HITCHBOT HOSTS FINALE EVENT TO CONCLUDE
JOURNEY FROM NOVA SCOTIA TO BRITISH COLUMBIA
Collaborative research project to explore if robots can trust humans with
Canadian hitchhiking adventure

TORONTO, ON. August 15, 2014: The trivia-loving, wellington-wearing, tweeting robot is currently traveling through British Columbia and is expected to arrive at its final destination in Victoria early next week. Since July 27th, hitchBOT has charmed its way from Halifax, N.S., to Victoria, B.C. – a journey of more than 6,000 km – by hitching rides from friendly strangers along the Trans-Canada highway.

To celebrate this experience, and to say thank you to all its fans, hitchBOT will be hosting a finale event on Thursday, August 21st from 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm (PDT) at Open Space Arts Society, an artist-run centre, located at 510 Fort Street in Victoria, B.C. Visitors will have the chance to meet hitchBOT, and are encouraged to ask questions and take selfies with it.

hitchBOT relied solely on the friendliness and the help of people it met along the way to make its journey a success. A GPS and 3G wireless connection feeding to a map on www.hitchBOT.me were the only ways for its family and fans to follow the different stages of its trip. hitchBOT shared photos and thanked its drivers for the memorable experiences, including a trip to Kouchibouguac National Park in New Brunswick, a powwow in Northern Ontario, dancing in the prairies of Saskatchewan, and attending a mountain-top wedding in British Columbia. Over 40,000 fans on Facebook and another 40,000 followers on Twitter and Instagram combined (@hitchBOT) cheered on and offered hitchBOT a ride toward its destination in Victoria, B.C.

hitchBOT was first conceived in 2013 as a collaborative art project between Dr. David Harris Smith, Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Studies and Multimedia at McMaster University, and Dr. Frauke Zeller, Assistant Professor in the School of Professional Communication at Ryerson University. Since then, hitchBOT's family has grown to include Dr. Ebrahim Bagheri, Assistant Professor in Electrical and Computer Engineering at Ryerson University, and Dr. Frank Rudzicz, Assistant Professor in Computer Science at the University of Toronto. Along with their research assistants in communication, multimedia, and mechatronics, this team has brought hitchBOT to life to explore topics in human-robot-interaction and to test technologies in artificial intelligence and speech recognition and processing.

hitchBOT's many friends and fans are invited to join in the celebration at Open Space with hitchBOT's co-creators on Thursday, August 21st from 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm (PDT).

For media requests, please contact Johanna VanderMaas (details below).

About hitchBOT
hitchBOT is an outgoing and charismatic robot that began hitchhiking across Canada in July 2014. Using artificial intelligence (AI) and user interface (UI) design, including speech recognition, speech processing, and social media and Wikipedia APIs, hitchBOT has charmed its way through rides across Canada. For more information, visit hitchBOT's website at www.hitchbot.me

Ryerson University is Canada's leader in innovative, career-oriented education and a university clearly on the move. With a mission to serve societal need, and a long-standing commitment to engaging its community, Ryerson offers more than 100 undergraduate and graduate programs. Distinctly urban, culturally diverse and inclusive, the university is home to more than 38,000 students, including 2,300 master's and PhD students, nearly 2,700 faculty and staff, and more than 155,000 alumni worldwide. Research at Ryerson is on a trajectory of success and growth: externally funded research has doubled in the past four years. The G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education is Canada's leading provider of university-based adult education. For more information, visit www.ryerson.ca

McMaster University, one of four Canadian universities listed among the Top 100 universities in the world, is renowned for its innovation in both learning and discovery. It has a student population of 23,000, and more than 160,000 alumni in 140 countries.

Open Space Arts Society: Founded in September 1972, Open Space is a non-profit artist-run centre located in Victoria, British Columbia. For over forty years, Open Space has supported professional artists who utilize hybrid and experimental approaches to media, art, music, and performance. As an exhibition and performance centre, Open Space reflects the wide diversity of contemporary art practices in Victoria, across Canada, and beyond. Our commitment to contemporary artists is an inclusive situation, embracing work by artists of different disciplines, media, generations, cultures, and communities.

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