

**Presentation to the Law Amendments Committee re Bill 198 - Emergency 911 Act
October 20, 2022**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Law Amendments Committee with regards to the important legislation being put forward in Bill 198 - to amend the emergency 911 Act. As a disabled senior in a wheelchair who lives alone, I, and many other vulnerable persons, experienced the terror of no telecommunications, during and after the hurricane. I commend the government for enacting legislation to ensure that emergency systems work, both during and after an emergency. However, the only loss of life directly attributable to the hurricane in Nova Scotia was the loss of an elderly man with dementia who was swept away to sea. This gentleman's life might have been saved by a Voluntary Vulnerable Person's Registry, which I will refer to as the VVPR. This view was reiterated by Ontario police and Hampton, New Brunswick EMO officials, on CBC radio, who said their registries could have proven effective if that gentleman, or his family, had registered him as vulnerable. Worldwide studies show people with disabilities are two to four times more likely to die in a disaster. 30% of Nova Scotians identify as having some form of disability, and we have the highest proportion of seniors in Canada, many with family who live afar. That's a lot of vulnerable persons in our province. Vulnerable people are not always known to their neighbours, as we are often not "out and about" in the same way that able-bodied individuals might be. Additionally, neighbours could not have helped me evacuate safely as I have heavy electric wheelchair (which ran out of power, by the way, in the prolonged power outage period). A little known fact is that ambulances will not transfer mobility devices, so if an ambulance was sent to transport me to a comfort station, I would have no wheelchair (this rule applies to walkers, and folding manual wheelchairs as well). Ambulances have no means to tie mobility devices down. A Vulnerable Person's Registry would not only help identify the most vulnerable people in an emergency, **but include them in emergency planning**. In my example, a wheelchair van gassed up, at the ready in a strategic location would be part of local planning, not just for me, but for any person with mobility issues.

It has been brought to my attention that separate legislation, Bill 202, has been put forward in the House about the establishment of a Voluntary Vulnerable Persons Registry, after I spoke about this concept on CBC Radio on Sept 27. Many vulnerable people, caregivers, and families, and organizations including the Canadian military, have contacted me in support of this idea. I applaud Honourable Member Nicoll from Dartmouth-Cole Harbour, who brought this legislation forward, and to the Honourable Minister MacFarlane for her support of such a Registry. However, I am here today to suggest that this Registry, the VVPR, belongs in the EMO Act, since it would be utilized and administered by EMO officials during emergencies. The Registry is not a social service, or a housing service, it's an emergency service and therefore belongs in this Act. Since the EMO Act is already being amended, it would be efficient to add one simple line to the legislation. This is the first of my proposed amendments - something to the effect **that from here forward the government will legislate the establishment of a Voluntary Vulnerable Persons Registry in all Nova Scotian municipalities, to be led and administered by the office of EMO, using First Voice consultations to develop effective, efficient policies and procedures**. Once the Registry has been legislated, its structure can be developed in consultation with vulnerable persons and EMO officials. This would allow for flexible community-based systems and approaches, suitable for the varying urban and rural situations found in our province.

Furthermore, I respectfully suggest, that in your amendments **you legislate that telecommunications companies be required to ensure that during, and after an emergency, EMO has adequate systems to link the Registry to appropriate officials so that they can assist and support the vulnerable persons and/or families, based on preset protocols, who voluntarily chose to register with EMO officials**. The danger of not linking the Registry to demands made to the telecommunications companies, is that the Registry exists, but EMO officials can't access the information due to communications failures and disruptions. Thank you very much again for the opportunity to present my views before this committee. I'd be honoured to assist the government further to advance the development of the Registry, and welcome any questions this committee may have for me.

Anne Camozzi - [REDACTED]