

# Solution in works to keep seniors' driving tests in town

By **TED BROWN**

Staff Writer

About a month before Georgetown's Lorne Hunter turned 90, he received a notice from the Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO), telling him he had to go for his driver's licence test.

Going for the test has never been much of a concern for Hunter. He's been taking the test—and passing it—every other year since he turned 80.

In the past, he'd set up an appointment and meet the MOT inspector at the Georgetown Seniors Centre, where he and any other driver who needed a test would undergo the biannual exam.

"This time was different," said Hunter. "When I called in for an appointment, they told me they no longer offered the test at the Seniors Centre. I was told I had to drive to Brampton or Mississauga to take it (the test)."

MTO spokesperson Bob Nichols said they made the decision to stop offering senior driver Group Education Sessions at the Georgetown Seniors Centre after receiving a notice earlier this year from the Centre of its intention to increase rent on the space used by the MTO.

"We understand the inconvenience this may be causing some seniors in the Georgetown area," said Nichols.

He said there are a number of alternate locations within a 30-minute drive of Georgetown, including Milton, Oakville, Brampton and Mississauga.

But that may only be a temporary situation as Nichols confirmed Monday the Town of Halton Hills and MTO staff is working on an arrangement to offer the testing at Georgetown Library.

"Last month, MTO talked with (Wellington-Halton



Lorne Hunter, 90, of Georgetown is one of many seniors who are impacted by the Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO) no longer offering drivers' licence testing to seniors at the Georgetown Seniors Centre. *Photo by Ted Brown*

Hills) MPP Ted Arnott and a representative from the Halton Hills Public Library regarding the feasibility of conducting the GES program there. The Library has agreed to allow MTO to use the facility. Negotiations are currently underway to begin conducting the GES program at this location in early January 2014," said Nichols.

An announcement made at Halton Hills council Monday evening confirmed that Town staff and the MTO are working together to finalize the arrangement.

"More details are expected to follow in the weeks ahead," it was announced.

In the meantime, however, seniors have to go out of

town to be tested.

"It doesn't seem right, making seniors drive out of town," continued Hunter. "Personally, I'm not too worried about driving to Mississauga or Brampton for the test—I drive pretty much anywhere I want. But others aren't quite as comfortable driving to unfamiliar places like that to take their test."

Hunter said in the past, the MTO inspectors set up at the Seniors Centre about once a month, to test any seniors who were due for their driving test.

"We had about 30 drivers show up at a time," said Hunter. "We even had seniors come down from Acton to take their test. When they (the MTO) said they weren't coming out to Georgetown anymore, we offered to pay a bit more for the test to cover the cost of traveling out for the day to make it more convenient for our seniors. But they still said 'no' and we now have to drive out of town."

Hunter said the test is 'fairly simple' with a written part, which checks the driver's knowledge of signs and rules of the road.

"In the written part, we tick off the little box that has the right answer. It's pretty straightforward," said Hunter. "The next part is the scary one. That's where they check your eyesight."

Jim Kennedy agrees moving the test out of Georgetown isn't fair to the seniors.

"I understood they (MOT) were requiring over-80 drivers to drive to Milton for their test," said Kennedy. "Many seniors in my building aren't comfortable driving to Milton. There's so much construction and traffic there now."

—With files from Lisa Tallyn, staff writer

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