



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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(Kitchener, ON) April 14, 2016 – The Canadian Coalition for Genetic Fairness wishes to congratulate Senator James Cowan for his tireless commitment to moving Canada forward on ending genetic discrimination. For the past three years Senator Cowan has been working in the Senate to move Genetic non-discrimination legislation forward. Bill S201 has now made it past 3<sup>rd</sup> reading in the Senate and will be moved forward to the House of Commons.

“Senator Cowan first presented a senate bill to end genetic discrimination in Canada three years ago,” says Bev Heim Myers, Chair of the Canadian Coalition for Genetic Fairness. “Our knowledge of the human genome has grown tenfold over the last few years. It provides Canadians with a better understanding of our own genetic information and can lead to healthier lives for all people living in Canada through prevention, detection, targeted treatment, screening and management of potential disease.”

“While this is good news, Canada has not kept up. We are the only G7 Country that does not have explicit protection for genetic test information,” continues Heim-Myers. “Where this information has the potential for huge benefit to individuals, it can also be used against us by employers, insurers and businesses. Our legislation to protect genetic test information has lagged behind science, technology and other countries. Senator Cowan, and the Senate, have helped move Canada forward and we are very grateful.”

Speaking on behalf of all Canadians who are, or will be, impacted by genetic discrimination, Bev Heim-Myers, Chair of the Canadian Coalition for Genetic Fairness (CCGF) and CEO of the Huntington Society of Canada (HSC), applauds MP Rob Oliphant who will champion the genetic non-discrimination Senate Bill in the House of Commons. “As individuals living in Canada let’s all hope that our very private, personal, complicated DNA information is put back in our control to be used as we choose, for our own benefit. It is important to let your MP know that legislation to protect genetic test information is important to you and your family. Let’s hope they will listen.”

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The Canadian Coalition for Genetic Fairness believes that genetic information is private, sensitive, complicated information that requires a high degree of protection. “It must be used to prevent and treat illness and save lives – not be used against people,” says Heim-Myers. “Not protecting genetic test information could have a lasting negative impact on the health and well-being of all Canadians. We are pleased that MP Oliphant will champion this Bill in the House of Commons and are hopeful that the Federal government is showing leadership by protecting genetic information.

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The Canadian Coalition for Genetic Fairness (CCGF/CCEG) is a coalition of organizations dedicated to preventing genetic discrimination for all Canadians. The Coalition is deeply concerned about discrimination against individuals based on their genetic make-up. We are united to educate Canadians about genetic discrimination and to influence governments both federal and provincial, and other relevant organizations to create change. CCGF/CCEG currently represents 18 hereditary genetic diseases in Canada.

**Members of CCGF/CCEG 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
Canadian PKU & Allied Disorders	Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus Association of Canada
The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs	The Canadian Breast Cancer Society
Canadian Congenital Heart Alliance	Individual Members

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 G7 country that does not protect its citizens against genetic discrimination.

**For more information, please contact:**

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