



For immediate release
June 23, 2009

Thunder Bay students connect to super-fast optical network

THUNDER BAY – More Northern Ontario students and teachers will soon have access to the global grid of advanced research and education networks as Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board connects to the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION).

ORION currently connects approximately 960,000 elementary and secondary school students across the province. By connecting, schools can enjoy enhanced quality videoconferencing when participating in the many distance learning programs offered by Canada's leading cultural and educational organizations, such as the Virtual Researcher on Call (VROC) program, the Royal Ontario Museum, the Canadian Museum of Nature, and the Canadian Space Agency.

With more than 8,000 students at 21 schools, the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board is already experimenting with videoconferencing. Grade 3 students at St. Martin School have been communicating over videoconference link with students at the First Nations School of Toronto and with Fort William Historical Park in Thunder Bay to enhance the learning of social studies. With an ORION connection, such videoconferencing sessions – especially with partners on the ORION network – will be greatly enhanced.

“Our school classrooms are under increased pressure to provide fast and reliable connections to valuable educational resources. ORION provides a level of connectivity that would otherwise not be feasible or affordable for our school board. With ORION, our Board can increase our bandwidth by several times while maintaining our costs,” says Tom Mustapic, Associate Director, Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board.

“It’s wonderful to see the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board join ORION and be able to connect with other students, researchers and institutions over the network,” says Phil Baker, ORION President and CEO. “We’re moving closer to our goal of providing all of Ontario’s 1.9 million K-12 students with access to ORION and the advanced resources and capabilities it enables.”

The Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board joins three other boards in North Western Ontario that are connected to ORION, as well as Lakehead University and Confederation College in Thunder Bay.

About ORION

The Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION), a not-for-profit organization, is Ontario's ultra high-speed research and education network which connects all of Ontario's universities, most colleges, several medical and other public research facilities and a growing number of school boards to one another and to the global grid of research and education networks. Stretching 5,800 kilometres over 21 communities throughout Ontario, ORION connects over one million Ontario researchers, scientists, students, teachers and staff to critical infrastructure for research, education and innovation. Visit www.orion.on.ca.

- 30 -

Media Contacts:

Tamara Stoll
Communications Officer
ORION
416-507-9860 ext. 224
tamara.stoll@orion.on.ca

Michael Thompson
Communications Officer
Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board
807-625-1587
mthomps@tbcdsb.on.ca