

VULNERABLE PERSONS REGISTRY



BACKGROUND INFO

Vulnerable Persons Registries (VPRs) are an emergency preparation and response tool that allows residents to voluntarily add themselves to a list of residents who experience a heightened need of support during emergencies due to mobility issues, medical needs, or other special needs.

NSFM received letters from 12 municipalities across the province calling for the formation of a province-wide, voluntary vulnerable persons registry. This issue was reviewed by the Public Safety Advisory Committee and was approved as an Advocacy Priority by the Board of Directors on February 2, 2024.

A small number of municipalities, including Halifax Regional Municipality, Richmond County, Town of Truro, have set up individual VPRs for their jurisdiction; Kings County and towns of Berwick, Wolfville, and Kings set up an intermunicipal VPR.

On September 20, 2024, the *Emergency Preparedness and Nova Scotia Guard Act* passed in the Legislature, which includes ministerial powers to create regulations and standards for Regional Emergency Management Organizations (REMOs) and VPRs. On February 2, 2026, the Minister enacted provincial standards that require REMO programs to include how a VPR will be operated.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE

Due to the increasing frequency of severe storms, heavy rainfalls, and wildfires, emergency planning and response are more important than ever. During these emergency events, people with disabilities, senior citizens, and other vulnerable demographics may experience difficulties securing daily needs and following evacuation orders. VPRs help emergency responders track and appropriately support residents most in need. Municipalities in Nova Scotia are doing their part by recognizing the need for VPRs but will be able to implement these important systems with provincial support.

NSFM ADVOCACY & RESEARCH

Preliminary responses to the notion of a province-wide VPR from the Department of Municipal Affairs implied that this responsibility would be best managed at the municipal level. NSFM staff conducted a jurisdictional scan of emergency response VPRs across Canada and noted a significant amount of variance in how these registries were designed and managed; as examples, the VPR in Sault Ste. Marie is managed by a non-profit and the VPR in the City of Calgary (which has a similar population as Nova Scotia) is managed by the Calgary Police Service.



On April 1, 2026, the Public Safety Advisory Committee received a presentation from staff of the Department of Emergency Management. This presentation included recommendations on how to define vulnerable and the proposal that municipalities be in charge of managing and updating VPRs in their jurisdiction. No financial support was offered as part of this proposal, but provincial staff have been investigating different online platforms that could be accessed by municipalities to host a VPR with training from provincial staff.

NEXT STEPS

VPRs province-wide remains an advocacy priority for NSFM. NSFM commends the progress being made by Department of Emergency Management in creating a regulatory framework for VPRs; this shows that the importance of VPRs is being acknowledged.

Municipal leaders are proud to be the order of government that is closest to the on-the-ground challenges and opportunities. Staying in touch with community, marketing important opportunities such as signing up for the VPR, fostering good neighbourly relations, and, when necessary, coordinating emergency responses are all unique strengths of municipalities. NSFM and its members want to increase the standard of public safety for all residents, especially those who are most vulnerable.

Municipalities are able to play their role best when properly supported by enabling legislation and access to resources. Further, while some municipalities may have the funding and staff expertise to establish a VPR independently, many may struggle to establish a VPR despite the possibility of a growing senior or otherwise vulnerable population in their jurisdiction. Therefore, NSFM continues to propose that the provincial government provide:

- An online platform for municipalities to utilize free of charge
- Training on how to operate a VPR for all municipalities
- Broad municipal consultation on VPR regulations
- The ability for municipalities to define vulnerability for the purposes of eligibility on the VPR

By engaging in respectful collaboration, municipalities and the provincial government will be able to ensure that all Nova Scotia receive the help that they need amidst the various types of emergencies that our province experiences.