

# Pearson's testing program aims to initiate broader implementation

On January 6, the Ontario government launched a COVID-19 pilot testing program at Toronto Pearson International Airport. Available free of charge to international arrivals at both Terminal 1 and Terminal 3, the voluntary test is administered by Switch Health. A leader in the connected disease management vertical, the Toronto-based healthcare company is positioned to establish and implement innovative testing methods and solutions.

Defined as another layer of protection in Toronto Pearson's Healthy Airport program, which helped Pearson become the first Canadian airport to earn Airports Council International health accreditation, the self-administered tests are a starting point to shape, develop and facilitate similar and future programs for broader implementation.

According to a release on Toronto Pearson's website, the pilot program is supported by evidence collected in a McMaster HealthLabs research study and guidance from the United Nation's International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Based on 20,000 tests on more than 8,600 travelers, interim results found that 99% of participants tested negative for COVID-19. As recently as the fall 2020 border study, self-administered tests have been proven to be effective. Plus, the sample collection method used by Switch Health is approved by Health Canada.

Allowing the flow of essential goods and travelers into the country, the airport continues to operate. Along with the transporting of healthcare and agricultural workers, as well as those returning home from overseas, the cargo that lands at Pearson includes personal protective equipment, vaccines and perishable goods. The most up-to-date measure of traffic at Pearson shows that levels in Q3 of 2020 were 12% of 2019 levels.

"The province's new program is the culmination of months of hard work and collaboration among health professionals, the aviation industry and government partners to make a safe industry even safer. It is an important step that will help to protect the airport community and neighbouring communities as we work to limit the spread of COVID-19," comments Robin Smith, Senior Advisor, Stakeholder Relations & Communications at Greater Toronto Airport Authority.