

Mr. Speaker,

Last night, President Nixon said that a cease-fire in Viet-Nam has been agreed upon. The Government is profoundly relieved at this historic news and profoundly grateful for it, as I am sure are all members of the House and all the Canadian people. At long last it seems agreement has been reached to stop the fighting in Viet-Nam. The way to peace will then lie open. All Canadians will welcome this.

It is now necessary to decide what contribution Canada can make to ensure that peace does indeed come to Viet-Nam. What is now in our interests to do, and what can we do effectively? - these are the questions we face.

Canada, in our view, will also wish to help in the immense task of relief and reconstruction in Viet-Nam. The Government has already announced its willingness to do so. The destructuon in both North an South Viet-Nam is immense. Canada has some experience in providing aid to South Viet-Nam, but none of course in North Vietnam. The government does not yet know what may be asked of us, nor how a larger Canadian programme may relate to the efforts of other countries and international organizations. We will have to find the answers to these questions as quickly as Viet-Nam returns to conditions in which aid can be effective. As always, we will offer to do what we are best able to do. We will be willing to help in this task anywhere in Viet-Nam where we are welcome and where we can be useful.

On November 2 last year, when it seemed a cease-fire agreement was near, the Governemnt made a proposal. That proposal was intended to meet the apparent concern of the parties that there should be some form of international presence immediately on the ground from the time of the cease- fire. The proposal was that, for the initial period, Canada would be prepared to place at the disposal of the new international supervisory body the Canadian Delegation to the existing international commission, the ICC, as it is commonly called, augmented as necessary.

Our concern was to enable the initial cease-fire arrangements to proceed without delay if the parties so wished.

That is very much the problem now.

The Governemnt subsequently stated publicly the conditions and considerations on which it will require assurances before it could take a decision on more complete participation in a new commission. It told the parties what these conditions were.