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PRESS RELEASE

Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to facilitate immigration to Canada of Vietnamese in the Philippines through humanitarian and compassionate consideration

Following the consultation meetings held with the Vietnamese communities in Toronto and Montreal last month, the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration of Canada today announced at a meeting with the representatives of the Vietnamese Canadian Federation a plan to facilitate immigration to Canada of Vietnamese living in the Philippines.

Outlining how Humanitarian and Compassionate consideration can be utilized by this group to apply for permanent residence in Canada, the plan involves a mechanism through which people who do not meet the criteria of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* can apply for permanent residence. An immigration officer will assess the application and decide, on a case by case basis, if it merits an exemption from the requirements of the Act and the Regulations.

A statement released by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) following the meeting indicates that expedited processing will be afforded to all applications submitted before December 31, 2007 by those who have been identified by the Vietnamese Canadian Federation (VCF). In order to help CIC identify members of this group, VCF will provide a list of the remaining Vietnamese living in the Philippines without status before applications are made.

VCF hopes that the plan announced by the Minister today will help close the last chapter of the saga of the Vietnamese refugees who have been stranded in the Philippines after fleeing for freedom from their homeland almost 20 years ago.

VCF has been working with Vietnamese-Australian refugee advocate and lawyer Hoi Trinh since 2002, and with SOS VietPhi since 2005, to urge the Government of Canada to give these people a chance to rebuild their lives in Canada. The Federation is therefore very grateful for the decision that the Minister announced today.

Minister Finley was accompanied by Mr. John Weissenberger, her Chief of Staff; Mr. Les Linklater, Director General of CIC's Immigration Branch; Mr. Jim Miller, Senior Advisor; and Ms. Sabrina Anzini, Senior Policy Advisor. Also present were the Honourable Jason Kenney, Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity and Mr. Tenzin Khangsar, his Chief of Staff.

The VCF was represented by Dr. Can D. Le, Commissioner for External Affairs; Mr. Duc Duong, Treasurer; Ms. Mai Nguyen, member of the Board of Directors of Asian Heritage Month

Society – Ottawa; and Ms. Trang Nguyen, Vice-President of the Vietnamese Students Association of the University of Ottawa.

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