

POLICY PROPOSAL

A Missing Persons Act for Nunavut, with a Vulnerable Persons Alert

A proposal to enact a Missing Persons Act for Nunavut, giving the RCMP the investigative tools used in every other province and territory and building in a Vulnerable Persons Alert for missing Nunavummiut of any age who cannot keep themselves safe.

Prepared for consideration by the Government of Nunavut

Submitted by Parent Partnership Project Inc.

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Executive Summary

Nunavut is the only province or territory without missing persons legislation. When a Nunavummiut who cannot keep themselves safe goes missing, the RCMP has none of the record access orders, search orders or emergency demands for records that police elsewhere in Canada now use when no crime is suspected, and the territory has no dedicated, standing Vulnerable Persons Alert framework with common eligibility criteria, activation rules and safeguards. An autistic child who bolts toward water, an adult with a brain injury who becomes lost, an Elder with dementia who walks out at night: none fits the AMBER Alert, which is built for abductions.

This proposal recommends that Nunavut enact a Missing Persons Act that gives the RCMP those investigative tools and builds in a single Vulnerable Persons Alert from the start. Eligibility for the alert would turn on what a person can and cannot do, not on age or diagnosis. The alert would use the alerting system Nunavut 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: a Missing Persons Act and companion regulations. Both are discussion drafts for legislative counsel, and both identify the points that need legal verification.

1. Background

1.1 Missing persons legislation in Canada

Every other province and territory now has missing persons legislation. The most recent are Yukon's Act, in force since October 2023, and the Northwest Territories' Act, in force since January 2026, which the Government of the Northwest Territories developed in response to Call for Justice 5.8 of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. These Acts let police obtain records and search orders from the courts and make emergency demands for records where no criminal investigation is underway, while limiting how the information may be used and disclosed. PPP has not found missing persons legislation introduced in Nunavut.

Without such an Act, the RCMP in Nunavut relies on general investigative powers when a person goes missing and no crime is suspected. Because Nunavut would be legislating for the first time, it can define the functional test once and use it for both the investigative tools and the alert, rather than adding an alert to an older framework built around narrower legal categories.

1.2 Public alerting in Nunavut today

Nunavut Emergency Management, a division of the Department of Community Services, issues public alerts in Nunavut through the national public alerting system and works in partnership with RCMP "V" Division, which it describes as the primary users of the system. PPP has not found a standing alert category for missing vulnerable persons in Nunavut.

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.

Nunavut has the same gap. A child in this situation in Nunavut would have no standing alert category built for the purpose, and the RCMP would also lack the investigative tools available elsewhere.

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 each province and territory on the same model as this one. A common functional test across provinces and territories would mean that a person who crosses a jurisdictional boundary is assessed against the same eligibility criteria on both sides.

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. A Nunavut Act would fit the national work and would not depend on it.

2. Problem Statement

People go missing in Nunavut 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. Nunavut's sea ice, tundra and open water, the distances between communities, long periods of darkness and its winter cold add to them. Nunavut has neither the investigative half of a missing-persons framework nor a dedicated public-alert framework for these cases.

3. Policy Objective

To establish a clear statutory framework for missing-person investigations in Nunavut, including access to judicial orders and emergency record demands with appropriate safeguards, and to ensure that when a missing person cannot keep themselves safe and public assistance could help locate them, police can activate a timely, geographically targeted Vulnerable Persons Alert using only the information necessary, regardless of the person's age or diagnosis.

4. Proposed Solution

PPP recommends that Nunavut enact a Missing Persons Act, with companion regulations for the operational details. The draft Act gives the RCMP record access orders, third party record access orders and search orders from the Nunavut Court of Justice, and emergency demands for records, modelled on the Yukon and Northwest Territories Acts, with limits on how information may be used and disclosed. Part 5 of the draft Act creates one Vulnerable Persons Alert for everyone who cannot keep themselves safe, rather than a separate alert for each condition or age group.

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 Nunavut legislation provides the complementary territorial 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 Act uses the same functional test to open the third party record access order and the search order, alongside a missing minor and a missing person at elevated risk of harm, so that one standard applies throughout. For the alert only, the draft Act provides that the RCMP need not first have exhausted the reasonable efforts that its definition of a missing person otherwise requires, so that the alert can be part of the first response.

4.2 Who decides

Under the draft Act, the RCMP would determine whether to activate a Vulnerable Persons Alert. The alert would then be issued by the RCMP, where authorized to access the applicable public-alerting system, or at the RCMP's request by another authorized issuing authority. The responsible issuing arrangements would be confirmed with Nunavut Emergency Management before implementation. Before activating, the RCMP must consider whether an alert would itself endanger the person or someone else, or interfere with an investigation.

4.3 Safeguards

- **Geographic targeting.** Alerts are geographically targeted to the smallest defensible area likely to support an effective public response. Broader distribution, including territory-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. The RCMP reports to the Minister of Justice by July 31, and the Minister publishes aggregated reporting within 30 days, on the timetable Yukon uses in a manner that protects personal information and operationally sensitive details.
- **Mandatory review.** The arrangements are reviewed within three years of coming into force.

4.4 How the alert reaches the public

The draft Act provides for dissemination through the system by which Nunavut 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 Legislative Assembly's authority. Distribution to phones and broadcasters runs through federally regulated distributors under CRTC requirements. Territorial legal authority does not by itself establish that reach, which is why the national pieces matter. The Nunavut Act supplies the territorial legal authority and decision rules, so that Nunavut is ready to use that treatment when it is available and can use its other channels in the meantime.

4.5 Coming into force

The draft Act comes into force on a day or days fixed by order of the Commissioner, so that provisions can be brought in as the regulations, training and alerting arrangements are ready, and sets a fixed latest date so that the Act cannot sit indefinitely without coming into force.

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 Alberta

Alberta has legislated a Silver Alert twice, in 2017 and again in 2023, 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.

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 Act and regulations 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:

- RCMP "V" Division
- Nunavut Emergency Management, and 9-1-1 and dispatch services
- Search and rescue organizations in Nunavut, including community ground search and rescue teams
- Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the regional Inuit associations, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada and other Inuit organizations
- Hamlet councils, Elders and community representatives
- Disability, dementia and brain injury organizations serving Nunavut
- Autistic self-advocates, people with lived experience, and family and caregiver representatives
- The Information and Privacy Commissioner of Nunavut and the Nunavut Court of Justice
- Broadcasters and telecommunications carriers in Nunavut that distribute alerts

7. Implementation Considerations

- Legislation: a new Missing Persons Act, with the Vulnerable Persons Alert in Part 5.
- Regulations: new regulations covering applications, service, reporting and records under the Act and, for the alert, 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.
- RCMP: designated decision-makers available at all times; training for them and for those who take missing-person reports.
- Alerting: arrangements with Nunavut Emergency Management for issuing, updating and cancelling alerts.
- Translation: versions in Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun and French, as Nunavut legislation requires.
- 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 Nunavut may use as starting points.

8. Fiscal Considerations

Nunavut already participates in the national public alerting system through Nunavut Emergency Management. This proposal would build on that infrastructure 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 Nunavut:

- enact a Missing Persons Act that gives the RCMP the investigative tools used elsewhere in Canada and creates a Vulnerable Persons Alert, with eligibility based on functional vulnerability and risk and not on age or diagnosis;
- introduce the Act as a government bill, sponsored by the Minister of Justice;
- refer the attached draft Act and draft regulations 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 Nunavut's alert can receive Broadcast Immediate distribution when that treatment is available.

PPP requests a written response identifying the territorial 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 A: Draft Missing Persons Act

Appendix B: Draft Missing Persons Regulations

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

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- 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.