

POLICY PROPOSAL

A Vulnerable Persons Alert for Québec

A proposal to add a Vulnerable Persons Alert to the Loi visant à aider à retrouver des personnes disparues (chapitre A-16.1), building on the Alerte SILVER and covering missing persons of any age who cannot keep themselves safe.

Prepared for consideration by the Gouvernement du Québec

Submitted by Parent Partnership Project Inc.

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Executive Summary

Québec took an important step in February 2026, when it extended the Alerte SILVER across the province. The Alerte SILVER asks the public for help through the media, police websites and social media. It currently applies to missing people with a diagnosed major neurocognitive disorder, or people aged 65 or older whose symptoms of such a disorder are confirmed by relatives or caregivers, subject to the program's other activation criteria. Two limits remain. It does not provide a general alert pathway for people of any age whose functional vulnerability arises from other conditions or circumstances, such as an autistic child who bolts toward water or an adult with a brain injury who becomes lost. And, unlike the AMBER Alert, it is not sent to phones through Québec En Alerte.

This proposal recommends that Québec add a Vulnerable Persons Alert to the Loi visant à aider à retrouver des personnes disparues. Eligibility would turn on what a person can and cannot do, not on age or diagnosis. Everyone the Alerte SILVER now covers would remain covered, and the alert would use Québec En Alerte, the system Québec already uses for AMBER Alerts, without a new system, a new brand of alert for each condition, or new infrastructure.

Two drafts are attached for the government's consideration, in French: 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 Act provides today

The Loi visant à aider à retrouver des personnes disparues (chapitre A-16.1), adopted in 2023, lets a judge of the Court of Québec or a presiding justice of the peace order third parties to communicate information, and authorize entry to premises, to help locate a missing person. Under article 8, the director of a police force, or a person the director designates, may communicate information to the public where the director considers it necessary, including the person's name, age, description and photograph, any condition that poses a risk to the person's safety or health, and where and how the person disappeared.

The Act defines a missing person as someone whose whereabouts are unknown despite reasonable police efforts to find them. It contains no alert provision and no regulation-making power. Article 12 requires the Minister of Public Security to report to the Government on the implementation of the Act by October 5, 2028, which is a natural occasion to consider this amendment.

1.2 The Alerte SILVER

Québec ran Alerte SILVER pilot projects from 2022 and announced its province-wide deployment on February 20, 2026. Only police forces, including the Sûreté du Québec, can activate it. Alerte SILVER currently applies to missing people with a diagnosed major neurocognitive disorder, or people aged 65 or older whose symptoms of such a disorder are confirmed by relatives or caregivers, subject to the program's other activation criteria: an imminent risk to life or safety, initial police searches that have not

located the person, and enough information for public release. It does not provide a general alert pathway for people of any age whose functional vulnerability arises from other conditions or circumstances. It is distributed through social media, police websites and traditional media with a distinctive logo, and it is not sent to cell phones.

The Alerte SILVER shows that Québec police and the public will use a standing alert category. It is an administrative program rather than a law, it is limited to neurocognitive disorders, and it does not use the interrupting alert that reaches phones, television and radio.

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.

Québec has the same gap. A child in this situation in Québec would fall outside both the AMBER Alert and the Alerte SILVER.

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 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 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 Québec amendment would fit the national work and would not depend on it.

2. Problem Statement

People go missing in Québec 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. Québec's rivers, lakes and winter cold add to them. The Alerte SILVER reaches only people with a major neurocognitive disorder, and only members of the public who are following the media or social media at the right moment.

3. Policy Objective

To ensure that when anyone in Québec 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 adding a new chapter III.1 to the Loi visant à aider à retrouver des personnes disparues, establishing an alerte pour personnes vulnérables, with a companion regulation for the operational details. The existing communication power in article 8 is unchanged. The new alert would give the Alerte SILVER a statutory basis and extend it to everyone at the same risk, rather than adding 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 Québec 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 Bill preserves existing Alerte SILVER eligibility: a missing person with a diagnosed major neurocognitive disorder, or a person aged 65 or older whose symptoms of such a disorder are confirmed by relatives or caregivers, who faces an imminent risk to life or safety, is treated as qualifying. Legislative counsel should confirm that the revised provisions do not inadvertently narrow that existing coverage. For the alert only, the draft Bill provides that police need not first have completed the reasonable efforts that the Act's definition of a missing person otherwise requires.

4.2 Who decides

Under the draft Bill, the director of a police force, or a person the director designates, activates the alert, as with the Alerte SILVER and the AMBER Alert today. The alert is then issued by that police force where it is authorized to issue alerts, or at its request by another authorized authority, such as the Sûreté du Québec. Before activating, the police force 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 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.

4.4 How the alert reaches the public

The draft Bill provides for dissemination through the system by which Québec participates in the National Public Alerting System, currently Québec En Alerte, in accordance with the requirements that apply to that system, alongside the media and police channels the Alerte SILVER already uses. Whether a Vulnerable Persons Alert interrupts phones, television and radio depends on national decisions about the Broadcast Immediate list, which are outside the National Assembly'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 Québec amendment supplies the provincial legal authority and decision rules, so that Québec 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 Bill comes into force on the date or dates set by the Government, and no later than a fixed date, so that provisions can be brought in as the regulation, training and alerting arrangements are ready without the amendment waiting indefinitely. The draft regulation would ordinarily be subject to a 45-day prepublication period in the Gazette officielle du Québec, subject to the exceptions provided by law.

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 Bill 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 Sûreté du Québec, the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal, other municipal police forces, Indigenous police forces, and the Association des directeurs de police du Québec
- The ministère de la Sécurité publique, which administers the Act and Québec En Alerte, and the minister responsible for Seniors and Caregivers, who announced the Alerte SILVER deployment with the Minister of Public Security
- Search and rescue organizations, and 9-1-1 and dispatch services
- The Fédération québécoise des sociétés Alzheimer
- The Fédération québécoise de l'autisme, and developmental disability and brain injury organizations
- Autistic self-advocates, people with lived experience, and family and caregiver representatives
- First Nations and Inuit governments and organizations, and northern, rural and remote communities
- The Commission d'accès à l'information
- Québec broadcasters and telecommunications carriers that distribute alerts

7. Implementation Considerations

- Legislation: one amending Bill adding chapter III.1 to the *Loi visant à aider à retrouver des personnes disparues*, with a regulation-making power the Act does not now have.
- Regulation: a new 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, ordinarily prepublished for 45 days under the Loi sur les règlements.

- Police: designated decision-makers available at all times; training for them and for those who take missing-person reports, building on Alerte SILVER practice.
- Alerting: arrangements through Québec En Alerte for issuing, updating and cancelling alerts, alongside the media channels the Alerte SILVER uses.
- Translation: English versions of the Bill and regulation, since Québec statutes are enacted in French and English.
- 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 Québec may use as starting points.

8. Fiscal Considerations

Québec already participates in an established public alerting infrastructure through Québec En Alerte and already operates the Alerte SILVER. 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 Gouvernement du Québec:

- support an amendment to the Loi visant à aider à retrouver des personnes disparues creating a Vulnerable Persons Alert, with eligibility based on functional vulnerability and risk and not on age or diagnosis;
- bring the Alerte SILVER within that alert, so that Québec has one alert for missing persons who cannot keep themselves safe;
- 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 Québec'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 A: Projet de loi, Loi modifiant la Loi visant à aider à retrouver des personnes disparues (alerte pour personnes vulnérables)

Appendix B: Projet de règlement, Règlement sur l'alerte pour personnes vulnérables

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

Sources

- Loi visant à aider à retrouver des personnes disparues, chapitre A-16.1, consolidation updated to November 30, 2024: <https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/A-16.1>
- Gouvernement du Québec, « Protection des personnes âgées – Déploiement de l'alerte SILVER à l'échelle du Québec », February 20, 2026: <https://www.quebec.ca/nouvelles/actualites/details/protection-des-personnes-ainees-deploiement-de-lalerte-silver-a-lechelle-du-quebec-68658>
- Noovo Info, "L'alerte SILVER étendue à l'ensemble du Québec", February 21, 2026: <https://www.noovo.info/nouvelles/societe/article/lalerte-silver-etendue-a-lensemble-du-quebec/>
- Vingt55, on the deployment of the Alerte SILVER, February 24, 2026: <https://vingt55.ca/deploiement-de-lalerte-silver-un-nouvel-outil-pour-retrouver-plus-rapidement-et-efficacement-les-personnes-vulnerables/>
- Gouvernement du Québec, Québec En Alerte: <https://www.quebec.ca/securite-situations-urgence/securite-civile/quebec-en-alerte>
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- Government of Alberta announcement of August 10, 2026, as reported by the Red Deer Advocate.
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- Manitoba, The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert), S.M. 2017, c. 29: <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/2017/c02917e.php>
- Bill C-263, Silver Alert National Framework Act, LEGISinfo, Parliament of Canada: <https://www.parl.ca/LegisInfo/en/bill/45-1/C-263>
- 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.