

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**National Media Contact:**  
**Sobia Khan** 519-749-8491 Ext. 130  
[skhan@huntingtonsociety.ca](mailto:skhan@huntingtonsociety.ca)

### **#LightItUp4HD in Manitoba**

(KITCHENER, ON) May 16, 2017 – May is Huntington Disease Awareness Month and volunteers are spreading the word, educating Canadians about Huntington disease (HD) and how they can help the thousands of Canadian families affected by this devastating disease.

Since 2015, volunteers from across Canada have been illuminating various buildings, monuments and statues during the month of May to raise the visibility of Huntington disease (HD) and Juvenile Huntington disease (JHD) in blue and purple lights. When the sun set on May 4<sup>th</sup> in 2015, thousands of Canadians saw the CN Tower illuminate, the first ever site to engage in Light It Up 4 HD, and in turn the HD community lit up with pride. Thanks to the enthusiasm of the HD community and the many HD volunteers, LightItUp4HD will be lighting up buildings, monuments and statues across Canada during the month of May 2017.

Brett Mitchell is courageously and enthusiastically spreading the word by lighting up The Merchants Hotel on May 26, 2017 in Selkirk, Manitoba. Many thanks to him for helping to spread the word about Huntington disease. The Merchants Hotel will be lit up in purple and blue and will hold a “LIGHT IT UP FOR HD FUNDRAISER” on Friday May 26<sup>th</sup>. Three acts will perform beginning at 8pm with folk artist Kalyna Morrow-Lytke, followed at 9pm by classic rock/country acoustic duo Double Bourbon then finally at 11pm Bad House Highway will rock the house until closing time.

Volunteers have reached out to HD organizations from around the world and have invited them to “LightItUp4HD”. Scotland, Germany, Spain, Ireland, and the United States, are just some of the countries working to #LightItUp4HD this May.

For so many years, HD has been kept secret in families due to stigma and discrimination. #LightItUp4HD is an opportunity to raise awareness, make connections, garner support from Canadians, and move forward with pride and dignity.

Volunteers have worked diligently for several months to secure an impressive list of sites that will be illuminating their lighting infrastructure for HD in May 2017. Their goal is to have at least one monument, building, bridge or building illuminated in each province or territory in Canada. As each confirmation is received, the list continues to grow and enthusiasm spreads for the #LightItUp4HD campaign.

“Seeing national and global monuments light up in the colours representative of HD and JHD is a great way to gain a better understanding of the impact of HD on generations of families,” says Sobia Khan, Communications Coordinator at the Huntington Society of Canada. “It means so much to the families impacted by HD to not only see nationwide recognition of HD and JHD, but around the world as well.”

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The Huntington Society wants to educate Canadians about the disease by lighting up significant national monuments. The more people that understand the disease, the more they can accept those who are impacted and extend support. The month of May is designated as Huntington Disease Awareness Month, the Society, together with the volunteers, invite Canadians to learn more about Huntington disease and Juvenile Huntington disease.

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**Huntington disease (HD)** is a debilitating brain disorder that is fatal and incurable. About one in every 7,000 Canadians has HD and approximately one in every 5,500 is at-risk of developing the disease. Many more are touched by HD whether as a caregiver, a family member, or a friend. HD causes cells in specific parts of the brain to die. As the disease progresses, a person with Huntington disease becomes less able to manage movements, recall events, make decisions and control emotions. The disease leads to incapacitation and, eventually, death. Many describe the symptoms of HD as having ALS, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's – simultaneously.

The **Huntington Society of Canada (HSC)** is a respected leader in the worldwide effort to end Huntington disease. HSC is the only Canadian health charity dedicated to providing help and hope for families dealing with Huntington disease across Canada.

**Media Contact:**

Sobia Khan  
Communications Coordinator  
Huntington Society of Canada  
1-800-998-7398 Ext. 130  
skhan@huntingtonsociety.ca