

ORANO

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NEWS RELEASE / COMMUNIQUE

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ORANO ANNOUNCES CONTRACT WITH BELL CANADA TO BUILD ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST RESEARCH AND EDUCATION OPTICAL NETWORKS

Toronto, Ontario – The formation of one of the world's largest optical research and education networks took a step forward today as the Optical Regional Advanced Network of Ontario (ORANO) and Bell Canada announced a \$25 million contract to deliver optical fibre and equipment for the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION), which spans 3,700 kilometres and will link Ontario's major educational institutions and research facilities.

"ORION will transform the way Ontario researchers and organizations collaborate with each other and their colleagues around the world," said Dr. Ross Paul, president of the University of Windsor and Chairman of ORANO, which owns and operates the network. "ORION brings, for the first time, access to the world's top high-speed research networks to all regions of the province," he said.

The agreements announced today conclude discussions between ORANO, Bell Canada and a group of allied companies, including Hydro One Telecom, Nortel Networks, Cisco Systems and several regional telecom providers. This arrangement enables ORANO to build and maintain its own broadband fibre network infrastructure.

ORION will link 21 communities across Ontario. Laid end-to-end, ORION's total optical fibre would stretch to 8,200 kilometres, the equivalent of one fifth of the Earth's circumference, making it one of the largest and most powerful research networks ever built. No other fully-owned and operated research network matches the size and scope of ORION.

"This agreement represents the ideal model for an effective public and private sector partnership that highlights made-in-Ontario technology and expertise to build a network that will soon make its mark around the world," said Jim Flaherty, Ontario's Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation.

"The vision for ORION comes directly from the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board Report and it is a critical component of our Government's Innovation Strategy, to ensure Ontario strengthens and maintains its position of global leadership in research and development," he said.

"We're proud to be part of this unique public-private partnership to deliver the ORION network. It's through partnerships like these, with government and the private sector, that we can give Ontario's colleges universities and research institutions the technological advantage necessary to remain at the forefront of research and innovation and the pursuit of knowledge," said Terry Mosey, President, Bell Ontario.

ORION brings high-speed optical networking capacity to users at levels comparable to or greater than the most advanced research networks in the world, and provides critical high-speed gateways to other research and education networks such as CANARIE's CA*net 4, Internet2 in the US and the Internet.

The network backbone features Nortel Networks' OPTera Long Haul 1600 Optical Line System and Cisco System's state-of-the-art Cisco 7600 series routers. Two individual strands of fibre-optic cable, which ORION has acquired for 20 years, form the physical backbone of the network, inter-connecting each of the network's 22 points of presence.

The network will offer optical wavelength capacities at 10 Gbps, scalable to 320 Gbps, using technology incorporating Dense Wave Division Multiplexing (DWDM) transmission capabilities and Layer 3 routing architecture to support real-time and high bandwidth applications such as IP multipoint videoconferencing and grid computing.

"Nortel Networks is committed to providing scalable and cost effective networking solutions to our enterprise customers," said Brian McFadden, president, Optical Networks, Nortel Networks. "We are pleased to be a part of this project, supplying our optical solutions that will help position ORION to offer innovative services, such as Gigabit Ethernet, to the research community."

"Cisco has always looked to research networks such as ORION as sources of innovation in the use of networking technologies," said Pierre-Paul Allard, President of Cisco Systems Canada. "ORION will help drive productivity in Ontario by serving as an enabler for advanced research in science, health, and education. Cisco Systems Canada is proud to play a role in this important project."

"Hydro One Telecom is pleased to support this initiative with the use of its optical fibre network and by facilitating the connectivity to regional and municipally-based fibre network providers across the province," said Joan Prior, CEO of Hydro One Telecom.

Member institutions are currently developing proposals for projects that are now possible because of ORION, which include advanced applications involving biotechnology, grid computing and real-time collaborative research in several scientific disciplines.

The Ontario Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation and Ontario's SuperBuild Corporation are ORION's primary funding partner, with an investment of \$32.3 million. The federal government has invested \$3.4 million through CANARIE, Canada's Advanced Internet Development Organization, which operates CA*net4. Additional private and public sector investments over the next three years will bring the value of the ORION project to over \$78 million. It is anticipated that ORION will be fully operational by Spring 2003.

ORION -- Ontario's Gateway to Research and Discovery -- is a high-speed, optical network that brings affordable world-class broadband connectivity to Ontario's research and advanced education institutions. Owned and operated by the Optical Regional Advanced Network of Ontario (ORANO), a not-for-profit organization, ORION is the largest fully owned and operated optical research and education network in the world.

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