



For Release around June 1st 2025

Vineland Research and Innovation Centre and Ontario Centres of Innovation (OCI) Announce Strategic Collaboration to Propel Ontario's Horticultural Sector.

VINELAND STATION, Ontario, June 1st, 2025 – Vineland Research and Innovation Centre (Vineland) and the Ontario Centres of Innovation (OCI) are pleased to announce a collaboration under Ontario's Critical Industrial Technologies (CIT) initiative. This collaboration aims to drive innovation and commercialization in Ontario's Agri-food sector by leveraging critical technologies such as AI and robotics.

"With over 85,000 tech professionals, Ontario stands at the forefront of global innovation and technology," said Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. "By designating 10 new Technology Development Sites, we're giving small and medium-sized businesses across the province the support they need to boost their competitiveness, speed up the delivery of made-in-Ontario solutions, and create quality jobs that will drive economic growth throughout Ontario."

The CIT initiative, supported by a \$50 million investment from the Government of Ontario, aims to propel Ontario's mining, advanced manufacturing, construction, and agri-food sectors onto the global stage.

As a designated Technology Development Site (TDS), Vineland will leverage its 218-acre campus, showcasing 35 buildings including research laboratories, farms and greenhouses. This property is owned by Agricultural Research and Innovation Ontario (ARIO), an agency of the Ontario Government that focuses on high-impact research and innovation, the management of properties for agriculture and food research, and the cultivation of strategic relationships that support the growth of the agriculture and food sectors.

"These ten Technology Development Sites are an integral part of Ontario's innovation ecosystem," said Claudia Krywiak, President and CEO, Ontario Centres of Innovation (OCI). "Through the Critical Industrial Technologies initiative, we are making top-tier testing facilities accessible to SMEs across the province, helping them accelerate commercialization and develop tomorrow's technologies right here in Ontario."

"Agricultural Research and Innovation Ontario - ARIO, has been providing the spaces where agri-food innovation, partnerships, and connections take place for the past 60 years," says Nevin McDougall, Chair of ARIO. "and ARIO is enabling collaborations like the one between Vineland and OCI to support a growing and sustainable agri-food sector."

"This collaboration between Vineland and OCI is a game-changer for Ontario's agri-food sector, harnessing AI and robotics to drive innovation and competitiveness," said Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. "By leveraging ARIO's resources and Vineland's cutting-edge facilities, we're empowering small and medium-sized agribusinesses to develop sustainable, market-ready solutions that strengthen our province's position in global markets."

"As a leader in horticultural research and innovation, Vineland is committed to advancing the economic viability, sustainability, and competitiveness of horticulture in Canada," said Dr. Ian Potter, President and CEO of Vineland. "Our collaboration with OCI will provide Ontario-based small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with unparalleled access to state-of-the-art facilities, specialized equipment, and expert advisory services to develop, test, and commercialize their critical technology solutions."

Vineland will offer SMEs access to unique testing labs and capabilities, including:

- Collaborative Greenhouse Technology Centre: Vineland offers a spectrum of low to high technology, commercial-scale greenhouse facilities for fast-tracking the commercialization of horticultural technologies.
- Horticulture Technology Solutions: A prototyping and manufacturing facility for fabricating and optimizing prototypes in a horticultural setting.
- Tree Culture Park: An outside laboratory featuring Canada's only individually instrumented tree compartments with integrated sensor technology.
- Advanced Pathology Laboratory: A facility for working with emerging or high-pressure pests and diseases.
- Biochemistry Laboratory: Vineland leverages metabolomics techniques to understand plants and their responses to biotic and abiotic stress in agricultural systems.

"By collaborating with OCI, we aim to stimulate technology adoption within Ontario's horticultural crop production and byproduct utilization sectors," said Dr. Nicole De Long, Director of Business and Client Development at Vineland. "We are excited to host these innovative technologies on campus, providing the sector with a firsthand look at their capabilities. Our technology showcase days will offer a unique opportunity for the sector to gather, discuss the challenges growers face, and explore how emerging critical technologies can address these issues."

"Ontario's small businesses are the backbone of our economy, with roughly 500,000 businesses that employ more than 2.5 million workers across our province," said Nina Tangri MPP for Mississauga Streetsville & Ontario's Associate Minister of Small Business. "These new development sites will be instrumental in helping innovators bring new technology to life and create more jobs and businesses across our province. Ontario's entrepreneurs in technology show us day in and day out, what it means to be dedicated, think big, and innovate."

"As Ontario prepares to lead a rapidly evolving global industrial economy, it is crucial to build a connected, province-wide network that fuels the development, testing, and adoption of critical technologies," said Raed Kadri, Vice-President, Strategic Initiatives and Business Development, OCI and Head of OVIN. "From robotics and AI to cybersecurity and sustainable construction, the new Technology Development Sites

under the Critical Industrial Technologies initiative will provide Ontario companies the competitive edge they need to transform the mining, construction, agri-food, and advanced manufacturing sectors and fuel a more resilient economy.”

For more information about the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre and the Critical Industrial Technologies initiative, please visit oc-innovation.ca/programs/cit/

About the Critical Industrial Technologies Initiative

Critical Industrial Technologies (CIT) is an initiative of the Government of Ontario, led by the Ontario Centre of Innovation (OCI), available to Ontario SMEs to accelerate the commercialization and adoption of critical technologies—5G, AI, blockchain, cybersecurity, quantum computing, and robotics —across key sectors including Advanced Manufacturing, Agri-Food, Construction, and Mining. Focusing on talent development, product innovation, and sector transformation projects, CIT is building the future of industry in Ontario.

For more information about the Critical Industrial Technologies initiative and the Technology Development Sites, please visit [OCI's CIT Program Page](#).

About Vineland Research and Innovation Centre

Vineland Research and Innovation Centre is a uniquely Canadian results-oriented organization dedicated to horticulture science and innovation. We deliver innovative products, solutions and services through an integrated and collaborative cross-country network to advance Canada’s research and commercialization agenda.

Vineland is situated on treaty lands. These lands are steeped in the rich history of the First Nations including the Hatiwendaronk, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabe and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people from across Turtle Island live and work in Niagara today. Vineland stands with all Indigenous people, past and present, in promoting the wise stewardship of the lands on which we live.

We are an independent, not-for-profit organization, funded in part by the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP), a five-year, federal-provincial-territorial initiative. For the latest on our research and innovation visit www.vinelandresearch.com.

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