

ORANO

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NEWS RELEASE / COMMUNIQUE

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\$5.8 million investment to connect Ontario post-secondary and research institutions to new ORION optical network

TORONTO - The Ontario Government and Optical Regional Advanced Network of Ontario (ORANO) have awarded \$5.8 million in funding to post-secondary and research institutions to allow them to connect to the new ORION optical network.

The Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION) is a 3,700-kilometre high-speed, fibre optic research network. Once fully operational, the network will link Ontario's 43 post-secondary institutions and more than 50 publicly funded research institutions and organizations through 21 network connection points throughout the province.

The funding, announced on April 28, 2003 by Ontario's Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation David Turnbull, will help leverage total investment of \$14.4 million. The funding will go towards equipment upgrade and connectivity projects that will enable institutions and organizations to connect to the network.

"The ORION Network builds on this government's goals by ensuring the province remains at the forefront of global research and scientific and medical discoveries," said Turnbull. "It will also optimize Ontario's current investment in R&D infrastructure, strengthening this province's research capacity in areas such as engineering, technology and medicine. This is an important step in connecting Ontario's leading research and education institutions locally and internationally, so they can participate in innovative global research projects."

"Today's announcement is the exciting beginning of a bright new future for Ontario," said Dr. Ross Paul, Chair of ORANO and President of the University of Windsor. "By bringing us the most advanced optical network infrastructure in Canada, ORION sets the stage for fantastic new developments in research and education throughout the Province. Our best researchers, teachers and students will now have the high speed and high powered connections that will allow them to excel in the new digital knowledge economy."

"This investment is big step forward in building the critical infrastructure we need to expand advanced networking to every corner of our province," said Phil Baker, President and CEO of ORANO. "Advanced research networks, particularly those using optical technologies, have become part of the basic science and technology infrastructure in advanced economies and are vital to new research and product development," he said.

The funding announcement was made at an official "fibre-splicing ceremony" marking the opening of ORANO's new offices in Toronto. ORANO is a non-profit organization created to build and maintain ORION.

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.

This follows the Dec. 16, 2002 announcement of a \$25 million contract with Bell Canada and partners to build and maintain the ORION network. Partners include Hydro One Telecom, Nortel Networks, Cisco Systems and several regional telecom providers. Many Ontario research and academic institutions, as well as community broadband and regional advanced networks are also making significant investments to connect to and maintain the network.

ORION will be operational by June 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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For further information

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