

Thousands of Canadians Need People Located Outside Police Mandate, Investigation Firms Report

From legal witnesses to estate heirs, most locate-person requests don't meet police criteria for missing persons cases

TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA, January 27, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- According to national data, between 70,000 and 80,000 Canadians are reported missing to police annually, but an even larger number of locate-person requests, from lawyers seeking witnesses to families searching for heirs, fall entirely outside police jurisdiction, according to Ontario private investigation firms.

“

Police and private investigators serve different but important functions. Understanding which resource is appropriate saves time and frustration.”

*Investigation Hotline Team /
Investigation Team*

"When people hear 'missing persons,' they assume police handle all cases," says Mitchell Dubros, founder and lead investigator of [Investigation Hotline](#), a Toronto-based private detective agency. "But police focus on endangered

individuals and suspicious disappearances. If a lawyer needs to locate a witness, if someone is searching for a birth parent, if an executor needs to find a beneficiary who moved 20 years ago—those aren't police matters. But the person still needs to be found."

The broader need to locate individuals for legal, personal, or business reasons represents a much larger, and largely invisible, category that private investigators handle.

Who Needs People Located

Private detective firms report locate-person requests come from:

- Legal professionals seeking witnesses, defendants avoiding service, heirs to estates, or class action participants
- Estate executors required to locate beneficiaries who lost touch with deceased individuals years earlier
- Adoption seekers navigating sealed records to find birth parents or biological children
- Personal reconnections involving former friends, romantic partners, or mentors when online

searches fail

- Business matters requiring location of former employees, disappeared partners, or individuals with contractual obligations

- Creditors needing skip-tracing services for individuals who relocated without forwarding information

"These are legitimate reasons to locate someone, but none of them involve police," the Investigation Hotline investigative team explains. "That's the gap private investigators fill."

Ethical Screening: Not Every Request Is Accepted

Before accepting locate-person cases, Investigation Hotline requires clients to explain why they need someone found and declines requests that raise concerns.

"We're not being nosy. We operate ethically and have a responsibility to protect people from potential harm," Dubros emphasizes. "If someone wants to locate an ex-partner who has a restraining order, we decline. If the situation raises red flags for stalking or harassment, we refuse the case."

The seasoned investigators screen all requests to ensure legitimate purposes and have turned down business when circumstances seemed concerning.

"We've declined cases where the story didn't add up, where someone was evasive about their reasons, or where they wanted information that crossed into invasive territory," according to Investigation Hotline's team. "Legal service, estate matters, adoption reunions, those are straightforward. But we make judgment calls and err on the side of caution."

The firm emphasizes that not all cases result in direct contact. When individuals clearly don't want to be found and no legal obligation exists, Investigation Hotline may provide only general confirmation of safety or location without facilitating unwanted contact.

"If a lawyer needs to serve papers, that's legal and we facilitate it," the team explains. "If someone is looking for a former partner who deliberately disappeared, we're extremely careful about whether and how any contact happens."



Investigation Hotline, Toronto's Highest Rated Private Investigation Agency

International Cases and Legal Requirements

Investigation Hotline's international presence, including operations and partnerships globally, enables cross-border investigations that extend beyond local police jurisdiction.

"Lawyers seeking witnesses who returned to their home countries, families locating relatives who emigrated, business matters involving individuals abroad—these require investigators who can work across borders legally," the team notes.

The firm reports that professional verification matters especially in legal contexts, where documentation must meet court standards.

"Anyone can Google a name or search Facebook. What we provide is verified, documented confirmation that it's the right person at that location, with evidence that holds up legally when needed."

When Locate-Person Cases Require Professional Services

Industry professionals recommend professional services when:

- The situation falls outside police mandate (non-endangered adults, civil matters)
- Legal proceedings require verified addresses for service or notification
- Estate matters require locating beneficiaries or heirs
- Adoption reunions involve sealed records or decades-old information
- International elements complicate searches
- Online searching and social media searches have failed
- Professional documentation is required for legal purposes

"Most people start with Google and Facebook," Dubros says. "When that fails, or when they need legally sound verification, that's when they contact us."

The public often doesn't realize that police resources are reserved for endangered individuals, creating confusion when people discover their legitimate need to locate someone doesn't qualify for police assistance.

"Understanding when police can help and when private investigators are the appropriate resource saves people time and frustration," Dubros notes. "Both serve important but different functions."

About Investigation Hotline:

Investigation Hotline is a licensed Ontario private investigation firm with [hundreds of verified](#)

[client reviews](#). With over 30 years of experience, the firm serves clients across Canada and internationally through a network of licensed investigators and support teams. The firm specializes in [locate-person investigations](#), skip tracing, infidelity investigations, corporate due diligence, surveillance, digital evidence analysis, and background investigations.

To schedule a confidential consultation, contact Investigation Hotline at +1 416-205-9114 or visit <https://investigationhotline.com>.

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