

Case Study

Proficiency Testing Accreditation PT Canada



American Association for Laboratory Accreditation

PT Canada

accredited proficiency testing providers

Case Study

According to ISO/IEC 17025, “proficiency testing is the evaluation of participant performance against preestablished criteria by means of interlaboratory comparison.” Proficiency testing programs and interlaboratory comparisons are critical to quality assurance for testing labs and serve as a tool to evaluate and improve the accuracy of test results.

Labs can participate in proficiency testing programs through a proficiency testing provider (PTP), an organization which distributes proficiency testing items or materials to participating laboratories to test. The participating labs send back their test results, which are then processed by the PTP. Based on the findings, labs determine the accuracy of their results and make improvements when necessary.

Many ISO standards require participation in a proficiency testing (PT) program, including ISO/IEC 17025. But, if laboratories are comparing the accuracy of their test results against these predetermined criteria, how can PTP’s customers be confident that their services are reliable and accurate, too?

Accreditation bodies, like A2LA, accredit PTPs to ISO/IEC 17043, the general requirements for the competence of proficiency testing providers, to provide third-party assurance and give customers confidence in the quality of the program.

About PT Canada

PT Canada (PTC), an A2LA accredited proficiency testing organization located in Ontario, is a not-for-profit that serves testing laboratories all around the world. Their first PT round was shipped in 1991 and they currently offer PT for around 60 different schemes, mostly in environmental sectors, including water and soil testing. In addition to environmental samples, PTC also offers schemes for cannabis testing laboratories, including potency, pesticides, residual solvents, metals, and moisture.

Twice a year, PTC provides its customers with four samples per round of testing. Most samples arrive undiluted, which not only makes for a more streamlined process, but also reduces the risk of error and provides more accurate test results.

“Unlike a lot of other PT providers, almost all of our samples get shipped to the customer ready to be analyzed,” said Ken Middlebrook, Executive Director of PT Canada, “so the lab is receiving samples similar to how they receive client samples.”





Ken has been a quality professional for more than 40 years and maintains a strong reputation in the industry for his involvement in the accreditation community. As a proficiency testing expert, he was also part of the working group to update the latest version of ISO 17043.

PTC also includes Program Manager Nadine Lewis, who conducts quality management, statistical analysis, and provides clients with top notch customer care.

“Customer service, of all the positions, is the most important, because you can’t have a business without customers,” said Nadine.

Nadine has been a quality professional for over twenty-five years and is committed to supporting labs in their pursuits to continuously improve. Nadine is a lead laboratory assessor, a member of the [A2LA Accreditation Council](#), and an [A2LA Member](#).

PT Canada's Accreditation History

PTC has been accredited to ISO/IEC 17043 and its precursor standards with A2LA since 2005. Prior to ISO/IEC17043, PTC was accredited to Guide 43 by the Standards Council of Canada (CALA) then to ILAC G13.

The organization was formerly part of CALA but became its own independent organization in 2020. From 1991 to 2019, PTC schemes were operated under CALA, and at the end of 2019, the operation of these schemes were transferred to PTC.

In early 2024, PTC became accredited to the newly published version of ISO 17043:2023 and were among the first proficiency testing providers to meet the requirements of the updated standard. “The A2LA assessors we have worked with have been great,” said Ken. “They’re statisticians first, but they also understand the practical aspects of the organization.”

The Future of PT

As certain industries continue to grow, so does the need for proficiency testing. For example, as medical and recreational cannabis use become more widespread, so do the regulations for cannabis sales and the need for testing labs that produce accurate, reliable results.

“Government regulations are what drive the proficiency testing industry,” says Nadine. “There are many labs that choose to participate in interlaboratory comparison because they want to ensure their test results are of the highest quality. But, for the most part, new regulations that require ISO/IEC 17025 or proficiency testing is where the growth comes from.”





The Importance of Proficiency Testings

Proficiency testing providers, like PTC, are a critical piece of the accreditation industry. They enable labs to confidentially compare their test results with the results of other laboratories, and offer an opportunity to identify problem areas, take corrective action, and improve the quality of their test results.

*“Accreditation is very important for consistency and reliability across PT providers,”
said Nadine.*

*“If you don’t have the consistency,
then you don’t have the quality.”*

Choose A2LA

Established in 1978, A2LA maintains a 97% retention rate among its customers, largely in part due to its knowledgeable customer service representatives and expert accreditation services staff. A team of customer care representatives is available during extended business hours to address any issues, and the leadership team consistently strives for improvement within the accreditation industry.



Start The Accreditation Process

Want to learn more about accreditation for your PT laboratory?

Scan the code to visit our [PT Accreditation Program](https://www.a2la.org/pt) page at [A2LA.org](https://www.a2la.org), and complete the “[Accreditation Estimate Request Form](#)”.

A Better World Through Accreditation

301.644.3248 | [A2LA.org](https://www.a2la.org) | info@A2LA.org

