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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **First Challenge to the Heritage Freedom Flag in Canada:**

#### **Sundre, Alberta**

In 1984, thanks to the initiative undertaken by a group of newly arrived Vietnamese refugees, and with the support of some local politicians, the town of Sundre, north of Calgary, Alberta, decided to add the flag of the former Republic of Vietnam alongside those of other countries being flown at a municipal property. Recently, responding to the complaint from an unidentified person, the town decided to take it down because it is not the official flag of the current Communist government in Vietnam.

In response to this development, the Vietnamese community in Calgary, with the support of the Vietnamese Canadian Federation, is mounting a campaign to urge the Town Council of Sundre to reverse this decision. The Council will meet on Monday, July 23, 2007, to discuss this issue.

Since by far the majority of the members of the overseas Vietnamese, including those in the Vietnamese community in Canada, are refugees who fled the Communist dictatorship which took over South Vietnam by force in April 1975, this flag is considered by the community as a beacon for democracy and freedom which, it hopes, will eventually come back to Vietnam.

The Vietnamese Canadian Federation is lending its full support to the campaign of the Vietnamese community in Calgary. It invites everyone to join in this campaign by writing to Mayor Roy Cummings of Sundre or to sign a petition which is currently in circulation to request the Town Council of Sundre to reverse its decision.

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Date of release: July 21, 2007

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Following are the coordinates of Mayor Roy Cummings and a bulletin by CanWest News Service on this matter.

His Worship Roy Cummings

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## News Media Report

# **Vietnam at odds with Alberta town over flag**

**Larissa Liepins, CanWest News Service**

Published: Thursday, July 19

The flag of South Vietnam flew over a small Alberta town for 23 years before the municipality realized it was not the official standard of the current communist government -- and took it down.

Now Sundre, Alta., population 2,500, could find itself in a diplomatic tug-of-war with Vietnam if it decides to respect the wishes of the local Vietnamese community and re-hoist the pre-Communist flag.

The town has flown the flag on municipal property since 1984, but did not realize until recently that it was not the country's official flag, said Sundre Mayor Roy Cummings. It was removed after an unnamed person complained.

"At the end of the day, we don't want to offend anybody -- or disrespect the Vietnamese people and residents of Sundre who opened their homes to the refugees in 1984," Cummings said Wednesday.

The flag, which used to fly alongside other international flags on municipal property, may end up in a garden in the town's museum, Cummings said.

But it should never have been lowered in the first place, because it's an important symbol to the millions of Vietnamese people who fled the country after the Communists took over in 1975, says Dong Nguyen - one of 30 Vietnamese-Canadians from Calgary who made a special trip to plead their case in front of Sundre council last Monday.

"It represents the freedom we had under the old government," Nguyen said. "It represents the more than one million people, more than 300,000 of whom died, who escaped the country by boat. It's our culture, our heritage."

But the embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam says it will officially protest if the flag re-appears on government property.

"Our country in general, and this embassy in particular, doesn't accept that flag," Vinh Le, the embassy's second secretary, said Wednesday.

"If it's raised in a public place or by a government or institution in Canada, it's not in accordance with international relations and protocols."

If Sunde does hoist it, "we will send a diplomatic letter to the (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada) to complain about this," Le said.

Several states and cities in the United States have moved to officially recognize the South Vietnam flag, but Calgary MP Jason Kenney, the secretary of state for multiculturalism and Canadian identity, said Ottawa doesn't plan to follow suit. It's up to municipalities and provinces to decide what they want to do, he added.

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