

**November 19, 2020**

The Honourable Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building, Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

**Re: Letter of support for COVID-19 testing upon arrival at Toronto Pearson International Airport**

Dear Premier,

Thank you for your tireless efforts and the efforts of the Ontario Government in managing through the challenges of COVID-19. As the province considers how we can safely and swiftly recover from the economic impact of the pandemic, we ask that, in collaboration with the Government of Canada, you support the Greater Toronto Airports Authority (the "GTAA") in introducing COVID-19 testing upon arrival at Toronto Pearson International Airport.

Introducing arrivals testing at Pearson would provide an added, stronger measure to protect our communities from COVID-positive travelers already destined to Ontario. Further, the restart and resumption of air travel is vital to Ontario's economic recovery and longer-term competitiveness and a science-based approach to lifting quarantines is critical to that effort. We rely on air travel for the travel and tourism sector, the service economy and the movement of goods. Not only is Pearson the gateway for the travel and tourism sector in Ontario – a sector that provides \$5 billion in tax revenues to the province – but the airport continues to be a vital link in the supply chain. It provides a means for business and consumers to receive critical goods and inputs and supporting exports. Given that 70 per cent of air cargo is carried in the bellies of passenger aircraft, capacity has been impacted with the decline in passenger travel.

Currently there is no arrivals testing process and travelers bound for Canada are required to quarantine for a full 14-day period. Quarantine restrictions are a significant barrier to travelers, both business and leisure, which further restricts the ability of travel and tourism businesses to economically recover. Surveys have shown that travelers are prepared to undertake a COVID-19 test in order to support data collection and in exchange for a reduction in quarantine.

In the first week of November, the Government of Alberta, together with the Government of Canada, launched a pilot at Calgary Airport and the Coutts land border crossing that allows passengers to reduce the length of quarantine after a negative test upon arrival. We are heartened that you have expressed an interest in following suit.

The recent McMaster Health Labs (MHL) study at Pearson, co-sponsored by the GTAA and Air Canada, has produced important scientific data to support this public policy decision. This week, [MHL released the interim results](#) of the voluntary COVID-testing arrivals study that ran from September 3 to November 14, 2020. The interim results, based on 20,000 tests conducted on more than 8,600 study participants, are showing that 99 per cent of arriving passengers are COVID-negative and being unnecessarily quarantined.

As Dr. Vivek Goel, co-principal investigator of the study, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Waterloo, and a former CEO of Public Health Ontario, indicates “Interim results from the border study support a test and reduced quarantine approach such as that being piloted in Calgary” and that “testing upon arrival with a follow-up test to catch later positive results could provide a reasonable path forward to help keep borders and the economy open while maintaining public safety.”

We encourage you to capitalize on the findings of this important work and to move quickly to introduce arrivals testing at Pearson. The results support the removal of quarantine restrictions in Ontario, allowing an opportunity to relieve strained Government resources by focusing on enforcement of the COVID-positive travelers.

The airport and airlines, like many businesses in the tourism industry, are putting science at the heart of all decisions in order to protect the health of their workforce and travelers. We support Pearson’s [“Healthy Airport” Commitment](#), and are encouraged by the innovations that the aviation industry has implemented, such as UV light disinfection in air ducts and touchless processes in-terminal. Last week, Dr. Tam indicated she has seen little evidence of COVID-19 transmission among passengers travelling, referencing the strict cleaning and enhanced ventilation measures implemented by aviation industry.

Premier Ford, Pearson plays a pivotal role to support Ontario’s economy. In better times, the airport facilitated an economic impact of \$42 billion, almost 6 per cent of Ontario’s GDP. Pre-COVID-19, nearly 50,000 people worked at Toronto Pearson and 300,000 were employed in the Airport Employment Zone, the second largest employment zone in the country.

We appreciate that COVID testing will be a necessary part of air travel for the foreseeable future and we encourage you to move quickly with your Federal counterparts to reestablish international air travel. Implementing a testing regime for arriving passengers to safely remove quarantine restrictions is an important step.

Thank you,



**Cc:**

The Honourable Caroline Mulroney, Minister of Transportation  
The Honourable Lisa McLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries  
The Honourable Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade  
The Honourable Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier, Minister of Health  
The Honourable Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance