

THE LINDSAY ADVOCATE

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Getting an appointment for a test in the GTA is difficult. Photo: William McGinn.

DriveTest centre in Lindsay faces community scrutiny during pandemic

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Scores of people have taken to social media of late to complain about the number of people who are from out of town lined up at Lindsay Square Mall's DriveTest centre to take their driving test.

Since the Greater Toronto Area is under scrutiny as a COVID-19 hotspot, it has made many uneasy about the loitering near the mall's back entrance, commonly used by

patrons to visit the mall.

However, it seems that at least for some out-of-towners, they feel they have no choice.

One man from the GTA who wished to remain anonymous because of the sensitivities around this issue told the

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Advocate that no other test centres close to him were able to take him right now.

Another visitor from the GTA who shared his first name, Justin, said, “My license is expiring, and there wasn’t a spot available for me around the Toronto area. And if you want to get it done as soon as possible then I guess you have to look outside,” of the GTA, he said.

The Advocate spoke to some of the people waiting around the mall entrance who all explained they were family members or friends of someone who was taking a test, and they were there waiting in a mall unfamiliar to them.

However, even with this being the case many businesses at the mall are unhappy with the situation. An employee for Trent Pet who didn’t wish to be named was one of them.

The crowding by the entrance meant at least one customer was too reluctant to go through that way and the employee had to take their order to the customer’s car. He believes that overall, the pet store has been negatively affected by the crowding at this entrance.

Shirley Salter, an employee for S & H Health Foods, told the *Advocate*, “I have got one of my girls that works here, and her husband’s having surgery in a hot zone, so she has to isolate for two weeks when she comes back. That’s just the way it is,” she said, explaining that people shouldn’t get a free pass from isolating if they’re from an area that has high COVID rates.

Salter encourages anyone from out of town to either stay outside or wear a mask. “I just want people that are in the mall to wear a mask and protect the other people that are in the community.”

Trent Pet’s employee said the complaints are not about race, something some people on social media are speculating this may be about, given the high number of racialized people in line.

“Unfortunately, because we’re in a country town, [some] people do that. [But] this is not about race. This is about a pandemic, about people’s health, so when people put it about race, that’s very wrong.”

He also said, because Kawartha Lakes hasn’t had many cases for a while, if you’re from out of town, “You should be doing your test in the area that you live in, and then when COVID’s over, then you can do whatever you want.”

When asked about these issues and what should be done about them, Lee Alderson, senior issues advisor to the Ministry of Transportation, said the DriveTest company and the government are currently working towards implementing additional actions to reduce “longer than usual lineups.”

These actions include some DriveTest centres offering extended hours of operation, increasing the number of people who are able to take written tests at 22 centres, and hiring 50 new driver examiners by December 2020.