



THE ONTARIO RESEARCH AND INNOVATION OPTICAL NETWORK

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For Immediate Release

## Postsecondary Review urged to recognize optical networks as new critical infrastructure

TORONTO - Ontario should recognize high-speed optical networks, such as the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION), as critical new infrastructure, just as important as bricks and mortar, able to power a bold new vision for the province's postsecondary education system. That is the main thrust of ORION's submission to the Bob Rae Postsecondary Review Advisory Panel, filed today.

ORION urges the Panel to incorporate the advanced capabilities of the network in its recommendations on enhancing the way research, education and learning are delivered in Ontario.

A new optical network of sophisticated fibre optic cabling and electronic equipment – ORION is dedicated entirely to Ontario's research and education community. Spanning 4,200 kilometres to 21 cities throughout Ontario, ORION today links the main campuses of all of Ontario's universities, several teaching hospitals, 19 colleges of applied arts and technology, and other research and learning facilities to one another and to similar institutions around the world. That number is growing as more Ontario institutions seek to connect to ORION and expanding global "intelligent infrastructure" grids.

As a system-wide tool for communication, collaboration and resource sharing, ORION is necessary inter-institutional infrastructure, as critical to institutions delivering on their research, education and learning mandates as their on-campus infrastructure, states the report.

ORION opens up the global research and education community to every college and university faculty member and student in Ontario at their main campus. ORION represents an ideal opportunity to leverage the collective resources of postsecondary institutions and bring them together in a seamless web across Ontario, as "a powerful force driving the innovation economy."

The report calls on the Panel to recognize that a new global research and learning infrastructure is rapidly evolving, and that increasingly, major research initiatives are multi-party, collaborative, reach across borders and multidisciplinary, and are increasingly dependent on a fully integrated global network infrastructure.

The ultimate benefit of advanced optical networks, claims the report, is how they can eliminate regional and national borders and enable a new era of innovation and collaboration between people and institutions in different regions and different countries.

"We cannot afford to lose out in the global innovation race," says Phil Baker, President/CEO of ORION, who is confident the Panel will consider incorporating advanced technology and networking within a bold, new definition of what constitutes critical infrastructure for the postsecondary education system in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

"Ontario can be a global leader in this field and ORION is prepared to play its part," he says. "Ontario has been given a wonderful opportunity. Other jurisdictions don't have what ORION has brought to our province, but they are moving quickly to try and catch up to Ontario. Let's seize the opportunity to work together over a shared network to leverage the system-wide potential of ORION for transformational innovations in research, education and learning."

The report can be downloaded at [www.orion.on.ca/news/pdf/ORIONRaePanelSubmission.pdf](http://www.orion.on.ca/news/pdf/ORIONRaePanelSubmission.pdf).

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### ABOUT ORION

ORION is owned and operated by the Optical Regional Advanced Network of Ontario (ORANO), a not-for-profit organization governed by a Board of Directors that includes leaders from the fields of education, research and business. The Government of Ontario is ORION's primary funding partner, with an investment of \$32.3 million. The federal government has invested \$3.4 million through CANARIE. Additional private and public sector investments bring the value of ORION to over \$78 million.

### **For more information, please contact:**

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