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Press Release

Vietnamese Canadian community applauds Prime Minister Stephen Harper's stand on human rights:

I don't think Canadians want us to sell out our values – our beliefs in democracy, freedom, and human rights.

Ut Ngo, President of the Vietnamese Canadian Federation, today wrote to Prime Minister Stephen Harper to thank him for raising the human rights issue in his meeting with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung in Hanoi yesterday, November 17. According to news reports from Vietnam, the Prime Minister tied in human rights concerns with Vietnam's expanding trade file, telling his counterpart that economic openness went hand in hand with social and political freedoms. The Prime Minister also raised several individual cases of political dissidents persecuted by the Vietnamese government, including one man who was imprisoned after providing testimony to the U.S. Congress on human rights in his country. He further told the Vietnamese Prime Minister that *not only is this important for all Canadians, but it resonates particularly for Canadians of Vietnamese origin* (Allan Woods, the Ottawa Citizen, November 18, 2006).

We are very encouraged by the firm stand that the Prime Minister took on this issue. It re-emphasized the point that he made while on his way to Vietnam for the APEC Summit, *I don't think Canadians want us to sell out our values – our beliefs in democracy, freedom, and human rights*. “We applaud your conviction that moral principles ought not to be sacrificed for the sake of political expediency”, said Ngo's letter.

In an open letter addressed to the Prime Minister and published October 20, 2006 in the Ottawa Citizen, the Vietnamese Canadian Federation and other Vietnamese organizations in Canada asked him to persuade Vietnamese leaders to adopt genuine democratization of the political system as a top-priority national policy. We are thankful that he did.

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For immediate delivery
November 18, 2006
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