

The Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Gérard Pelletier, announced today that the government has decided to withdraw its office and diplomatic personnel from Saigon and to transfer their responsibilities to our mission in Bangkok which is accredited to South Viet-Nam. The decision to withdraw the office is based on considerations relating to its ability to perform its functions, and to the security of its personnel; it does not constitute a political gesture.

Some Canadian nationals have remained in Saigon in spite of the departure of our office. All of them had indicated either that they wished to remain or that they had made their own arrangements to leave. During the past month our Chargé d'Affaires repeatedly sent these people warnings advising them, in increasingly pressing terms, to leave South Viet-Nam. Furthermore the government on several occasions sent in Canadian military aircraft for their evacuation. Their decision to stay in South Viet-Nam was taken of their own free will and on their own responsibility. We respect their decision, and before closing our office the Chargé d'Affaires satisfied himself that he could do nothing further for them.

It was also clear that he was not in a position to facilitate the departure of Vietnamese citizens whose departure did not depend upon Canadian decisions or procedures but upon decisions and procedures which are the sole responsibility of the South Vietnamese authorities. Apart from several individual cases and small groups of orphans already in the processing stream to adoptive parents in Canada, the special measures instituted at Saigon and in Canada by the Minister of Manpower and Immigration to facilitate the admission of relatives of Canadians of Vietnamese origin have regretfully not achieved the results that had been hoped for because of the Vietnamese exit regulations. Those who may be able to present themselves and apply at other Canadian missions abroad will be considered with sympathy and despatch.