



For Immediate Release
December 1, 2005

MaRS Discovery District Connects to ORION and global grid

TORONTO – The MaRS Discovery District’s state-of-the-art research and collaboration facilities are now linked to the global research and scientific networking community, through ORION and the worldwide grid of advanced research and education (R&E) networks.

MaRS Discovery District and the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION) have agreed to collaborate and to connect the MaRS facilities with an ultra high-speed optical fibre connection to Ontario’s advanced, fully optical R&E network. As a result, MaRS obtains significant, virtually unlimited bandwidth to support its activities, including advanced videoconferencing capabilities and the ability to offer collaborative technology services at extremely high speeds.

“Advanced networks like ORION are part of the new critical infrastructure for global research and innovation, and it’s important that MaRS connect directly with colleagues and researchers here at home in Ontario and around the world,” says MaRS CEO Dr. Ilse Treurnicht. “This agreement allows us to leverage significant provincial investments in landmark research-support initiatives. It will certainly help strengthen Ontario’s position as a preeminent location for research and innovation,” she said.

“Few jurisdictions can match what we now have in place, here in Ontario,” said ORION President/CEO Phil Baker, emphasizing that this new partnership extends MaRS’ access to 21 Ontario cities and lays the foundation for expansion of research collaborations, extending the benefits of new research capabilities to all regions of Ontario.

The new gigabit connection allows MaRS to collaborate with ORION’s connected institutions, including all Ontario universities, most colleges, several teaching hospitals and numerous research institutions. It also provides MaRS with a direct pipeline to Canada’s CA*net 4 national backbone and to global R&E networks including Internet2, GEANT in Europe and APAN in Asia.

The two organizations have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, which sets the stage for collaboration and support of mutual goals. It includes an agreement to co-host the annual Ontario Research and Education Summit at the new MaRS Collaboration Centre facilities, next June 5 and 6, 2006.

The ORION connection will support and provide enhanced access to MaRS’ communication and collaboration technologies, including multi-site, high-definition advanced video conferencing; virtual whiteboards and collaboration tools, webcasting and archiving, video links and remote participation for virtual conferences and events; media broadcast capabilities and emerging technologies such as audience response systems, decision support and distributed meetings.

“We are extremely excited about MaRS connecting to ORION and the global research and education community,” said Baker. “This connection opens the door to infinite opportunities for research, collaboration and applications over ORION.”

ORION anticipates to complete the connection to the MaRS facilities by the end of December.

About MaRS

MaRS Discovery District is a not-for-profit corporation founded by leaders from the business and public sectors, to improve commercial outcomes from Canada's foundation of science and technology innovation. MaRS connects and fosters collaboration between the communities of science, business and capital through co-location in the MaRS Centre. Through catalytic programs and structured networks that are extended through its web portal, MaRS is systematically building a robust, sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports the development of young companies. The MaRS Centre, located in Toronto's Discovery District, opened in May 2005. For more information about MaRS visit www.marsdd.com.

About ORION

The Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION), a not-for-profit organization, is Ontario's leading-edge research and education telecommunications network. ORION connects Ontario's universities, colleges, medical and other public research facilities, and a number of school boards to one another and to the global grid of research and education networks. Learn more at www.orion.on.ca

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