NEWSLETTER
Amistad
Issue 47.5

Sep/Oct 2026 ★ Bi-monthly newsletter of the Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto ★

The Canadian Network on Cuba has launched an online parliamentarian petition.



We, the undersigned, citizens and residents of Canada, call upon the Government of Canada to:

1. Deepen and defend economic and cultural exchanges between Canada and Cuba in the face of United States aggression;

2. Enforce the Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act, to protect Canadian corporations who do business in Cuba against United States sanctions;

3. Lift the Government of Canada's advisory against non-essential travel to Cuba and expand opportunities for tourism and trade; and

4. Reaffirm Canada's historic opposition to the United States embargo against Cuba at the United Nations and support the annual resolution on the Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo.

Some of you may have seen it and signed already, but we wanted to share with everyone that e-petition 7649 which closes on October 11th. We ask that you circulate it far and wide. Here is the link to sign:

tinyurl.com/NoWarOnCubaPetition





CCFA Toronto's 2026

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, November

Details to follow

★ CCFA TORONTO UPDATES

Photos from the Moncada Day on July 26. We hope you enjoyed the celebration!



















Cuba Documents Another Year of Economic Siege



At a maternity hospital in Cuba, anesthesiologist Dr. Yudmila Rodríguez Verdecia describes what happens when electricity fails during an operation.

"The surgery cannot be stopped. We have had to keep operating under the glow of cell phone flashlights," she says in Cuba's latest annual report to the United Nations.

The Cuban government calculates that U.S. economic warfare caused $8.083 billion in damage between March 2025 and February 2026, bringing its estimate of the cumulative cost of U.S. policy since Cuba's 1959 revolution to $178.7 billion.

In addition to the six-decade-old embargo, the report points to a web of financial restrictions, the State Sponsors of Terrorism designation, the 1996 Helms-Burton Act and a de facto oil blockade that restrict access to essential goods and services.

Licet Rodríguez Alonso, who accompanies her son Diego between Villa Clara and Havana for cancer care, says fuel shortages from the U.S. oil blockade make her worry if his treatment can continue.

"Diego is in radiation [therapy], but there's no fuel," she says. "How will those machines run?"

Other medical supplies are already in Cuba but cannot reliably reach patients. According to the report, more than 30,000 children have been unable to receive vaccinations on schedule because fuel shortages have disrupted refrigerated transport, leaving medications stuck in warehouses.

The lack of fuel also affects food production. During the growing season ending in early 2026, irrigation operated for an average of just two hours a day rather than the 16 hours needed, the report says.

Meanwhile, UN agencies cited in the report describe disrupted shipments of more than 2,900 metric tons of food aid and $630,000 worth of medical supplies.

Shipping companies Hapag-Lloyd (Germany) and CMA CGM (France) stopped accepting new shipments to Cuba following Trump's May 1 executive order threatening "secondary sanctions" on foreign companies doing business with blacklisted Cuban entities.

The report also identifies obstacles to buying and maintaining medical equipment. It says that due to payment restrictions and sanctions threats, the price of Japanese-made Olympus endoscopy equipment costs ten times more in Cuba than in other Latin American countries.

Baxter Healthcare (U.S.) and Vitalmex Interamericana (Mexico) cited the blockade in refusing to continue doing business with Cuba, while U.S.-made cardiac pumps remain "out of reach" to children with severe heart conditions.

The report describes a shortage of working Braille machines for blind students. Meanwhile, deaf students are unable to access cochlear implants because of broken components or missing batteries.

Source: Anthony Brenner, The Cuban Handshake
Published on Sep 10, 2026

The US Blockade Against Cuba in Figures

8 MINUTES OF BLOCKADE
Amount to the annual funding needed for special education programs serving children and youth with hearing impairments ($129,500)

13 MINUTESOF BLOCKADE
Equal the amount of resources required nationwide for children with visual disabilities ($203,970)

16 MINUTES OF BLOCKADE
Equal the yearly expense of acquiring Nusinersen, the medication used to treat infantile spinal atrophy ($250,000)

46 MINUTES OF BLOCKADE
Represent the cost of importing parts from distant markets to repair or replace water pumping equipment ($714,400.)

3 HOURS OF BLOCKADE
Amount to the funds needed to cover infertility treatment abroad for 109 couples ($2,900,000)

3 DAYS OF BLOCKADE
Equal the investment required to modernize Cuba's banking system with new technology ($65,000,000)

4 DAYS OF BLOCKADE
Equal the cost of importing all the fuel needed to meet the country's economic demand ($78,510,000)

Read the full report to the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) by the government of Cuba at **cubaminrex.cu**

Marco Rubio: A Poetic Verdict for a Traitor



Your name, Marco Rubio, echoes through the courtyard of history like the shameful echo of one who sold his cradle for a seat in office. Every law you push for, every blockade you applaud, is not foreign policy: it is a noose slowly tightening around the neck of your own flesh and blood.

The hunger you sow from afar, the economic suffocation you celebrate in Miami offices, are inscribed in invisible ink in the record of a silent genocide that humanity will not forget. You believe that power shields you, but the power you wield is a house of cards built upon the suffering of others; a fleeting flash on the empire's screen that tomorrow, when the wind changes direction, will sweep you away without mercy.

The reckoning will not come in dollars or votes, but in the relentless currency of historical justice. Your pedestal crumbles with every step you take, because perpetrators of genocide never find solid ground on which to rest.

While you cling to an agenda that reeks of the corpses of a people, the heart of Cuba beats with a strength that your eyes, clouded by resentment, cannot see. Soon—very soon—the official silence will be broken, and your hollow voice will be buried under the weight of your own lies. Your position of power will dissipate like the morning mist, and not even your political patrons will be able to save from contempt the one who spat on the table of their ancestors.

But, oh, Marco Rubio! While you fade into the oblivion of the stateless, Cuba's dignity will remain intact, standing tall and defiant in the face of the hurricane. That dignity cannot be bought by your lobbyists, nor can it be broken by your embargoes or tarnished by your speeches. It burns in every young person who dreams without your permission, it blossoms in every mother who nourishes her children with the courage you lack, and it shines in the bare feet that stride firmly toward the future.

The homeland is neither negotiable nor for sale, and even if your time on the political stage runs out amid artificial applause, the lone star will shine eternally upon the chest of a people whom neither genocide nor treason will ever be able to subdue.

May history judge you, may time condemn you, and may the light of Cuba dazzle you until it blinds your fleeting ambition!

Silvio Rodríguez

2026 Calixto Garcia Solidarity Brigade

NOV 29 - DEC 11

Calling all trade unionists, labour activists, students, educators, health and social service workers, community organizers, social justice activists, artists, writers, cultural workers and anyone committed to international solidarity and learning from Cuba's experience.

Open to all ages and backgrounds - no experience needed - just curiosity and solidarity.

We are extending the date for payment of the brigade to the end of October but we need to know as soon as possible if you are interested. This will ensure a spot in the 2024 Brigade. The payment is 100% refundable if you need to cancel before October 31st 2024.

Reminder* the prices quoted below will include all accommodation, a mandatory comprehensive health insurance plan and our Brigade's T-shirt. The quoted price will NOT include airfare to and from Cuba. Thank you again for your support!!! Helps us share this information!!

Double occupancy:	$1,480 CDN plus airfare
Single occupancy:	$1,590 CDN plus airfare

Email: calixtogarciabrigade@gmail.com
to request the registration form
Facebook: Calixto Garcia Solidarity



We'd love to hear from you! If you have articles, editorials, or letters you'd like us to share, send them to **canadiancubanfriendshiptoronto@gmail.com** before August 15th (indicate "**Amistad Submission**" in the subject line). Please keep it under 1,200 words.

Abel Prieto: "We are fighting a very powerful enemy, but not an all-powerful one"

Interview with the president of the Casa de las Américas, Abel Prieto Jimenez



A writer, essayist, and one of the leading figures in Cuban cultural policy in recent decades, Abel Prieto Jiménez served for many years as president of the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC), was Minister of Culture from 1997 to 2012 and from 2016 to 2018, and served as an advisor to the leadership of the Revolution. Since 2019, he has presided over Casa de las Américas. His intellectual and political career has been closely linked to Fidel Castro and the major debates surrounding culture, identity, hegemony, and decolonization.

On the centennial of Fidel Castro's birth, NODAL speaks with Abel Prieto at a particularly complex moment for Cuba, Latin America, and the Caribbean: an intensification of the U.S. offensive against the island, an energy and economic crisis, internal transformations within Cuban society, the rise of the new right and neo-fascist movements, the concentration of media and technological power, and a profound reconfiguration of the global landscape.

What tools Fidel's thought still offers for understanding this historic moment, and what political, cultural, and organizational conditions are necessary to build revolutionary projects capable of representing the vast majority—these are the central questions from which Prieto, within the framework of the celebrations marking Fidel's centennial, shares his reflections, going beyond mere remembrance and tribute to the Latin American revolutionary leader.

Cuba is going through a particularly complex period, marked by an intensification of the imperialist offensive. What concrete facts and figures allow us to gauge its scope today? Is the term "blockade" still sufficient to describe what is happening?

What we are dealing with now is a large-scale suffocation campaign. The word "blockade" falls short. They have drastically curtailed the ability to import fuel; but also to import food, raw materials for manufacturing medicines, medical equipment—everything, absolutely everything. They have exerted enormous pressure to dismantle Cuban medical cooperation in Latin American and Caribbean countries and have managed to bring several governments to their knees. They have brought tourism to a standstill; foreign companies that had been working with us for years have pulled out, fearing retaliation from the U.S. government; they threaten anyone who wants to sell us oil or anything else.

Several shipping lines and airlines have suspended their ties with Cuba. Seven thousand containers of basic goods destined for our country have been stranded at various points throughout the Caribbean.

The U.S. government has imposed sanctions on Cuban companies with the aim of damaging essential sectors. It has also targeted organizations and even individuals, such as our Minister of Public Health. This is sickening and insane.

They have caused the infant mortality rate to double, left tens of thousands of Cubans waiting for months for surgery, and forced us to endure extremely difficult conditions. They hope that by punishing the Cuban people in this way—pushing them to the limit so cruelly—the expected "social upheaval" will occur; that is, that the people will rise up against the government, thereby providing a pretext for a "humanitarian intervention."

On the contrary, I believe that the majority of our population has become more radicalized and is now more anti-imperialist than ever. There may be some confused people—those who think the Yankees need to come once and for all and "solve the problem"—but those who are confused or won over to "the Yankee solution" are a minority. The vast majority of the Cuban people know full well who is responsible for this ruthless blockade and are prepared to defend their Revolution at all costs. That people would never accept a return to the colonial status from which we freed ourselves in 1959.

It is the people who actively participate in preparing to defend the country. Now, in Cuba, every week, every Friday, a National Day of Defense is organized, based on a concept created by Fidel and Raúl during the Reagan era, when we were on the verge of being invaded by the Yankees: "the War of the Entire People," as Fidel dubbed a defensive concept that involves the mass participation of the people in the response to a military invasion—from communities, from neighborhoods, from defense zones.

On August 25, Trump signed an extension of the embargo against Cuba through September 2027, under the Trading with the Enemy Act, and that very same day, scientists at the Center for Molecular Immunology (CIM) announced the creation of a new drug for the treatment of cancer. And this very week, amid such a complex situation, the start of a new school year on September 1 in all the country's schools and the continuation of the International Book Fair in the central

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rovinces made headlines.

On the one hand, we are preparing to confront imperialism in its fiercest and most dangerous form and its absurd accusations that we represent "a threat to its national security." On the other hand, we are constantly seeking creative ways to move forward in science, medicine, education, culture, and the economy, through the implementation of the reforms approved in July by the National Assembly.

This offensive also has a communications dimension. What should Latin America and the world know today about the reality in Cuba that psychological warfare and the communications blockade seek to hide?

They use lies all the time, without any shame—toward the entire world in general and, specifically, toward the Cuban people. They repeat over and over that Cuba is a "failed state," that it is the government's inefficiency and corruption that cause shortages, deprivations, and paralysis.

Díaz-Canel has said it many times: Why are they trying to suffocate us if we're so inefficient? Why don't they let us fail on our own? Wouldn't it be more instructive for us to fail on our own to prove that socialism doesn't work?

They constantly deny the achievements of the Revolution. They distort our history and paint a picture of Havana in the 1950s as a dazzling, "glamorous" (that little word) city, full of cars and neon lights, where Hollywood stars came to have fun on the weekends. Of course, the dark side of that Havana—the side of brutal repression, of misery, of racism, of the mafia, of children without schools or medical care, of unsanitary neighborhoods—does not appear in those fables crafted with artificial intelligence.

This kind of reinterpretation of history is taking place on a global scale. And neo-fascism has a strong interest in whitewashing the image of Franco, Mussolini, Hitler, and—going much further back—the European conquerors and colonizers who committed genocide against indigenous peoples and perpetuated African slavery. Remember that Trump declared October 13 Columbus Day and stressed the need to rescue the figure of the "Discoverer" from the avalanche of insults from the "far left," referring to the anti-racist Black Lives Matter movement. Even Giorgia Meloni, when she was at the UN in 2023, went with her press team to lay a wreath at Columbus's monument.

We must bear in mind that this media campaign against us is taking place amid a widespread cultural crisis, a grave intellectual regression, and an offensive aimed at dumbing down millions of people.

Social media doesn't encourage you to analyze, reason, or evaluate a problem—quite the opposite. It manipulates you emotionally and drags you into reacting with anger, with uncontrollable rage, and into joining the wave of hatred against "the other"—the communist, the immigrant, the feminist, the gay person, the Arab, the Black person, the Muslim, and so on. Fascism has benefited the most from this irrational climate.

In the face of the advance of the right wing and new forms of domination, what is the main challenge today in building a revolutionary, anti-imperialist, and socialist project in Latin America and the Caribbean capable of representing and organizing the vast majority?

We must halt the ideological and cultural onslaught of imperialism and fascism—which are currently on the offensive—pool our forces, unite, organize, and work very hard to prepare our people so that we may be capable of "emancipating ourselves by our own efforts," as Fidel put it. We must foster a critical, well-founded, and analytical way of thinking in the face of frivolity and irrationalism—a way of thinking that is expressed through that critical, every day, indispensable instinct—and launch a full-scale counteroffensive.

There is talk of more than 30,000 deaths in Europe due to the heat wave in 2026, and yet climate change is not taken seriously. Capitalism has been the planet's most terrible predator, and that must be our cause—the cause of the left. In the "common sense" promoted by the right, there is no room to "philosophize" about something as abstract and distant as the end of the human species.

Remember that there are theorists of fascism who read Gramsci very carefully. And there are many others who have not read him and will not read him—yet who effectively apply "Gramscian" tools.

"Without culture, there can be no freedom," Fidel used to say, paraphrasing Martí, and in the battle against fascist stupidity and arrogance, we must elevate the culture of our people. Culture is not a mere ornament.

"The trenches of ideas are worth more than the trenches of stone," Martí asserted. It falls to us to build those trenches of ideas through every means at our disposal.

We must understand that this war is global; it belongs to the entire South, and to the South that dwells in the very heart of the North. We must join forces with all those who refuse to accept the status of "inferiors" and "disposable people" attributed to us by the supremacist and perverted elite of multimillionaires in the North.

That call for unity among the "proletarians of all countries" remains relevant; though now we must rally all the "losers"—

Continued on the next page

whether they are proletarians, the unemployed, the underemployed, retirees, migrants, or people living on the streets, Christians or Muslims, atheists or spiritualists, heterosexuals, bisexuals, homosexuals, the sick without health insurance—all those whom neoliberalism has brutally cast aside and condemned to "lose all hope," as the sign Dante imagined for the gates of Hell read.

We are fighting a very powerful enemy; but it is not all-powerful. And, as we know, it is a giant in decline with feet of clay. Fidel taught us that every revolutionary must be optimistic and confident of victory.

Source: Emilia Trabucco for NODAL (Noticias de América Latina y el Caribe). Translated by Resumen Latinoamericano, Published on September 5, 2026. Edited for length. Full article on resumen-english.org/2026/09/abel-prieto

Mobile cinema as a form of resistance



The growing success of Cuban Film Institute's relaunch of the Cine Móvil (Mobile Cinema) project last year is having an impact across the island. The initiative has its roots in the early days of the revolution, when ICAIC established a mobile cinema department, sending trucks equipped with projectors to some of the country's most remote communities.

Octavio Cortázar's short documentary For the First Time captures the wonder and delight of a community encountering cinema for the first time. This time around, a local organiser explained that, in Bayamo, "We have already reached several communities where the viewer has never actually been to a movie theatre before. Our intention is to take the movies out of the theatre and into the community."

As electricity outages and lack of repairs have closed cinemas across the island in recent years, ICAIC has responded. Today, projectors and mobile cinema screens, including inflatable ones, are arriving in rural communities, town squares and former sugar-mill settlements all over Cuba.

Audiences are enjoying films despite regular power cuts that plunge their neighbourhood into darkness. Not only using generators, a team from ICAIC and the film collective Rueda Producciones has also developed a system of solar inverters that allows screenings to continue using built-in batteries, charged by solar panels.

The project has revitalised public spaces from Havana to Santiago, kept culture alive and brought together young and older generations, with a diverse programme of films, including films designed for children and teenagers. Local cultural institutions have been able to expand the programme to incorporate music, theatre, dance, circus acts and involve local artists. It is a revival of the philosophy of the original mobile cinema: "… when it sheds its seats and walls, it recovers its most basic and necessary function—that of being an encounter, a community, a shared wonder under the open sky."

Initially, last summer, it started with a permanent screen set up on Lenin Hill in Regla, and another on 23rd Street between 10th and 12th, in front of the office of ICAIC (Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry), with their own generators, to be immune to power outages. Meanwhile the Mobile Cinema truck was reactivated, visiting communities, such as El Fanguito, on the outskirts of Havana.

Gradually more mobile screens popped up in parks outside cinemas in the 10 de Octubre municipality. In Villa Clara, the inflatable screens went to the Quintín Banderas community in the Corralillo municipality and the Panchito Gómez Toro community in Quemado de Güines, as part of a tour of small, remote communities. In Santiago de Cuba, Mobile Cinema visited, among other communities, the town of Boniato and the San Luis municipality.

Also in Holguín, Granma, Pinar del Río, Camagüey, and Guantánamo, screens and video projectors reached wherever needed to provide a cultural and entertainment option during blackouts. In Guantánamo, for example, at the Huambo cinema, they took the projector out onto the porch and managed to bring movies to the audience.

Screenings and cultural activities took place at the San Carlos Cinema in Morón (Ciego de Ávila), the Jigüe Cinema in Corralillo, the Meca Cinema and the Hermanos Barcón Video Room in Pinar del Río, and the Ayacucho Cinema in Consolación del Sur, also in Pinar del Río.

The Provincial Film Center in Granma managed to provide backup power to the Céspedes Cinema, and Camagüey did the same. More cinemas such as the Yaguajay Cinema (Sancti Spíritus), the Martí Cinema (Holguín), the Meca Cinema in San Juan y Martínez (Pinar del Río), and several theaters in Villa Clara also managed to stay open to show films using back up generators. Last year, the ICAIC announced more than 3,900 screenings had taken place in 180 cinemas during July despite energy difficulties, and with a record attendance of more than 128,000 spectators.

Source: Cubacine ICAIC

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CCFA Toronto Statement

The Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto is active in promoting friendship, respect, and co-operation between Canadian and Cuban peoples. We work with other Canadian groups and international organizations.

Our activities aim to:

- Provide information and organize events related to Cuba for the public and media, focusing on culture, health, education, sports, and Canada-Cuba relations
- Counteract the deliberate misinformation about Cuba spread by the U.S.
- End the illegal U.S. blockade of Cuba and defend Cuban and Canadian sovereignty from U.S. interference

About Amistad

Amistad is the newsletter of the CCFA Toronto, posted six times a year with volunteer labour. The Editorial Committee reserves the right to edit submitted material. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Editorial Committee.

We encourage everyone interested to submit media articles, editorial ideas, and letters.
Email canadiancubanfriendshiptoronto@gmail.com
Deadlines are the 15th of even months.

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