



249 Rochester Street Ottawa, ON; K1R 7M9 CANADA
Tel.: (613) 230-8282; Fax: (613) 230-8281; Email: vietfederation@bellnet.ca
Website: www.vietfederation.ca

BACKGROUND

Symbol of democracy and freedom in the town of Sundre (Alberta, Canada): the Vietnamese heritage and freedom flag

The Vietnamese Canadian Federation is calling upon all those who cherish democracy and freedom to write to the Sundre (Alberta, Canada) town council (c/o Mayor Roy Cummings, fax: (403) 638-2100; email: townmail@sundre.com) before August 7 to urge the council to recognize the flag with three red stripes on a yellow background as the overseas Vietnamese's heritage and freedom flag.

On July 19, 2007, the Federation was informed of the council's decision to take down this flag -- which had been flown on a town property since 1984 -- in response to an unidentified person's complaint that it is not the official flag of the current Communist government in Vietnam. Together with the Vietnamese community in Calgary, the Vietnamese Canadian Federation immediately launched a campaign to inform councillors of the background of this flag, which is overwhelmingly considered by the overseas Vietnamese community as an inalienable part of its heritage, and to urge them to reverse their decision.

Following the meeting of July 23 at which the council heard moving and convincing testimonies by the representatives of the Vietnamese community, and by Mr. Ed Morgan, a well-respected former councillor and current resident of Sundre, councillors indicated general support of the flying of this flag, as reported by the Calgary Herald in the article entitled *Backing Freedom Flag in Sundre right thing to do* (July 24, 2007).

"Calling it the right thing to do, Sundre Mayor Roy Cummings said council supports hoisting the yellow and red-striped flag of the pre-communist South Vietnam, despite an earlier decision to remove it from a collection of international flags flown in the town", wrote reporter Jamie Komarnicki of the newspaper.

"When I think about what those flags mean, what those flags mean to people -- it has got nothing to do with whether it's from a recognized country now. It's what those people believed in," Mayor Cummings was quoted as saying following the meeting.

"If we believe that the (South Vietnamese) flag should be flown -- in our hearts and our minds -- there's nobody that's going to force us to change our mind. I don't care who it is," the Mayor said.

Although the Vietnamese Communist government embassy in Ottawa argued that its official flag (with a golden star on a red background) should be used instead, Mayor Cummings indicated at a follow-up meeting on July 29 with representatives of the Vietnamese community that out of the numerous messages that he received last week, including many from people outside the Vietnamese community, none supports the embassy's position.

While realizing that the council will not officially vote on this issue until August 7, the Vietnamese Canadian Federation greatly appreciates the courageous and heart-felt position expressed by Mayor Cummings. It shows unequivocal support of this flag, the symbol of democracy and freedom to the overseas Vietnamese community. The vast majority of members of this community were among the million and a half refugees who fled the country after the fall of South Vietnam to the Communists in April 1975 and made it to the shore of freedom, while hundreds of thousands of others were killed by pirates, drowned at sea, or died of starvation.

The Federation is a non-profit umbrella organization of the Vietnamese community in Canada. Established in 1980, it currently has 12 chapters in all major cities from coast to coast, with a national office in Ottawa.

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