

## Bell supplies optical sinews to Ontario research network

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Ontario's advanced computer network for research institutes is one step closer to becoming a reality.

The Optical Regional Advanced Network of Ontario announced a \$25 million contract yesterday with Bell Canada to deliver optical fibre and networking equipment for ORION — the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network.

"We're buying the fibre ... and the equipment is being delivered. We expect to have the network up and running later in the spring," said Phil Baker, president and chief executive officer of ORION.

More than 3,700 kilometres of fibre-optic cable will be required to connect approximately 100 post-secondary schools and research institutes in 21 communities across the province.

Toronto will be home to two connections on the ORION network: one at York University and one at University of Toronto.

ORION will also connect the schools to Canada's national research network, CA\*net.

"The ORION network project is all about putting the physical network infrastructure in place so that we can do research better," Baker said.

The network will allow researchers to collaborate on projects in real-time, for example.

The project was originally announced in 2000, when the Ontario government committed to a \$50 million, five-year plan to develop ORION.

Another \$3.4 million was granted by the federal government through Canada's Advanced Internet Development Organization, which operates CA\*net.

Public sector funding and private investment are expected to cover the cost of the project for the first five years, which is estimated at \$78 million.

After that, the ORION network is on its own.

"Our business plans requires us to be self sustaining by the 2005-2006 fiscal year," Baker said.