reconvene in a hybrid setting in Ottawa in April 2026 to present their final recommendations to government officials, policymakers, civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders.

This process highlights the importance of ensuring that young people have a meaningful role in shaping Canada's approach to AI policy. As a generation that has grown up using digital platforms and systems, youth bring lived experience that is directly relevant to how AI affects everyday life, making this perspective invaluable. Canada is at a point where choices about AI governance will have long-term implications. Including youth as active contributors in this process is necessary to support policies that balance innovation, accountability, and public trust.



APPENDIX: EXPERT SPEAKERS

Alex MacIsaac, *Senior Research Coordinator, Samara Centre for Democracy*

Alex is the Senior Research Coordinator at the Samara Centre for Democracy. His work focuses on technology's influence on Canadian democracy and civic engagement, digital platform governance and prosocial design, and mitigating digital information threats. He currently is the project coordinator for VERIFIED and previously led the SAMbot project from 2022-2025. Alex is a graduate of McMaster University's Master of Public Policy in Digital Society program, where his research focused on digital privacy law, digital democracy, and the spread of dis- and misinformation online, all within a Canadian context. He also holds a Bachelor of Arts in Applied Communications, Leadership, and Culture from the University of Prince Edward Island. Through holding previous working roles in research, communications, public affairs, and municipal government, Alex has had experience working within both the non-profit sector and public service.

Melanie Walker, *Executive Director, Canadian International Council (CIC)*

Melanie Walker is the Executive Director of the Canadian International Council (CIC), one of Canada's oldest civic organisations dedicated to strengthening public engagement in international affairs. She brings more than twenty years of experience in operational leadership, programme development, and global fundraising, with a focus on democratic participation, women's and youth leadership, and resilient media and civic ecosystems. Before joining CIC, she served as Executive Director of Media Development at the World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), where she also founded Women in News, now active in 24 countries. She has led capacity-building and advocacy initiatives in more than 30 countries and has raised and spearheaded multi-million-dollar funding relationships with public and private international donors, including Sida, Norad, the European Commission, the Open Society Foundations, and others. Melanie serves on several international advisory bodies, including the WAN-IFRA Media Freedom Board, the World Expression Forum Young Experts' Nomination Committee, and the Advisory Council for the Sustainable Journalism Partnership. She is a Senior Fellow of the Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History and holds an MSc from the London School of Economics.

Halyna Padalko, *Fulbright Scholar, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)*

Halyna Padalko is a multidisciplinary researcher whose work examines strategic communication, propaganda and disinformation, and the use of AI tools in these areas, with a focus on Ukraine, Russia, and their implications for public policy and democracy. She is a Fulbright Scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where her research examines Russian disinformation and contemporary strategic communications. Dr. Padalko is a former Digital Policy Hub doctoral fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation and a research affiliate of the Balsillie School of International Affairs. Her work bridges academic research and applied policy analysis, combining qualitative and computational approaches to examine information manipulation, influence operations, and emerging AI-enabled risks to democratic systems.

APPENDIX: ENDNOTES

[1] "**Astroturfing**" refers to when individuals, companies, or bad actors try to make it look like there is a natural grassroots movement supporting their ideas or product but have actually planned and paid for a campaign with specific messaging.

[2] "**Affective polarization**" refers to the mutual dislike between different societal groups.

[3] Youth participated in Brené Brown's **Dare to Lead List of Values Exercise**. This allowed them to identify what mattered most to them and provide a starting point for their issue statements

[4] Q&A sessions allowed the group a chance to ask any questions that may have emerged during workshops and table discussions. The sessions were led by **Alexander Martin** and **Aengus Bridgman**, Director of the Media Ecosystem Observatory.

[5] Workshops included a digital wellness session led by **Mariel Emanuel** and **Andre Policzer** of **NoSo November**, alongside issue-mapping exercises. The forum also featured a participatory presentation on information integrity and related policy considerations.

[6] In-person participants drafted a suite of policy recommendations in breakout groups before undertaking a gallery walk exercise to identify the top priorities of the larger group. Recommendations were presented to the hybrid participants and refined as a collective.

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