

April 17, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada
K1A 0A6

via email - justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to encourage the Government of Canada to take the right decision, particularly during this pandemic, and support actions that will encourage the United States government to end its economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba and the Cuban people.

For decades Canada has encouraged respectful and cooperative relations with Cuba and supported United Nations resolutions calling for an end to this more than 60-year old blockade.

Now, as the world faces an unprecedented pandemic, humanitarian actions are more important than ever.

Cuba for example, has extended support to many countries during this pandemic, despite its limited resources and the impact of the US blockade on its country.

It is now known, and internationally well-documented, that Cuba and its people are contributing and supporting several countries in the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic. Cuba has sent doctors and health care professionals to 15 different countries including Italy, Andorra, Jamaica, Barbados, Saint Lucia, Surinam, to mention a few.

As well, many of the doctors who have graduated from Cuba's Latin-American Medical School after receiving tuition-free education are now working on the front lines in hospitals around the world, including hospitals in New York City. The Latin-American Medical School has trained many medical students who would not have otherwise been able to afford the hefty tuition fees charged at universities in countries like the United States or Canada.

As well, not long ago, in a remarkable humanitarian gesture, Cuba allowed the British cruise ship, MS Braemar, to dock at the port of Mariel located west of Havana. The Cuban government sent personnel to assist the crew and passengers to disembark and to return home safely — and all of this when many other countries in the region refused to help. Recently, 51 elected representatives of the British Parliament requested that Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab speak directly with his counterpart in the United States government to ask that the blockade and embargo against Cuba and its people be suspended, at least temporarily.

Despite this blockade, Cuban scientists have been working very hard for decades to produce medicines and treatments to keep the Cuban people healthy. Treatments for diabetic foot ulcers utilizing the Cuban product Heberprot-P have been very successful. Cuban researchers have also produced a lung cancer vaccine, CimaVax-EGF, which is accessible in many nations. Meanwhile, US patients cannot get CimaVax-EGF without breaking American law.

Cuban health professionals have also developed the anti-viral treatment Interferon Alpha 2B Recombinant. This “wonder drug” has been successful as a treatment for patients infected with COVID-19 and its expansion as a therapy is being considered in many countries. It is reported that more than 15 countries have ordered Interferon Alpha 2B Recombinant from Cuba.

For all of the reasons stated, and many not mentioned here, we are asking the Canadian government to act quickly and request directly that the United States government remove its blockade against the Cuban people.

Sincerely and respectfully

Rolando Hernandez
Organizing Group for the
Association of Cubans Residing in Ottawa

c.c. The Honourable Patty Hadju, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0A6 — via email - patty.Hajdu@parl.gc.ca