

Executive Summary

The Vulnerable Persons Alert (VPA)

The Vulnerable Persons Alert (VPA) is a proposed national standard for alerting the public when a person who cannot keep themselves safe goes missing. It uses Canada's existing Alert Ready system and an event code that system already contains. Prepared by Parent Partnership Project Inc. (PPP), October 2026.

The Gap

Canada's national alerting framework provides Broadcast Immediate treatment for qualifying AMBER Alerts and includes Silver Alerts on its Broadcast Immediate Events List. However, it does not establish a nationally coordinated, age-neutral and diagnosis-neutral pathway for alerting the public when a functionally vulnerable person goes missing. That leaves out a missing autistic child, a younger adult with a brain injury, and anyone else whose danger comes from being unable to recognize risk, say where they are, or get back to safety.

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

The Design

One mechanism, no new brand. The VPA does not create a new alert system, new infrastructure, or a new public-facing brand. It sets a national standard for using something Canada's alerting system already contains.

Eligibility is functional, not diagnostic. The test is whether a person is unable to recognize danger, communicate their location, seek help, or return to safety. Age and diagnosis are neither necessary nor sufficient. Conditions such as autism, dementia, and acquired brain injury are examples of how that incapacity can arise, not a list of who qualifies.

Two gates, so that not every case becomes a phone alert.

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

Urgent search measures begin on reasonable suspicion and never wait for either gate. No minimum time missing is required. Alerts are targeted to the smallest defensible area, say only what the public needs to help, and are cancelled or updated as soon as the person is located.

Gate 2 is an operational test. Satisfying it does not by itself authorize Broadcast Immediate distribution, which depends on the technical review described below.

What Already Exists

- **The event code.** Canada's alerting standard, CAP-CP, already contains a code for a missing vulnerable person: missingVPer.
- **The distribution system.** Alert Ready already reaches compatible phones, television, and radio.
- **The list that decides.** A separate list maintained by SOREM, the Broadcast Immediate Events List, determines which events receive the interrupting alert. It includes AMBER and Silver. It does not include missingVPer.

So the event code exists, but it has no standing Broadcast Immediate designation and no national standard for its use. That is the gap this proposal addresses.

What PPP Asks

1. **A technical interoperability review.** Establish a Specification Committee through the CEMCS Change Management Process to determine the appropriate Broadcast Immediate treatment for missingVPer, including the required CAP values, wireless parameters, and any associated technical changes.
2. **Designation of an operational-policy body.** An appropriate F/P/T body to consider the national operational standard: who qualifies, when an alert issues, what it says, and how use is reported.
3. **Time-limited federal interoperability funding.** Support for provinces and territories to align training, dispatch systems, and implementation.

The first two are parallel requests to different bodies. PPP does not presume that new legislation or regulatory amendments are necessary. The responsible authorities must determine what changes implementation requires.

How the Levels Fit Together

The framework is built so that Canada does not end up with thirteen separate alerting systems. Each level contributes to one coordinated national framework, using common eligibility criteria and the existing missingVPer event code, while operating within its own legal and technical authority.

Level	Its part
National (federal, provincial, and territorial governments together)	Settle the technical treatment of missingVPer and adopt one operational standard, with time-limited federal funding to support alignment.
Provincial and territorial	Establish or confirm legal authority through whatever instrument fits the jurisdiction, and adopt the training and reporting requirements.
Local	Police, dispatch, and search and rescue run the response. PPP proposes that police make the activation decision, as with an AMBER Alert, subject to each jurisdiction's legal authority and alerting arrangements.

The national standard would establish common eligibility and interoperability principles while preserving provincial and territorial authority over policing, alert issuance, and local implementation.

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 Document Set

- *A National Proposal for Vulnerable Persons Alerts* (the Federal Proposal)
- *Proposed National Vulnerable Persons Alert (VPA) Operational Standard: Discussion Draft*
- *The Research Behind the Campaign: An Evidence Base for the Vulnerable Persons Alert Proposal*
- *Model First Responder Training & Local Implementation Manual* (draft)
- A companion proposal for each of the ten provinces and three territories

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. PPP has advocated on systemic issues facing vulnerable persons since 2018.