NEWS RELEASE

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ORION Awards celebrate Ontario's innovations in research, technology and learning

TORONTO – Ontario achievements in mobile-based transportation software, distributing university news and entertainment programming over IP networks, and data management and simulation systems for viticulture are being recognized today at the 2011 ORION Awards at the MaRS Centre.

The Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION) celebrates Ontario researchers and innovators who are leveraging cutting-edge technologies to support research, education and discovery in Ontario and on the global stage.

These projects and leaders will be recognized today at the ORION Awards Presentation at the MaRS Discovery District, part of the 2011 ORION Summit.

"This year's award recipients illustrate the power of being connected to ORION, Ontario's backbone for research and innovation," says Dr. Darin Graham, President and CEO of ORION. "Ontario is rich in research and leadership talent and the ORION Awards are our way of celebrating those key individuals and projects that are helping put Ontario on the map in fields such as technology, scientific discovery, teaching and learning."

Iain Klugman – Winner of the ORION Leadership Award
Iain Klugman's 20-year career in marketing and technology management has made him one of Canada's foremost experts in innovation and commercialization. Since coming to Waterloo Region to lead Communitech as President and CEO, Mr. Klugman has joined his commitment to supporting technology businesses on the front lines with a sophisticated understanding of building successful regional economies. Under his leadership, Communitech pioneered Canada's first executive-in-residence program at a not-for-profit organization; launched a youth outreach strategy to engage more than 20,000 secondary students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; left no stone unturned in the quest for talent to fill more than 2,000 open positions in the Region's technology sector; launched a national digital media network; and built The Communitech Hub – a $100 million strategy dedicated to the growth and success of digital media and ICT companies in Ontario. Today, Communitech works with more than 700 tech companies representing over $22 billion in revenue – all in a community of just 500,000 people – a community now widely acknowledged as Canada's leading tech cluster.

Building the "Global Campus Network" – Winner of the ORION Learning Award
Ryerson University's School of Radio and Television Arts is pioneering the development of a CNN-style network for universities around the world using bidirectionaL high-definition video streaming technology broadcast over IP networks. Led by Professor Richard Grunberg, the project presents a collaborative, international student perspective of worldwide events and creative endeavours. The unique nature of the technology being developed permits the connection of fully bidirectional HD video content with intercom, IFB (earpiece audio for interview scenarios), 4 channels of audio, all with imperceptible delay for live interactivity. Over this system it would be possible to share, feed and derive feeds for raw, pre-packaged and live news, current affairs and entertainment programming, and to develop a collective of research content producers for potential access to 4,100 universities around the world. With the intent of building a cost-effective "CNN" of the university world, Ryerson's School of Radio and Television Arts hopes to garner participants and connect university channels and digital signage systems around the globe, to build a Canada-wide cable TV and trans-media platform, and to connect related researchers everywhere.

PrAgMatic – Winner of the ORION Discovery Award

The PrAgMatic data management system enables vineyard owners and managers to take advantage of the latest remote sensing technology in an economically feasible way to address the challenges of modern day viticulture. For this project, each individual vine in each participating vineyard was GPS located, tagged and recorded into a database of the PrAgMatic system developed by Niagara Research at Niagara College. Large data sets collected by sensors are three-dimensionally mapped and researchers involved in the project at other institutions are able to access the results over the ORION network. Vineyard owners are then able to access real-time, remote-sensed data that allows them to better manage and control operations, inputs and yields. Precision agriculture and its application also promises reduced environmental impacts, increased productivity, specialized crops, and a host of other benefits. The PrAgMatic project includes a collaboration of researchers from Niagara College, Brock University, the University of Guelph, Nova Scotia Community College, and Queens University, as well as partners from the Grape Growers of Ontario, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), and IBM Research. The PrAgMatic project has been supported by the Ontario Centres of Excellence (OCE), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA).

Context-Aware Computing Solutions in Intelligent Transport Systems – Winner of the ORION Innovation Award

Context-aware systems make decisions and provide information based on multiple sources of information about users and from applications – acting as sensors – that gather data from users and their surroundings. Ryerson University's Ubiquitous Computing Group (UCG), led by Dr. Hossein Rahnama, has utilized context awareness to build intelligent mobility solutions in airports, train stations and field security settings. Using adaptive semantics, the retrieved information from mobile devices are customized based on the need of their users. Using this technology, an airport passenger can receive updated flight information and location of points of interest when entering an unfamiliar airport, a blind passenger can find the location of nearby elevators and escalators using voice commands, and a police officer can automatically retrieve the status of sensors or camera feeds when entering an unfamiliar building. This project has been successfully launched in Europe as part of the EU MUSIC project for the Paris Metro and is planned to launch soon with local transit systems and airport authorities in Ontario.

About ORION

Supporting speeds hundreds of times faster than the Internet, ORION is Ontario's advanced research and education network. A not-for-profit corporation, ORION links 1.8 million Ontario researchers, scientists, students, teachers and staff who depend on ORION for teaching and learning and to enable their research collaborations and discoveries in physics, cancer research, environmental science and technologies, social sciences and the humanities and multiple other disciplines. Part of Canada's advanced network alliance, ORION connects users and institutions to each other and, through CANARIE - Canada's advanced research and innovation network, to high-capacity research and education networks, partners and collaborators across Canada and around the world. Visit www.orion.on.ca.

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