

New Customs program using Iris Recognition technology makes clearing Customs simpler and quicker

Toronto, September 25, 2002...

Elinor Caplan, Minister of National Revenue, announced today a pilot project using iris recognition technology will be implemented at Pearson International Airport and Vancouver International Airport in January 2003. CANPASS-Air will speed up customs and immigration clearance for travellers to make air travel safer.

CANPASS - Air will allow pre-approved travellers to clear customs by simply looking into a camera that recognizes the iris of their eyes as proof of identity. Members will also be able to declare goods and pay duties and taxes at the kiosks.

In conjunction with other new technologies, CANPASS - Air checks clients against a security system as if they were meeting an officer in person, and refers suspect clients to further inspection. Limiting the amount of interaction with our trusted clients allows Customs personnel to focus on people they don't know.

"While security is obviously of utmost importance, the free flow of travel is essential to the vitality of this country,

the majority of travellers are law-abiding citizens," said Minister Caplan. "These are the people who are welcome to apply to programs such as this one."

CANPASS - Air will be ready to receive applications in January 2003, with passage kiosks operational at Pearson International Airport in Toronto and at Vancouver International Airport in March 2003. This is a cost-neutral program with an annual membership fee of \$50 CDN each year.

"Considering that we process more than 300,000 travellers and \$2-billion in trade every single day it is small wonder that it is said that looking for terrorists and evil doers at the border is like looking for a needle in a haystack," Minister Caplan added.

"CANPASS-Air enables us to work with our trusted and known clients to make their Customs experience quick while allowing us to focus our attention on higher-risk travellers."

The CANPASS - Air Program will be expanded to a joint program with the United States, to be piloted at Macdonald-Cartier Airport in Ottawa and Dorval Airport in Montreal next year.



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Markham, Ontario
Canada L3R 9Z7

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