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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***Senate Leader of the Opposition re-tables Bill to End Genetic Discrimination in Canada***

(Kitchener, ON) October 18, 2013 – Yesterday, the Honourable James S Cowan QC, Leader of the Opposition in the Senate re-tabled the Genetic Non-Discrimination Act, (Bill S 201) a comprehensive Bill in the Senate to end Genetic Discrimination in Canada.

The federal government identified genetic discrimination in its Speech from the Throne 2013, delivered on October 16, by the Governor General, as a priority over the next two years. This proposed legislation will facilitate this very important work.

"We applaud the government for identifying genetic discrimination as a problem, and showing the leadership required to make this a priority," said Bev Heim-Myers, Chair of the Canadian Coalition for Genetic Fairness and CEO & Executive Director, Huntington Society of Canada. "This will benefit all Canadians. We look forward to working with the government to stop the practice of employers and insurance companies discriminating against Canadians on the basis of genetic information."

Though other countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and many other EU countries, have taken important steps towards eliminating genetic discrimination, Canada has fallen behind.

The CCGF applauds The Honourable James S. Cowan for introducing this Bill to bring the necessary level of protection to Canadians, aiming to ensure that genetic information is used properly without fear of repercussion. This would ensure that genetic information is used for health and research purposes only.

The issue is a critical one. As research advances, more and more is being discovered about the genetic origins of disease and disability, including who might get what disease some day. "Our practices in business, commerce, health and research must ensure that personal complicated genetic information is used for the benefit of all Canadians", says Bev Heim-Myers. "Who among us has perfect genes?" Heim-Myers points out. "Everyone could be at risk."

SUMMARY of the Genetic Non-Discrimination Act (S-201 - An Act to prohibit and prevent genetic discrimination): This enactment prohibits any person from requiring an individual to undergo a genetic test or disclose the results of a genetic test as a condition of providing goods or services to, entering into or continuing a contract with, or offering specific conditions in a contract with, the individual. Exceptions are provided for medical practitioners and researchers, as well as for insurance providers in respect of high-value insurance contracts if provincial laws expressly permit a requirement that existing genetic test results be disclosed.

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The enactment amends the *Canada Labour Code* to protect employees from being required to undergo or to disclose the results of a genetic test, and provides employees with other protections related to genetic testing and test results. It also amends the *Canadian Human Rights Act* to prohibit discrimination on the ground of genetic characteristics.

The Huntington Society of Canada is the founding organization of the Canadian Coalition for Genetic Fairness (CCGF). CCGF is dedicated to preventing genetic discrimination for all Canadians. Canada is currently the only G8 country that does not protect its citizens against genetic discrimination.

“Huntington disease (HD) is a human rights issue. The idea of overcoming stigma and working together to obtain the human rights and human dignity that every person in the world is entitled to is one of the many things that the global HD Community has to fight for.” explains Dr. Ed Wild, Cambridge University, Editor-in-Chief, HDBuzz.net

Members of CCGF/CCEG to date are:

ALS Society of Canada	Alzheimer Society of Canada
Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation	CORD
The Foundation Fighting Blindness	Huntington Society of Canada
Kidney Foundation of Canada	Muscular Dystrophy Canada
Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada	Osteoporosis Canada
Ovarian Cancer Canada	Parkinson Society of Canada
Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada	
Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics	
Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Association of Canada	

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Photo included

