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Air Canada Finalizing Initial Order for Newly Approved COVID-19 Rapid Testing Kits from Abbott

- ***Initial results from McMaster HealthLabs airport study reinforce value of testing***

MONTREAL, Oct. 1, 2020 /CNW Telbec/ - Air Canada said today that it is finalizing an initial order of Abbott's ID NOW COVID-19 rapid response tests as part of its ongoing evaluation of COVID-19 testing technology and protocols. The airline, which last month partnered with McMaster Health Labs (MHL) and the Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA) in a study of arriving international travellers at Toronto-Pearson, said preliminary results from the study indicate testing can help protect customers and facilitate the safe relaxation of government travel restrictions.

"Air Canada continues to explore various options for testing for COVID-19 and we are finalizing an initial order from Abbott for 25,000 rapid test kits for voluntary employee testing now that it has been approved for use in Canada. Understanding that we will need to live alongside this virus for the short- to medium-term, we have been pursuing relationships and a layered approach as a way to keep our employees and our customers safe. We believe testing will be key to protecting employees and customers until such time as a COVID-19 vaccine is available. Rapid testing is also a means to enable governments to relax current blanket travel restrictions and quarantines in a measured way while still safeguarding the health and safety of the public," said Dr. Jim Chung, Air Canada's Chief Medical Officer.

"We are further encouraged in our belief in the effectiveness of testing, including self-administered testing, by the preliminary results from our partnership with MHL and the GTAA. The preliminary results suggest a shorter, test-based strategy may be an available and safe alternative to the 14-day quarantine."

Since the Toronto-Pearson study began September 3, MHL has conducted nearly 13,000 tests of returning international travellers who volunteered to participate. Of those more than 99% have tested negative for COVID-19 with less than 1% having indicated COVID-19. Of the less than 1% indicating COVID-19, more than 80% are being detected in the initial test and the rest on the Day 7 test, with none being detected by the Day 14 test. For more information on the MHL study see <https://aircanada.mediaroom.com/2020-09-03-McMaster-HealthLabs-Air-Canada-and-Greater-Toronto-Airports-Authority-to-Conduct-a-Voluntary-COVID-19-Study-of-Arriving-International-Travellers>.

Air Canada has been at the forefront of the airline industry in responding to COVID-19, including being among the first carriers globally to require customer face coverings onboard and the first airline in the Americas to take customers' temperatures prior to boarding. In May it introduced a comprehensive program, [Air Canada CleanCare+](#), to apply industry-leading biosafety measures at each stage of the journey.

Air Canada has undertaken several medical collaborations to further advance biosafety across its business, including with Cleveland Clinic Canada for medical advisory services, Ottawa-based Spartan Bioscience to explore portable COVID-19 testing technology and, since 2019, with Toronto-based BlueDot for real-time infectious disease global monitoring. It continues to explore other potential partnerships with technology and medical companies to further strengthen its biosafety protocols.

About Air Canada

Air Canada is Canada's largest domestic and international airline. Canada's flag carrier is among the 20 largest airlines in the world and in 2019 served over 51 million customers. Air Canada is a founding member of Star Alliance, the world's most comprehensive air transportation network. Air Canada is the only international network carrier in North America to receive a Four-Star ranking according to independent U.K. research firm Skytrax, which also named Air Canada the 2019 Best Airline in North America. For more information, please visit: aircanada.com/media, follow Air Canada on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#), and join Air Canada on [Facebook](#).

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