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By New...

News

Your Kawartha

Former Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MP On Trip To South Africa Impacted By New Travel Bans



By **Pamela Vanmeer** November 28, 2021



Barry Devolin

KAWARTHA LAKES-Former Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MP Barry Devolin has found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Devolin, who now runs a travel agency, left for a whirlwind trip to South Africa, Holland, London and France last week. From his hotel in Holland, Devolin told Kawartha 411 News that he has tours booked for those four destinations in the spring and he wanted to ensure his clients would have a wonderful experience, post-COVID restrictions.

The first four days in South Africa went well and then the world erupted over a new COVID variant called Omicron.

“The four nights in South Africa went fine but when I got to Paris on Friday everything went crazy. I was supposed to go to London today but the UK has blocked anyone from South Africa.”



Barry Devolin on the plane to South Africa

The new mutation was first discovered in South Africa and has since been detected in Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, Israel, Italy, the Czech Republic and Hong Kong.

The Ontario government announced two cases of the variant had been confirmed in Ottawa on Sunday.

Two Omicron cases have been detected in Australia after travellers

from southern Africa arrived in Sydney, the New South Wales Health Ministry announced on Sunday.

The two travellers are in isolation along with 12 other passengers who came from southern Africa. According to the Health Ministry, both cases are people who are fully vaccinated and asymptomatic. Two cases have been confirmed in the UK, two others in Germany and one in Italy. Dozens more are suspected in the Netherlands and the Czech Republic. Officials in South Africa say cases are mild.

Devolin says the people in South Africa are more concerned about the economic impact of travel restrictions imposed on the country than the virus itself.

“The daily case numbers and fatalities have been very low for the past few months in South Africa, lower than Canada and still are,” Devolin explains. “The feeling until last week was that they were past the worst of it. They were more interested in the economic impact, it’s the beginning of their summer there, they were hoping they were going to recover some of the money they lost over the last two years.”

On November 26th Our World Data reports there were 803 cases of Coronavirus in South Africa. That’s down from 19,955 on July 8, 2021. South Africa is 41st in terms of deaths per capita and far below the US and UK. Over the last seven days South Africa has had an average of 3.7 deaths per million while Canada has had 3.25.

Devolin will have to skip the UK portion of his tour and will spend the next seven days in Holland.

“The Netherlands went into half lockdown yesterday, everything shutdown from 5 pm to 5 am but this has nothing to do with the new variant, it’s because of a surge in cases that already taking place.”

He’s hoping the borders will remain open and he will have no problem getting home.

The Government of Canada has implemented enhanced border measures for all travellers who have been in the Southern Africa region — including South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Namibia— within the last 14 days before arriving in Canada.

Foreign nationals who have travelled in any of these countries within the previous 14 days will not be permitted entry into Canada.

Canadian citizens, permanent residents and people with status under the *Indian Act*, regardless of their vaccination status or having had a previous history of testing positive for COVID-19, who have been in these countries in the previous 14 days will be subject to enhanced testing, screening, and quarantine measures.

These individuals will be required to obtain, within 72 hours of departure, a valid negative COVID-19 molecular test in a third country before continuing their journey to Canada. Upon arrival to Canada, regardless of their vaccination status or having had a previous history of testing positive for COVID-19, they will be subject to immediate arrival testing. All travellers will also be required to complete a test on day 8 after arrival and quarantine for 14 days.

Devolin, who currently lives in Haliburton, was elected in the **2004 election** to represent the newly redistributed riding of **Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock**. He remained the MP until 2015 when he did not seek re-election.

With only approximately 24 % of the population of South Africa fully vaccinated, the former politician says he feels Canada should be doing more to ensure vaccine equity.

“My message is, this is why countries like Canada need to help poor countries get vaccinated, rich countries will never be safe until the whole world has access to vaccines.”