



## **U. P., N. Ont. schools' link super-fast**

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A unique wireless connection was to be completed today between Michigan's Upper Peninsula and Northern Ontario, enhancing a global grid to eventually link the world's research and education facilities.

The connection uses radio waves six kilometres up to transmit massive amounts of data at speeds of one gigabit a second. The new laser-guided line-of-sight wireless link uses Bridgewave Communications' new 80GHZ radio frequency transmission technology, the first large-scale deployment of the new gear at this frequency.

"This is one of the first globally, because 1 gigabit/sec is just starting right now," said Sam Mokbel, senior director of engineering and networking operations for the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network.

Sault College, Algoma University, Algoma District School Board and Lake Superior State University can now share information.

The \$60,000 project is shared equally between ORION, a non-profit group primarily funded by the Ontario government when it was launched in 2001 -- it has since become self-sufficient -- and its Michigan counterpart, Merit.

ORION and Merit already link Windsor and Detroit, but via the more traditional fibre optic cable. That option wasn't viable here, where far fewer members would be unable to meet the "very expensive" cost, Mokbel said.

Besides the cross-border aspect of the new technology, it enhances security to keep the Internet up between member institutions in the event of a power failure.

ORION already shares the Bell fibre optic cables from the Sault to Sudbury. The new technology works as a backup network, Mokbel said.

"This has one purpose only, to ensure the availability of extreme connectivity to Sault members, regardless of weather, fibre-optic availability, equipment problems or any issues you could expect."

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