



For Immediate Release

May 16, 2006

New ORION circuit maintains North's connection to global grid

TORONTO - Northern Ontario's ORION-connected institutions are applauding the nearly \$500,000 investment in a new high-speed optical fibre circuit that came on stream this week, providing critical backup to the North's connection to the global grid of high-speed research and education (R&E) networks.

The new service provides failsafe backup to as many as 18 northern colleges, universities, school boards and other organizations that rely on their connection to the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Networks (ORION) and their link to Canada's CANet 4 and global networks.

Maxim Jean Louis, President and Chief Executive Officer of Contact North/Contact Nord welcomed the announcement. "This is wonderful news for us and we're very pleased that ORION and CANARIE were able to accelerate this investment and move quickly to have it in place," said Jean Louis, also Vice-Chair of the ORANO Board of Directors.

Institutions that rely on ORION include Laurentian, Lakehead and Nipissing Universities, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, the Sudbury Neutrino Observatory, the Boréal, Cambrian, Confederation, Northern, Sault and Georgian Colleges, as well as Contact North/Contact Nord and several school boards.

Service outages, triggered by fibre cuts, accidents or equipment failure, spurred ORION and CANARIE to accelerate plans to introduce backup services to the ORION locations north of Toronto. When a truck backed up into a Hydro poll just outside Barrie, for instance, service was disrupted for several hours to points north of that location. Depending on the nature of the accidents, some repairs can take a few days.

The new service ensures northern institutions will seamlessly maintain their connection with traffic automatically carried over to the new GigE backup circuit.

CANARIE, which operates Canada's national CANet 4 national backbone, invested \$400,000 towards the project. ORION provided nearly \$100,000 in equipment and labour costs, including optical fibre acquired from Big Pipe Inc. This work required CANARIE to re-engineer one of its east-west optical wavelengths to accommodate the new backup service out of Thunder Bay.

"Opening an optical wavelength for this service is very costly and requires special engineering design and data and management equipment," says ORION Senior Director of Engineering and Network Operations, Sam Mokbel, who collaborated with CANARIE's CANet 4 Chief Engineer René Hatem to plan and implement the work.

Nearly 60 per cent of the ORION's network, as much as 2,500 of ORION's 4,200 kilometres of network fibre is now covered by the new GigE (Gigabit Ethernet) service, which represents data transmission capability of 1,000 megabits per second.

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A map of the new circuit can be downloaded from <http://www.orion.on.ca/news/pdf/northernbackup.pdf>

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