



POLICY PROPOSAL

A Vulnerable Persons Alert for Alberta

A proposal to amend the Missing Persons Act, SA 2011, c M-18.5, to create a Vulnerable Persons Alert for missing Albertans of any age who cannot keep themselves safe, connected to the national alerting system the province already uses.

Prepared for consideration by the Government of Alberta
Submitted by Parent Partnership Project Inc.

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A VULNERABLE PERSONS ALERT FOR ALBERTA

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Executive Summary

When an Albertan who cannot keep themselves safe goes missing, Alberta has no standing alert pathway built for that purpose. Police can release information about a missing person, and Alberta has an emergency alerting system, but there is no dedicated alert for missing vulnerable persons who do not meet AMBER Alert criteria. An autistic child who bolts toward water, an adult with a brain injury who becomes lost, a parent with dementia who walks out at night: none fits the AMBER Alert, which is built for abductions. Alberta passed Silver Alert amendment legislation in 2017 and again in 2023, with the later legislation specifying an age threshold of 55 years or older. The Silver Alert provisions do not appear in the consolidated Missing Persons Act current to June 11, 2025, and PPP has not found evidence that they have been brought into force.

This proposal recommends that Alberta amend the Missing Persons Act to create a single Vulnerable Persons Alert. Eligibility would turn on what a person can and cannot do, not on age or diagnosis. The alert would use the alerting system Alberta already takes part in, and would not require a new system, a new brand of alert for each condition, or new infrastructure.

Two drafts are attached for the government's consideration: an amending Bill and a companion Regulation. Both are discussion drafts for legislative counsel, and both identify the points that need legal verification.

1. Background

1.1 What the Missing Persons Act provides today

The Missing Persons Act gives police services tools to find a missing person: access to records, emergency demands, and limited authority to release information to the public. Its definition of a missing person has no age restriction. It includes an individual whose whereabouts are unknown and whose safety and welfare are feared for given the individual's physical or mental capabilities or the circumstances of the absence. Section 7(3) lets a police service release a missing person's name, description, photograph and related details by media release or website posting.

The Act as consolidated to June 11, 2025 contains no alert provision of any kind. It does not provide for a Silver Alert, and it sets no age threshold.

1.2 Alberta's two Silver Alert Acts

Alberta has legislated a Silver Alert twice. The Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017 (Bill 210) passed and was to come into force on proclamation. The Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022 (Bill 204, SA 2023, c. 4) followed, with a threshold of 55 years or older. The Silver Alert provisions do not appear in the consolidated Missing Persons Act current to June 11, 2025, and PPP has not found evidence that they have been brought into force. The legal status of both Acts should be confirmed by legislative counsel.

Two points follow. First, legislating an alert is not the same as having one: the Legislature has acted twice and Albertans still have no alert of this kind. Second, the Silver Alert model is limited by age. An alert for people 55 and older, as the later Act specified, would not have reached a missing child or a younger adult facing the same danger.

1.3 The elopement case in Calgary from summer 2026

On July 16, 2026, an 11-year-old nonspeaking autistic boy went missing from a day home in Calgary. Because the case did not meet the usual threshold for an AMBER Alert, an emergency alert was not issued until July 18, two days later, and only after the Government of Alberta granted a case-specific exemption. The search ended on July 29, 2026, when he was found deceased.

Under the current framework, a child in this situation reaches the public only through an exemption granted case by case, not through a standing category built for the purpose.

1.4 Alberta's review

On August 10, 2026, Alberta announced it would engage law enforcement, disability advocates, and community partners on emergency alert processes for missing vulnerable persons, including a review of its AMBER Alert criteria. PPP took part in the province's listening sessions in fall 2026. This proposal is offered as a concrete contribution to that review.

Section 13 of the Missing Persons Act also requires a special committee of the Legislative Assembly to begin a comprehensive review of the Act not later than 2027. That review is a second natural occasion to consider this amendment.

1.5 The federal context

Bill C-263, the Silver Alert National Framework Act, passed second reading in the House of Commons on June 5, 2026 and is before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. It followed the disappearance of Earl Moberg, an 81-year-old Winnipeg man living with dementia who went missing in December 2023 and was never found. The bill is framed around older adults.

PPP has separately asked the Government of Canada to support a national standard for a Vulnerable Persons Alert that covers children and adults under one functional test. Canada's alerting standard already contains an event code for a missing vulnerable person, called missingVPer. That code is not currently on the list of events that receive Broadcast Immediate distribution, the treatment that interrupts phones, television and radio. An Alberta amendment would fit the national work and would not depend on it.

2. Problem Statement

People go missing in Alberta every year whose lives are at immediate risk because they cannot recognize danger, say where they are, or get back to safety. The Alzheimer's Association estimates that about 6 in 10 people living with dementia will wander at least once. A 2012 study in Pediatrics

found, in a parent-reported U.S. survey, that 598 of 1,218 autistic children (49 percent) had attempted to elope from a safe environment at least once after age four. A 2022 Government of Canada news release states that if a person with Alzheimer's disease is not found within 12 hours, there is a 50 percent chance they will be found injured or dead.

Comparable serious risks can arise from different forms of functional vulnerability, regardless of age or diagnosis. Alberta has no standing alert for these cases. The two attempts to create one were framed around older adults, and PPP has not found evidence that they have been brought into force.

3. Policy Objective

To ensure that when any Albertan goes missing who cannot keep themselves safe, and the public could help find them, police have clear legal authority to alert the public quickly, in the right area, with only the information needed, regardless of the person's age or diagnosis.

4. Proposed Solution

PPP recommends a targeted amendment to the Missing Persons Act that adds a Vulnerable Persons Alert as a new section, with a companion Regulation for the operational details. The amendment does not rename or revive the Silver Alert. It creates one alert for everyone the earlier Acts would have covered and everyone they would have left out.

4.1 Who qualifies, and when the public is alerted

The test has two parts, which PPP's national proposal calls gates.

Gate	What it triggers	What must be true
Gate 1	The sustained, enhanced police and search response	The person is missing, functionally vulnerable, and at a materially elevated, time-sensitive risk of death or serious bodily harm
Gate 2	The public alert	The public can usefully help, and a defensible alert area exists

Gate 1 describes the enhanced operational response proposed in PPP's national standard. The Alberta legislation provides the complementary provincial alert authority and safeguards.

- Functional vulnerability means a limitation that materially impairs a person's ability to recognize danger, communicate, seek help, or return to safety. Dementia, a medical condition, a developmental disability, autism spectrum disorder, acquired brain injury and young age are illustrative, non-exhaustive examples.

- Age and diagnosis are neither necessary nor sufficient.
- No minimum time missing is required.
- The search never waits for the alert decision. Urgent search measures begin on reasonable suspicion, before either gate is formally decided.
- Not every Gate 1 case becomes a public alert.

4.2 Who decides

Under the draft Bill, a police service authorizes the alert, as with an AMBER Alert. The alert is then issued by that police service where it is authorized to issue alerts, or at its request by another authorized authority. Before authorizing, the police service must consider whether an alert would itself endanger the person or someone else, or interfere with an investigation.

4.3 Safeguards

- Alerts are geographically targeted to the smallest defensible area likely to support an effective public response, and the area can move as the person moves. Broader distribution, including province-wide alerting, requires an operational justification and should be reassessed as new information becomes available.
- An alert says only what the public needs to help. A diagnosis is normally excluded, and is disclosed only where necessary and lawful.
- Where the missing person is an adult, police must consider any sign that the adult left voluntarily and can keep themselves safe, and must not disclose a located adult's whereabouts without consent except as the Act already permits.
- Every alert is reviewed on a set schedule and updated as circumstances change. The alert is cancelled or updated as soon as the person is located, whatever the outcome, and is cancelled if it no longer meets the conditions for continued use.
- Every decision is recorded with reasons, including decisions not to alert. Use is reported every year, and audits check both alerts that should not have issued and cases where an alert should have issued and did not.
- The arrangements are reviewed within three years of coming into force.

4.4 How the alert reaches the public

The draft Bill provides for dissemination through the system by which Alberta participates in the National Public Alerting System, in accordance with the requirements that apply to that system. Whether a Vulnerable Persons Alert interrupts phones, television and radio depends on national decisions about the Broadcast Immediate list, which are outside the Legislature's authority. Distribution to phones and broadcasters runs through federally regulated distributors under CRTC requirements. Provincial legal authority does not by itself establish that reach, which is why the national pieces matter. The Alberta amendment supplies the provincial legal authority and decision rules, so that Alberta is ready to use that treatment when it is available and can use its other channels in the meantime.

4.5 The earlier Silver Alert Acts

The draft Bill proposes, provisionally, to repeal the 2017 and 2022 Silver Alert amending Acts, so that an age-limited alert cannot later come into force beside the new one. That clause must not be finalized until legislative counsel has confirmed the status of both Acts.

4.6 Coming into force

The 2017 Act depended on proclamation, and none followed. The draft Bill allows proclamation, so that provisions can be brought in as the Regulation, training and alerting arrangements are ready, and sets a fixed latest date so that the amendment cannot sit unproclaimed indefinitely.

5. Evidence and Precedent

5.1 Manitoba

Manitoba legislated a Silver Alert in 2017. Eligibility is limited to adults: vulnerable persons as defined in Manitoba law, and other adults with a cognitive impairment. The disappearance of Earl Moberg showed a second limit. His family later said publicly that the alert went out through news media and did not reach people who were not already following the news that evening.

5.2 United States

The U.S. Ashanti Alert Act of 2018 created an adult-focused framework based on disability, endangerment or involuntary disappearance. In 2024 the Federal Communications Commission added a Missing and Endangered Persons event code to that country's emergency alert systems. It is the nearest technical parallel to what PPP proposes for missingVPer. The code has been technically enabled since September 2025; whether and how often alert originators use it is not confirmed.

5.3 What no reviewed jurisdiction combines

Pieces of this model exist elsewhere. PPP's review did not find a single jurisdiction that combines age-neutral eligibility, a functional test, and Broadcast Immediate delivery. No study yet shows that an interrupting phone alert improves recovery for these cases, which is why the draft Regulation requires records and annual public reporting. PPP's companion document, The Research Behind the Campaign: An Evidence Base for the Vulnerable Persons Alert Proposal, sets out the evidence and its limits.

6. Stakeholder Consultation (Recommended)

Before introduction, PPP recommends consulting, at minimum:

- Alberta police services, the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police, and RCMP "K" Division
- 9-1-1 and dispatch services

- The Alberta Emergency Management Agency and the operators of Alberta Emergency Alert
- Search and rescue organizations
- Alzheimer Society of Alberta and Northwest Territories
- Inclusion Alberta
- Autism Society Alberta and Autism Calgary
- Brain injury and other disability service organizations
- Autistic self-advocates, people with lived experience, and family and caregiver representatives
- Indigenous governments and organizations, and rural and remote communities
- The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner
- Alberta broadcasters and telecommunications carriers that distribute alerts

7. Implementation Considerations

- Legislation: one amending Bill adding a new section to the Missing Persons Act.
- Regulation: a new Part of the Missing Persons Regulation covering decision factors, authorization, escalation where a family's request is declined, targeting, content, review, records, reporting, audit, post-incident review, training and review within three years.
- Police: designated decision-makers available at all times; training for them and for those who take missing-person reports.
- Alerting: arrangements with the provincial alerting authority for issuing, updating and cancelling alerts.
- National: alignment with federal, provincial and territorial work on the Broadcast Immediate list and a national operational standard.

PPP has drafted a Model First Responder Training & Local Implementation Manual and a Proposed National Vulnerable Persons Alert (VPA) Operational Standard: Discussion Draft, which Alberta may use as starting points.

8. Fiscal Considerations

Alberta already participates in an established public alerting infrastructure. This proposal would build on that infrastructure rather than establish a separate alerting network. Additional implementation and operating costs, including consultation, drafting, training, dispatch and alert-authoring changes, and annual reporting, have not yet been determined. PPP has asked the Government of Canada for time-limited federal funding to help provinces and territories align training, dispatch systems and implementation with a national standard.

9. Recommendation

PPP recommends that the Government of Alberta:

- support an amendment to the Missing Persons Act creating a Vulnerable Persons Alert, with eligibility based on functional vulnerability and risk and not on age or diagnosis;
- refer the attached draft Bill and draft Regulation to legislative counsel as discussion drafts, including the verification points listed in their drafter's notes;
- consult the organizations listed in section 6 before introduction; and
- take part in federal, provincial and territorial work on a national Vulnerable Persons Alert standard, so that Alberta's alert can receive Broadcast Immediate distribution when that treatment is available.

PPP would welcome a written response identifying the officials responsible for considering this proposal and the next steps.

Who We Are

Parent Partnership Project Inc. (PPP) is a parent-led not-for-profit organization based in Calgary, Alberta, incorporated under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act. It produces free resources and pursues both direct family support and systemic policy advocacy for families of children and adults with disabilities. PPP has advocated on systemic issues facing vulnerable persons since 2018.

Appendices

Appendix A: Draft Missing Persons (Vulnerable Persons Alert) Amendment Act, 2026

Appendix B: Draft amendment to the Missing Persons Regulation, Alta Reg 151/2012

Both appendices are provided as separate attached documents. This proposal is one of fourteen prepared by PPP: one federal, and one for each of the ten provinces and three territories.

Sources

- Missing Persons Act, SA 2011, c M-18.5, Alberta King's Printer office consolidation current to June 11, 2025.
- Alberta, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017 (Bill 210); Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, SA 2023, c. 4 (Bill 204).
- Government of Alberta announcement of August 10, 2026, as reported by the Red Deer Advocate; LiveWire Calgary, July 18, 2026.
- Bill C-263, Silver Alert National Framework Act, LEGISinfo, Parliament of Canada.
- Manitoba, The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert), S.M. 2017, c. 29.
- U.S. Ashanti Alert Act of 2018; Federal Communications Commission, Report and Order FCC 24-83, adopted August 7, 2024.
- Government of Canada, news release on search and rescue for people living with dementia, June 29, 2022.
- Alzheimer's Association, public estimate of lifetime wandering.
- Anderson et al., "Occurrence and Family Impact of Elopement in Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders," *Pediatrics* 130(5), 2012.
- SOREM Broadcast Immediate Events List, Version 2.1, amended May 26, 2022.