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For Immediate Release

RESEARCH AND EDUCATION NETWORKS IN ONTARIO AND MICHIGAN SIGN HISTORIC CROSS-BORDER AGREEMENT

TORONTO - ORION and Merit Network, the Ontario and Michigan Research and Education (R&E) networks, have signed an historic agreement to interconnect across the Canada/U.S. border, collaborate on advanced networking technologies, and facilitate research in the Great Lakes region.

ORION President Phil Baker and Merit President Hunt Williams signed the agreement at the ORION head office in Toronto March 31, 2004, where Merit and ORION held a one-day summit.

"We are looking forward to future collaboration with ORION and with its participating institutions," said Hunt Williams, President of Merit. "This agreement will extend our networks east and west around the Great Lakes and open the door to advanced collaborations in many fields.

"This agreement is a great beginning," said ORION President Phil Baker. "Interconnecting with Merit will not only join our two networks physically but will also facilitate exciting new collaborations in advanced networking in support of research and education in both Ontario and Michigan. "

The two networks plan to connect across the Canada/US border at Windsor/Detroit later in 2004, and at Sault Ste. Marie at a later date.

At the one-day summit, Baker and Williams were joined by ORION's Senior Manager for Strategic Partnerships Randy Neals in meetings to discuss potential collaborations with leading researchers in particle physics, astrophysics, landscape and urban design, and telecommunications applications at the University of Toronto.

MichNet Director Mary McLaughlin and Backbone Engineering and Technical Support specialist Brian Cashman also met with ORION Project Director Sam Mokbel and his engineering team to plan the Merit-ORION interconnection.

The group also met with GTAnet chair Bob Gagne of York University and Hospital for Sick Kids Technical Director Chip Campbell, and discussed the new GTAnet Toronto-area R&E network and potential collaborations in genomics research.

The Toronto summit follows an earlier visit by ORION officials to Merit's head office in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION) is owned and operated by the Optical Regional Advanced Network of Ontario (ORANO). ORION is a high-speed, optical network that brings affordable, world-class broadband access and connectivity to research and educational institutions in the Province of Ontario. It is governed by a Board of Directors that includes leaders from the fields of education, research and business. Among its objectives is to link researchers, educators, scientists, learners and innovators in Ontario to one another, to colleagues around the world, and to networked resources so that they can advance research, learning, knowledge, technology development and scientific discovery.



Merit Network, Inc. (MERIT), a non-profit corporation governed by Michigan's public universities, owns and operates America's first regional research and education network. Founded in 1966, Merit supports the high-performance networking needs of Michigan's universities, colleges, K-12 schools, libraries, state government, health care, and other non-profit organizations. Through Merit, Michigan's research and education organizations have access to leading-edge network research, state and national collaborative initiatives, and international peering.

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