

Cuban Medical Teams for 2021 Nobel Peace Prize

The Council of Canadians' statement on nominating Cuban international health teams for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize.

By [Council of Canadians](#)

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At the June 2020 Annual Meeting, Council of Canadians' members voted to endorse and promote a Canadian nominating process for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize to go the Henry Reeve medical teams from Cuba for their international work in the context of COVID-19.

In 2005, Cuba's leaders looked ahead and saw a world increasingly beset by pandemics and natural disasters. This led them to initiate a program to train professional medical personnel to be able to respond quickly to emergency requests from other nations. This initiative resulted in the mobilization of thousands of Cuban medical personnel with the skills and training to deal with a variety of global calamities, known as the Henry Reeve brigades.

When COVID-19 hit in 2020, Cuba responded to emergency requests for trained medical personnel by sending 53 health teams to 39 countries on four continents. The health teams were able to assist countries with fragile health systems that were ill-equipped to deal with COVID-19.

Cuba's response to COVID-19 eclipses all other front-line efforts from industrialized nations in the fight against COVID-19. This response is more remarkable given that the island nation has been under a decades-long embargo by the United States of America. The U.S. State Department has made it known since the beginning of the pandemic that they might retaliate against any country receiving Cuban medical personnel. Only one country has capitulated to these threats from the U.S., and that country is Canada.

We are fortunate to have Dr. John Kirk as the nominator. As an expert on Cuba's humanitarian efforts and its medical internationalism and a professor at Dalhousie University's Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies, Dr. Kirk easily meets all of the strict requirements outlined by Oslo for those individuals heading up a nomination process for the Nobel Peace Prize. [Read Dr. Kirk's nomination.](#)

The Council of Canadians fully supports this nomination effort, and are honoured to be working in solidarity with the endorsers listed below.

Individual Canadian endorsers for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize Nomination for the international work of Cuban medical personnel

- **The Hon. Lloyd Axworthy** – Canadian politician, elder statesman and academic served as Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs under P.M. Chretien, invested as a Companion of the Order of Canada and honoured at a sacred pipe

ceremony as Waappski Pinaysee Inini (Free Range Frog Man), Chair of the World Refugee Council, among other prestigious international and academic positions;

- **Dr. Anna Banerji** - Pediatrics and infectious disease specialist and Associate Professor at University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine, Faculty lead for Indigenous and Refugee Health, invested in the Order of Ontario, 2014 Women's Courage Award International, among other citations;
- **Jane Bunnett** - Flautist, saxophonist and bandleader and jazz legend is a five-time Juno Award winner, invested in The Order of Canada and has more than a dozen albums featuring Cuban music, jazz, and classical as well as dance and pop music;
- **John Cartwright** - Chairperson of the Council of Canadians Board of Directors and a long-time labour leader and social justice advocate. He is also the President of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council, and over the years helped develop the Campaign for Public Education, Public Transit for the Public Good, the Toronto Waterwatch and Toronto Hydro campaigns as well as crafting the "Green Jobs Strategy" for the Canadian Labour Congress.
- **George Elliot Clarke** - Canadian poet, playwright and literary critic, known for chronicling the experience and history of the Black Canadian communities of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick ("Africadia"), has served as Poet Laureate of Toronto and Canadian Parliamentary Poet Laureate, appointed to the Order of Nova Scotia and as an Officer of the Order of Canada, and has received many other distinctions;
- **Bruce Cockburn** - Canadian roots-rock legend, 13-time Juno Award winner, Officer of the Order of Canada, recipient of the Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement, recipient of the environmental Earth Day Award, and many others honours;
- **Elizabeth Hay** - Prize winning author of numerous novels, short stories, non fiction and essays. Among many honours, she was the co-winner of the Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-Fiction, received the Ottawa Book Award, won the Giller Prize in 2007, was accorded the 2012 Diamond Jubilee Medal, and most recently won the Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction. Elizabeth worked for ten years as a CBC radio broadcaster in Yellowknife, and also did radio documentaries for CBC's Sunday Morning.
- **The Rt. Hon. Michaëlle Jean** - Canadian stateswoman, journalist and a refugee from Haiti, was the 27th Governor General of Canada and the third Secretary-General of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, named member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, and has received many Appointments, Medals, and Awards as well as multiple Honorary degrees;
- **Dr. Noni E. MacDonald** - Paediatrics infectious disease specialist and Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at Dalhousie University, invested in the Order of Nova Scotia and in the Order of Canada, and recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Canadian Society for International Health, among other honours;
- **MP Elizabeth May** - Canadian politician who served as leader of the Green Party of Canada from 2006 to 2019. An environmentalist, author, activist and lawyer, May founded and served as Executive Director of the Sierra Club of Canada from 1989 to 2006. Elizabeth has been an officer of the Order of Canada since 2005, and has been named by the United Nations as one of the leading women environmentalists worldwide, among other citations.
- **Senator Pierrette Ringuette** - The first francophone woman to be elected to

the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick. In the 1993 federal election she won a seat in the House of Commons of Canada as a Liberal Member of Parliament. In 2002 she was appointed to the Senate on the recommendation of Prime Minister Jean Chretien. In 2007 she received the grade of Officer of the Ordre de la Pleiade in recognition of her contribution to the development of francophone and Acadian culture. In 2016 she chose to sit as part of the Independent Senators Group. Senator Ringuette continues to be a member of several standing committees and is currently a Counselor of The Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas, Co-Chair of the Canada-Cuba Inter-Parliamentary Group.

- **Svend Robinson** - Canadian politician and Member of Parliament for the New Democratic Party, a strong environmentalist and outspoken advocate for the rights of indigenous peoples both in Canada and internationally, he was adopted into the Haida Nation ("White Swan"), J.S. Woodsworth Resident Scholar at Simon Fraser University, and among several awards...the Elena Iberoamerican Award on Ethics and the Hero Award, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity;
- **David T. Suzuki** - Canadian academic, science broadcaster and environmental activist is a Companion of the Order of Canada and invested in the Order of British Columbia, recipient of the Right Livelihood Award and has been awarded honorary degrees from over two dozen universities around the world, and is the host the CBC's long running series The Nature of Things;

Organizational Canadian endorsers for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize Nomination for the international work of Cuban medical personnel

- [Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research](#)
- [Canadian Society for International Health](#)
- [Canadian Union of Postal Workers \(CUPW\)](#)
- [Canadian Union of Public Employees \(CUPE\)](#)
- [Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice](#)
- [Common Frontiers](#)
- [Council of Canadians](#)
- [Canadian Union of Postal Workers \(CUPW\)](#)
- Peace Brigades International - Canada
- [Public Service Alliance of Canada \(PSAC\)](#)
- [Sisters of Providence of Saint Vincent de Paul](#)
- [Unifor](#)
- [United Church of Canada](#)
- [United Steelworkers \(USW\)](#)

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