



POLICY PROPOSAL

A Vulnerable Persons Alert for Manitoba

A proposal to amend section 1.1 of The Missing Persons Act, C.C.S.M. c. M199, so that Manitoba's existing alert covers missing Manitobans of any age who cannot keep themselves safe and connects to the national alerting system the province already uses.

Prepared for consideration by the Government of Manitoba

Submitted by Parent Partnership Project Inc.

October 2026

A VULNERABLE PERSONS ALERT FOR MANITOBA

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Executive Summary

Manitoba legislated a Silver Alert in 2017, and police use it regularly. Section 1.1 of The Missing Persons Act lets a police service alert the public when a vulnerable person or another adult with a cognitive impairment goes missing, and Winnipeg police and the RCMP issue Silver Alerts throughout the year. Two limits remain. The Silver Alert applies only to adults, so an autistic child who bolts toward water or a young child who slips out a door is not covered. And it reaches the public through media and police channels rather than the interrupting alert on phones, television and radio.

This proposal recommends that Manitoba amend section 1.1 so that its existing alert covers missing persons of any age who cannot keep themselves safe, with eligibility based on what a person can and cannot do, not on age or diagnosis, and connects to the alerting system Manitoba already uses. It would not require a new system or new infrastructure. Everyone the Silver Alert covers today would remain covered.

The amendment can be made under either name. Option A renames the alert the Vulnerable Persons Alert, the name used in PPP's national and provincial proposals. Option B keeps the Silver Alert name for the same, wider alert. A draft Bill is attached for each option, with one companion Regulation that works with either. All are discussion drafts for legislative counsel, and each identifies 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: search orders, record access orders, emergency demands for records, and limited authority to release information. Its definition of a missing person has no age restriction. It includes a person whose whereabouts are unknown despite reasonable efforts to locate them and whose safety and welfare are feared for given their age, physical or mental capabilities, or the circumstances of the absence. Section 8(3) lets a police service release a missing person's name, description, photograph, serious medical conditions, vehicle information, last known location and the circumstances of the disappearance.

Section 1.1, added in 2017, defines a "silver alert" as a broadcast messaging system that rapidly informs the public, including through the media, when a vulnerable person or another adult with a cognitive impairment goes missing. A police service may make arrangements with broadcasters and other partners, and may activate a Silver Alert when the person is missing, is a vulnerable person or another adult with a cognitive impairment, their safety and welfare are feared for given that impairment, and public dissemination could assist in their safe recovery. A "vulnerable person" is a person under a committee order under The Mental Health Act or with a substitute decision maker under The Adults Living with an Intellectual Disability Act. Section 1.1 has not been amended since 2017.

1.2 The Silver Alert in practice

Manitoba's Silver Alert is in active use. Winnipeg police and the RCMP issue Silver Alerts throughout the year, including for a 92-year-old man in June 2026, a 73-year-old man in September 2026, and a 75-year-old woman in the Interlake region. Because the test is not tied to age for adults, alerts have also been issued for men aged 57 and 61. Manitoba police and the public already know how a Silver Alert works.

The disappearance of Earl Moberg, an 81-year-old Winnipeg man living with dementia who went missing in December 2023 and was never found, showed the limit of that model. 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. They have asked for alerts that reach phones, radio and television, are targeted to the area where a person went missing, and follow set criteria.

In May 2026, Manitoba RCMP began a three-month pilot of an opt-in community notification system in six communities, which can share missing-person information by text, email or phone. It complements Alert Ready and does not replace it.

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.

Manitoba's Silver Alert would not have covered this child, because it applies only to adults.

1.4 Other jurisdictions are acting

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 Alberta's listening sessions in fall 2026 and has prepared companion proposals for Alberta and British Columbia on the same model as this one. A common functional test across provinces would mean that a person who crosses a provincial boundary is assessed the same way on both sides of it.

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 was introduced by Manitoba MP Raquel Dancho and followed the disappearance of Earl Moberg. 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. The existing Silver entry is defined by age and diagnosis. The list describes it as covering "a missing, wandering older adult who may be suffering from a documented cognitive disability or degenerative memory disorder." People whose risk is the same but whose age or diagnosis differs fall outside it. There is therefore no standing, nationally coordinated Broadcast Immediate pathway established for this event code. The technical and operational changes needed to create that pathway require determination through the appropriate national processes. A Manitoba amendment would fit the national work and would not depend on it.

2. Problem Statement

People go missing in Manitoba 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. Manitoba's rivers, lakes, winter cold and distances between communities add to them. Manitoba already alerts the public for adults in these situations. Children facing the same danger are left out, and no Manitoba alert of this kind reaches people who are not already following the news.

3. Policy Objective

To ensure that when any Manitoban 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 that replaces section 1.1 of The Missing Persons Act with a single alert based on functional vulnerability, with a companion amendment to the Missing Persons Regulation, M.R. 62/2013, for the operational details. The amendment builds on the Silver Alert rather than adding a second alert beside it.

4.1 Two options for the name

The substance is the same under both options. Only the name of the alert differs.

	Option A: Vulnerable Persons Alert	Option B: Silver Alert
Name in section 1.1	“Vulnerable persons alert”	“Silver alert”, as now
Who is covered	Anyone of any age who meets the functional test, including everyone the Silver Alert covers today	The same
Test, safeguards and reporting	As set out in this section	The same
Consistency	Same name as PPP’s national standard and other provincial proposals	Keeps a name Manitobans already know
Points to weigh	A change of name for police and the public; a transition clause carries existing alerts over	Manitoba would use a different name from other jurisdictions, and the national Silver entry covers only older adults with a documented cognitive disability

4.2 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 Manitoba 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.
- The search never waits for the alert decision. Urgent search measures begin on reasonable suspicion, before either gate is formally decided.

- No minimum time missing is required. A child heading toward water should not have to be missing for a set number of minutes.
- Age and diagnosis are never the test. They can inform how the search is run, but they neither qualify nor disqualify anyone.
- Not every vulnerable missing person generates a public alert.

The draft Bills preserve existing eligibility: a missing person who qualifies for a Silver Alert under current Manitoba law, a vulnerable person or another adult with a cognitive impairment whose safety and welfare are feared for given that impairment, continues to qualify. They also carry forward section 1.1's existing rules on what information may be released and the limit on personal health information.

The amendment is intended to preserve existing Silver Alert eligibility while establishing the national functional-risk standard for Vulnerable Persons Alerts. Legislative counsel should confirm that the revised provisions do not inadvertently narrow the existing authority to issue Silver Alerts for adults who qualify under current Manitoba law.

4.3 Who decides

Police make the activation decision, as they do now for a Silver Alert and for an AMBER Alert. Under the draft Bills, the alert is issued by that police service where it is authorized to issue alerts, or at its request by another authorized authority. In Manitoba, police, including the RCMP and local police services, already issue AMBER Alerts through Alert Ready under the Manitoba Emergency Management Organization's AlertMB program. Before activating, the police service must consider whether an alert would itself endanger the person or someone else, or interfere with an investigation.

4.4 Safeguards

- **Geographic targeting.** Alerts are geographically targeted to the smallest defensible area likely to support an effective public response. Broader distribution, including province-wide alerting, requires an operational justification and should be reassessed as new information becomes available.
- **Minimum necessary content.** An alert says only what the public needs to help. A diagnosis is normally excluded, and is disclosed only where necessary and lawful.
- **Adult autonomy and consent.** Where the missing person is an adult, police consider available evidence that the person left voluntarily and can keep themselves safe. A located adult's whereabouts must not be publicly disclosed without consent unless disclosure is otherwise authorized by law.
- **Review and cancellation.** Alerts are reviewed at prescribed intervals and updated when circumstances materially change. The alert is cancelled or updated as soon as the person is located, whatever the outcome, and is cancelled if the conditions for continued alerting are no longer met.
- **Recorded decisions.** Authorization decisions, including decisions not to issue an alert, are documented with the reasons and information available at the time.

- **Public reporting.** 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. Reporting includes cases where an alert was considered and not activated. Police services report to the responsible minister, and the minister publishes aggregated reporting in a manner that protects personal information and operationally sensitive details.
- **Mandatory review.** The arrangements are reviewed within three years of coming into force.

Section 1.1 has no reporting requirement today, and no rule on review or cancellation. These safeguards are new for Manitoba.

4.5 How the alert reaches the public

The draft Bills keep section 1.1's existing arrangements with broadcasters and other partners, and add dissemination through the system by which Manitoba participates in the National Public Alerting System, in accordance with the requirements that apply to that system. Whether an 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 Manitoba amendment supplies the provincial legal authority and decision rules, so that Manitoba is ready to use that treatment when it is available and can use its other channels in the meantime.

4.6 Coming into force and transition

The draft Bills come into force on proclamation, so that provisions can be brought in as the Regulation, training and alerting arrangements are ready, and set a fixed latest date so that the amendment cannot sit unproclaimed indefinitely. Under Option A, a Silver Alert in progress when the new section comes into force continues as a Vulnerable Persons Alert, so no alert has to be cancelled and reissued.

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. Its regular use demonstrates that a standing alert category can be incorporated into police practice and public missing-person communications. Its limits, adults only and reach that depends on the news, are the two gaps this proposal closes.

5.2 Alberta

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.

Legal authority is not the same as reach. A province can legislate an alert without that alert ever reaching a phone. An age-limited alert would also leave out missing children and younger adults who face comparable risks.

5.3 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.

5.4 What no reviewed jurisdiction combines

Pieces of this model exist in other jurisdictions. 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. That is why the draft Bills and Regulation require documented activation decisions, annual public reporting and a review within three years.

PPP's companion document, *The Research Behind the Campaign: An Evidence Base for the Vulnerable Persons Alert Proposal*, describes the supporting evidence and its limitations.

6. Stakeholder Consultation (Recommended)

Before introduction, PPP recommends consulting, at minimum:

- The Winnipeg Police Service, the Brandon Police Service and other municipal police services, First Nations police services, the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police, and RCMP "D" Division
- 9-1-1 and dispatch services
- The Manitoba Emergency Management Organization, which administers AlertMB
- Search and rescue organizations
- The family of Earl Moberg and other families who have advocated for stronger alerts in Manitoba
- Alzheimer Society of Manitoba
- Autism and developmental disability organizations operating in Manitoba, including St. Amant
- Brain injury and other disability service organizations
- Autistic self-advocates, people with lived experience, and family and caregiver representatives
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments and organizations, and rural, northern and remote communities
- The Manitoba Ombudsman, on access and privacy

- Manitoba broadcasters and telecommunications carriers that distribute alerts

7. Implementation Considerations

- Legislation: one amending Bill replacing section 1.1 of The Missing Persons Act, in the version for the chosen option.
- Regulation: new sections of the Missing Persons Regulation covering decision factors, authorization, escalation where a family's request is declined, targeting, dissemination, content, review, co-ordination, 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, building on existing Silver Alert practice.
- Alerting: arrangements through AlertMB for issuing, updating and cancelling alerts, alongside existing broadcaster arrangements.
- Translation: official French versions of the Bill and Regulation, since Manitoba statutes and regulations are enacted in both languages.
- 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 Manitoba may use as starting points.

8. Fiscal Considerations

Manitoba already participates in an established public alerting infrastructure and already operates a Silver Alert. This proposal would build on both rather than establish a separate alerting network. Additional implementation and operating costs, including consultation, drafting, translation, 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 Manitoba:

- support an amendment to section 1.1 of The Missing Persons Act so that Manitoba's alert covers missing persons of any age, with eligibility based on functional vulnerability and risk and not on age or diagnosis;
- choose whether the alert is named the Vulnerable Persons Alert (Option A) or keeps the Silver Alert name (Option B);

- refer the draft Bill for the chosen option and the 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 Manitoba's alert can receive Broadcast Immediate distribution when that treatment is available.

PPP requests a written response identifying the provincial officials or bodies responsible for considering these recommendations, the next procedural steps, and an anticipated timeline for an initial decision or further engagement.

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 A1: Draft The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Vulnerable Persons Alert), Option A

Appendix A2: Draft The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert Expansion), Option B

Appendix B: Draft Missing Persons Amendment Regulation (amending M.R. 62/2013), for use with either option

The 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

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<https://gov.mb.ca/emo/about/emergency-alerting.html>
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- Government of Alberta announcement of August 10, 2026, as reported by the Red Deer Advocate.
- Alberta, Missing Persons Act, SA 2011, c M-18.5, King’s Printer office consolidation current to June 11, 2025; Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017 (Bill 210); Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, SA 2023, c. 4 (Bill 204).
- Bill C-263, Silver Alert National Framework Act, LEGISinfo, Parliament of Canada:
<https://www.parl.ca/LegisInfo/en/bill/45-1/C-263>
- CHVN Radio, June 6, 2026, on Bill C-263 and the Moberg family: <https://www.chvnradio.com/articles/silver-alert-legislation-inspired-by-missing-winnipeg-senior-advances-to-committee-study>
- U.S. Ashanti Alert Act of 2018; Federal Communications Commission, Report and Order FCC 24-83, adopted August 7, 2024.
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- SOREM Broadcast Immediate Events List, Version 2.1, amended May 26, 2022.