



NEWS

## Kawartha Lakes residents raise COVID-19 concerns over Lindsay DriveTest

By [Sarah Sobanski](#) Kawartha Lakes This Week

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Some Kawartha Lakes residents are asking if the Lindsay DriveTest should be open to those coming from outside the city during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both Kawartha Lakes Mayor Andy Letham and the office for Laurie Scott, MPP for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, confirm they're fielding calls from residents concerned people are coming from COVID-19 hot spots, such as Peel Region, to take their tests locally.

Danny Dewey, a Little Britain resident, is one of them. His wife works at Northern Reflections near the driving test centre.

“If you drive by the mall and just look at it ... There’s people lined up all over the place,” he says, noting he’s concerned for those employed by DriveTest as well as those who work in Lindsay Square Mall and surrounding area.

Lee Alderson, senior issues adviser for the Ministry of Transportation, says health and safety is a top concern for DriveTest. It has introduced strict protocols such as requiring customers to wear face coverings, sanitize their hands on entry and having their temperature taken the day of their test.

“Drivers who have a temperature of 37.8 degrees Celsius or higher will have their test cancelled without penalty,” Alderson wrote in an email.

“All DriveTest staff wear personal protective equipment when serving customers and driver examiners are equipped with personal protective equipment, face shields/goggles, sanitizer packages and seat covers when conducting road tests.”

Alderson adds DriveTest is hiring more than 130 temporary driver examiners to make more road tests available, so people who need them can get them as quickly as possible – reducing backlog and lineups.

“By hiring additional temporary driver examiners, the province expects that DriveTest will reduce the wait time for road tests to pre-COVID-19 levels by March 2021,” Alderson says. She notes testing centres shut down in the spring making many Ontarians unable to get their driver’s licences.

Dewey has retired from Garrys Garden Centre now, but he remembers customers coming in from the DriveTest when he worked there. He recalls one customer in particular who came in “exuberant” that they’d passed their test after failing to pass six times where they lived.

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It's no secret that people come from larger urban centres to take their tests in Lindsay, he says. It's easier to pass the test here without a major highway to test on.

"But that's another issue," he says. "Now we have another COVID-19 (wave). Now we have the possibility of COVID-19 coming into our community."

David Williams, chief medical officer of health, is advising individuals and families from higher transmission zones to avoid travel to lower transmission zones, except for essential reasons.

Mary Dane, governance and stakeholder director for Serco Inc., which manages DriveTest, says DriveTest doesn't track where people are coming from to do their road tests.

"We understand the concerns raised regarding DriveTest applicants travelling outside their local areas to take their exams," she says.

"At this time, the ministry and DriveTest do not prohibit applicants from attending their DriveTest centre of choice. Allowing customers to choose any DriveTest centre regardless of residence, optimizes the capacity of the entire DriveTest network and improves customer service through improved access to the earliest possible road tests dates."

Mayor Letham says he's been sharing residents' concerns with MPP Scott, but ultimately the city has "no jurisdiction over (DriveTest's) business model."

"Until the province bans all travel, we have no mechanism to stop folks using it," he says. "It is a provincial building and service and therefore open to residents of the province."

Christine Bujold, senior communications adviser and press secretary for Scott, says everyone has a part to play to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

"Handwashing, hand sanitizer, wearing a mask and maintaining social distancing are an important part of stopping the spread," she says.

"If these measures are taken by everyone we can reduce the spread and continue to keep daily life and the provinces' economy moving forward."