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Proposed Code of Conduct for the Use of AI by Québec Political Parties

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Background

Communication by political parties—whether to present their policy proposals, contribute to public debate grounded in the strongest arguments, or deliver programs that meet Quebecers' expectations—is essential to the vitality of our democracy. For political parties to develop the most effective policy platforms, it is also crucial that they better understand citizens and their concerns.

Technological advances have significantly enhanced our ability to communicate with voters and ascertain their expectations. In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has expanded as never before our capacity to enrich political life by accelerating the circulation of information and diversifying political messaging.

While the use of AI can benefit our democracy, however, it is equally clear that imprudent use may affect the quality of public debate by generating unreliable or false information, manipulating opinions through undetectable alterations, and personally targeting voters in ways that undermine respect for their privacy. Such uses of AI could have the detrimental effect of eroding public trust in elected representatives and in the information conveyed.

As a leader in ethical reflection on AI through the Montréal Declaration for Responsible Development of Artificial Intelligence, Québec is also well positioned to implement sound practices in the use of AI. To safeguard the integrity of political information and strengthen the resilience of electoral processes against malicious uses of AI, clear guidelines must be established for the transparent and responsible use of AI in political communications and electoral campaigns in Québec. This commitment to responsible conduct by political parties reflects a firm determination to uphold the integrity of our electoral process, a fundamental component of our democracy.

To this end, we, the undersigned parties, make the following commitments.

I. Transparency

The parties undertake to ensure that personal information used by the AI systems they deploy to send targeted messages to citizens and to design and deliver personalized political messages is collected with those individuals' consent, in accordance with the applicable legal framework and in a manner that supports the vitality of the electoral and democratic process. This commitment is consistent with existing requirements to which the parties are subject regarding the protection of personal information and privacy.

The parties shall ensure that individuals who receive targeted political messages generated by AI are able to access the general reasons why they are receiving such messages, expressed in clear and understandable language.

Where parties use foreign AI solution providers or data brokers to design and disseminate political advertising, they undertake to disclose this explicitly using appropriate means (for example, on their website).

To safeguard the independence and integrity of the electoral process, the parties shall seek to avoid, in matters relating to AI, the use of foreign providers or brokers that do not adhere to Québec's democratic values or to the applicable legislative framework, including the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

The parties shall ensure that political messages generated by AI systems and not reviewed or approved by a human—whether text, video, images, audio content or other formats—are clearly identified as such.

The parties agree to contribute to the development and implementation of a standardized, simple and easily recognizable labeling system enabling all individuals to identify AI-generated political messages as such.

To ensure the authenticity of their political messages and counter the erosion of public trust resulting from the proliferation of fraudulent and misleading AI-generated content online, the parties undertake to use watermarks or other authentication markers to confirm the origin of such messages.

II. Responsible Use

The parties agree not to use AI systems to generate or disseminate messages with intent to deceive or manipulate the electorate, including through disinformation, misinformation or deliberate disregard for fact-checking.

The parties undertake not to use AI systems to generate so-called deepfakes (images, videos or audio recordings) with intent to mislead voters.

The parties shall ensure that AI systems are not used to influence opinion through manipulation, provocation, cyberbullying or the exploitation of voters' vulnerabilities.

The parties agree not to use AI systems to create false social media accounts for the purpose of increasing the reach or impact of their political messages.

Parties that use conversational agents (chatbots) agree to direct users to official online electoral information rather than prioritizing responses generated solely by such agents.

The parties undertake to remove immediately any content that violates this Code of Conduct. They also undertake to report to the relevant online platforms any fraudulent political content circulating in their name but not originating from them, so that said platforms may remove such content.

III. Security and Governance

The parties undertake to take active measures to ensure the security of the AI systems they use, so as to mitigate risks of data breaches, hacking or malicious exploitation.

In order to promote the responsible use of AI techniques and to protect the integrity of the electoral system, the parties propose that a monitoring group be created to consider the implementation of the principles set out in this Code of Conduct and potential amendments to Québec's legislative framework.

This monitoring group will facilitate the sharing of best practices and technical measures aimed at strengthening cybersecurity.

The political parties shall promptly report to the competent authorities any attacks or disinformation campaigns directed against them, so as to enable a coordinated response that preserves their reputation and the integrity of elections.

The parties further propose to initiate a collective dialogue with online platform operators to explore concerted measures to protect the integrity of elections.

IV. Awareness and Prevention

The parties undertake to promote this Code internally to ensure that its provisions are known and understood by political staff (including candidates, representatives and volunteers), and to provide training to those personnel on the risks associated with AI systems in electoral processes.

Recognizing that the resilience of electoral processes requires heightened vigilance on the part of all citizens, the parties also commit to promoting greater AI literacy and encouraging critical thinking about online content.