

**GET INVOLVED WITH
FRIENDS OF CUBA AGAINST THE U.S. BLOCKADE
(FCAB - VANCOUVER)**

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**END THE
US BLOCKADE
OF CUBA!**

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Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC)



**The Newsletter of
Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba - VCSC
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Summer 2021



An Open Letter to Party Leaders in the 2021 Federal Election of Canada

Re: Canada-Cuba Relations

I am writing to you on behalf of the Canadian Network On Cuba (CNC), which represents 22 Canada-Cuba friendship and solidarity organizations across Canada, ranging from Vancouver to Halifax, with over 50,000 in membership. Two of the CNC's principal objectives are:

- * bringing an end to U.S. economic sanctions against Cuba and
- * ensuring that Canada's relations with Cuba are based on equality and respect for the island nation's independence, sovereignty, and the right of self-determination.

Canadians - more than 3,900 - have already spoken clearly on these matters in two parliamentary petitions (e-2586 and e-3456) calling on the Government of Canada to actively oppose U.S. economic aggression against Cuba, and to ensure that Ottawa-Havana relations be maintained in accordance with established international law and diplomatic norms.

In 2014, the world rejoiced to see the restoration of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba in a signed agreement between then Presidents Raúl Castro and Barack Obama.

The world held out great hopes that relations between the two countries would be normalized. Canada helped by providing a venue for the talks which led to the improvement of those relations. However, under the administration of Donald Trump, we witnessed a return to the policy of overt and ever escalating hostility and aggression against Cuba. Under Trump, the economic sanctions against Cuba reached unprecedented levels with 243 new distinct and vindictive measures targeted against the island nation. Fifty of these measures were vindictively imposed, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, severely limiting the island nation's access to equipment and other necessary items required to preserve the health of Cubans.

In response to the parliamentary petition e-2586, the Government of Canada acknowledged, "In the midst of the global crisis, the embargo on Cuba has become an additional impediment to purchasing medical supplies to deal with the pandemic, as well as to receiving international aid."

The administration of President Joseph Biden not only continues the unrelenting, criminal, and immoral economic

war against Cuba but has also imposed additional sanctions. It is not an exaggeration or hyperbole to describe Washington's policy as an economic war against the people of Cuba. Imposed since the early 1960s, it constitutes the principal obstacle to Cuba's social and economic development. The monetary cost to the heroic island-nation is immense: more than \$130 billion.

This U.S. war against Cuba persists despite resounding international condemnation June 23rd, for the 29th consecutive time, the global community overwhelmingly stood with Cuba, voting 184 to 2 in the United Nations General Assembly, resoundingly repudiating the U.S. economic war against Cuba as a flagrant violation of international law. Canada stood among those counted in the vast ranks of the world's nations resoundingly rejecting the coercive, unilateral, and extra-territorial U.S. policy. This global isolation was further underscored by the refusal of the vast majority of the world's nations to sign on to the so-called so-called Joint Statement in the wake of the Washington orchestrated July 11 disturbances against Cuba.

Nevertheless, the U.S. war on Cuba continues unabated. Washington flagrantly flaunts international law and opinion, employing an array of coercive measures to force other countries to join in its aggression against the Cuban people. Canada has not been immune from these pressures. For example, in 2017 the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the U.S. Treasury Department fined the American Honda Finance Corporation (AHFC) \$87,255 for approving and financing between February 2011 and March 2014 the leasing by Honda Canada Finance Inc. of 13 cars to the Embassy of Cuba in Canada. Also, in 2020 Western Union Financial Services (Canada), Inc. decided to end the transfer of funds from Canada to Cuba. In a statement to the CBC, the company declared that the decision was



"due to the unique challenges of operating remittance services from countries outside of the United States to Cuba."

This decision not only caused – and is causing – significant damage to people-to-people contacts and Canada-Cuba relations but is also a violation of the sovereignty of Canada by raising U.S. law above that of Canadian law.

Within this context, the Canadian Network on Cuba poses the following questions that should immediately be a focus of the Government of Canada's foreign policy and external relations:

How do you and your party intend to respond to and counter the escalation of Washington's hostility towards Cuba?

What immediate steps will you and your party take to oppose the economic sanctions of the United States against Cuba condemned by the United Nations and several other international organizations?

What concrete measures will you and your party implement to oppose the extraterritorial application of U.S. sanctions against Cuba as they pertain to Canadian businesses and Canadian citizens and, especially regarding the enforcement of the Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act?

Will you and your party support the right of Cuba to the return of the illegally occupied territory of the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay?

Do you and your party support Cuba's right to self-determination and sovereignty, free of any external interference in the island's domestic affairs (i.e., affirming the right of the people of Cuba to determine their own political, economic, and social arrangements without foreign interference)?

Will you and your party condemn the ongoing U.S. campaign of against subversion against the legitimate constitutional order of Cuba?

In 2019, the Government of Canada dramatically and abruptly reduced the staffing of the Canadian embassy in Havana. While many services have been restored, the embassy is still without a full complement, which continues to hamper its ability to function properly:

Will you and your party raise the staffing of the Embassy of Canada in Cuba to its full complement as quickly as it is possible?

Our enquiries are motivated by the reality that Washington's effort to

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 4pm PT / 5pm MT / 6pm CT / 7pm ET / 8pm AT

Link to join via Zoom at
www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/brigade

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 6PM CENTRAL TIME
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ARE

HAVE SURVIVED IN A POST-SOVIET WORLD

CUBA!

HELEN YAFFE



asphyxiate Cuba is an egregious violation of the human rights of the Cuban people and an intolerable violation of the right to self-determination. The CNC resolutely reaffirms the inalienable right of the people of Cuba - and all other peoples - to determine their future and their political, economic, and social system without external interference: a right enshrined

in the United Nations Charter, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international legal instruments.

Irrespective of their political or ideological positions, Canadians stand for the building of genuine friendship with the island nation: relations based on mutual respect, equality, and recognition of Cuba's right to self-determination and sovereignty. This is poignantly illustrated by the financial support for the CNC's Medical Supplies for Cuba Campaign, which

has provided almost two-million syringes to assist Cuba in its country-wide vaccination program.

In closing, we wish to thank you for your consideration of these issues. We look forward to your response to our questions. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
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★ ★ ★ Join the Medical Supplies for Cuba Campaign!

The Canadian Network on Cuba is proud to initiate a vibrant fundraising campaign across Canada to raise \$50,000 for greatly needed medical supplies for Cuba. This will be a 3-month campaign to fill and ship a container with the critical supplies that Cuba needs.
www.CanadianNetworkonCuba.ca



How to Donate via cheque or e-transfer:

1) Make cheque payable to CNC and write on Memo line: medical supplies.

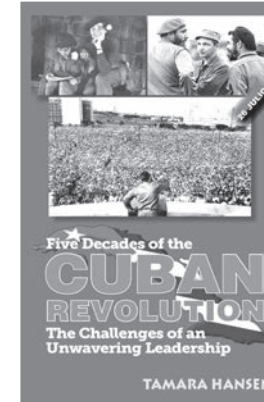
Mail to: CNC c/o Sharon Skup 56 Riverwood Terrace Bolton ON L7E 1S4

2) Send e-transfer to: donate@canadiannetworkoncuba.ca
Mention "medical supplies" in message.

IMPORTANT: and also send an email or phone (905.951.8499 a local call from Toronto) to Sharon with the exact spelling of your secret password/answer and your name so she can then open your e-transfer.

Battle of Ideas Press

5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership



By Tamara Hansen

Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba over a dozen times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.

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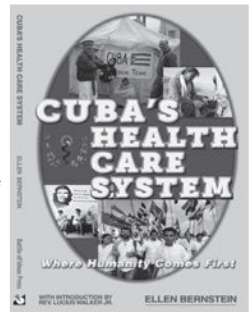
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Battle of Ideas Press

CUBA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM WHERE HUMANITY COMES FIRST BY ELLEN BERNSTEIN

"The unfailing dedication of Cuban health care professionals has led to dramatic improvements in quality of life, for millions of people who previously had no other hope of receiving decent medical care. IFCO/Pastors for Peace is pleased to honor the diligent health care professionals of the Cuban health care system. We especially pay tribute to Cuba's national leadership, whose vision of universal health care as a right of every citizen sets an example for the world."

Ellen Bernstein has served as Associate Director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) since 2003. She has been a key staff member of IFCO's project Pastors for Peace, and has been deeply and integrally involved in IFCO's historic work with Cuba.



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FRIENDS OF CUBA



**AGAINST THE U.S. BLOCKADE
FCAB-VANCOUVER**

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Let's build a movement of car caravan around the world against the U.S. blockade of Cuba.

By Andrew Barry

As 2020 saw the world suffer and struggle against the global Covid-19 pandemic, then U.S. President Donald Trump tightened the grip of the criminal and unjust U.S. blockade on the people of Cuba. As people suffered through the pandemic, the U.S. ramped up its hostility towards Cuba in an effort to weaken and overthrow the independent and sovereign government in Cuba.

For 59 years, the U.S. has imposed a blockade on the people of Cuba, trying desperately to return the government of Cuba to be a lackey for U.S. capitalist interests. This harmful policy that affects almost every aspect of day-to-day life in Cuba stops food, medicine, technologies, etc., to the island of Cuba. 12 U.S. presidents have tried and failed to overthrow the Cuban government through the blockade.

As international tourism dried up during the pandemic, Cuba's economy, of which over 10% is tourism-based, was battered by both the pandemic and the intensification of the U.S. blockade.

For Cuba solidarity activists within the US, Canada and across the world, the pandemic conditions brought a new challenge of how to fight back against the U.S. blockade. Social distancing made traditional street protests less safe as well less effective. Then in the final months of 2020, Cuban-American activist Carlos Lazo, the Coordinator of the anti-blockade group Puentes de Amor, began a new and unconventional form of protest: Car Caravans Against the Blockade!

In Vancouver, Canada, the Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade (FCAB) joined this global campaign

led by Carlos Lazo, and on March 28, 2021, had our first Vancouver Car Caravan for Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade! 18 vehicles and 35 participants drove through the streets of Vancouver with their vehicles plastered with Cuban flags and signs denouncing the genocidal and cruel U.S. blockade on Cuba. 31 countries and 57 cities worldwide joined forces that day in an international day of action against U.S. hostility on the people of Cuba. 7 Car Caravans across Canada participated, including Vancouver, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and Victoria.

The following month on April 25th, saw Vancouver's 2nd monthly Car Caravan, which again was part of Car Caravans' international day of action against the U.S. blockade on Cuba.

Every month since then, on the last Sunday of the month, Vancouver has joined this international effort to oppose and bring down this failed U.S. policy of aggression and blockade against the people of Cuba.

Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade supported the dynamic effort of Carlos Lazo as, in July, he marched over 2000km from Miami, Florida, all the way to Washington DC! Carlos arrived on July 25th to take part in Washington's day of action Car Caravan, an international day of action that we here in Vancouver participated in with our Caravan!

Vancouver and Canada as a whole have joined the United States, Cuba, Venezuela, Mexico, Panama, Tunisia, South Africa, India, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, Italy and over 30 other countries during these Car Caravans Against the U.S. Blockade on Cuba. Momentum for the Caravans has grown, especially after the June 23 vote at the United Nations

General Assembly, where the world stood united with the people of Cuba in condemning the blockade. 184 countries voted with Cuba against the blockade, while the only 2 to vote in favour of the U.S. blockade on Cuba were the United States and Israel!

However, the U.S. has not backed down in this international isolation it faces with its blockade campaign against Cuba. On July 11 U.S. backed incidents within Cuba that saw acts of vandalism and sabotage provided the U.S. government with the excuse to intensify the blockade and put more sanctions on the people of Cuba. Without recognizing the irony, the U.S. implemented new sanctions on Cuba, arguing that they imposed the new acts of hostility to defend Cuban people's right to protest while at the same time U.S. police and state agents have been systematically killing and terrorizing black people and immigrants within the United States.

As people in Cuba continue to suffer from the U.S. blockade on their nation, it has become crucial for peace-loving people worldwide to unite to defend Cuba against these attacks. Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade will continue to mobilize and organize on the streets of Vancouver or with online events until the cruel and unjust blockade comes to an end. As traditional forms of protest continue to be difficult to organize, the Car Caravans Against the Blockade have opened up as a unique form of expression to denounce and oppose U.S. hostility on the people of Cuba. We will continue, and we encourage you to join the campaign! Let's build a movement of car caravan around the world against the U.S. blockade of Cuba. The U.S. blockade on Cuba is illegal, inhuman, and immoral.

Lift the Blockade on Cuba Now!

Andrew Barry - @andrewbarry
Vancouver Cuba Car Caravan
Coordinator

