

Spring 99, Auto Care

Drive Clean program promised to be affordable and convenient

It will be fairly easy to find a repair garage approved to perform an emissions test under Ontario's Drive Clean program.

The Drive Clean program is designed to help fight smog, which is linked to the rise of respiratory ailments, especially among children. The problem is particularly acute in many urban areas with a large number of motorized vehicles. Cars, trucks and buses are the single largest source of smog-causing pollutants in Ontario.

"We will make sure that approved testing and repair facilities are readily available

and that emission tests are affordable," said Environment Minister Norm Sterling. "The cost of a test, in fact, is less than the cost of one fill-up of gasoline for many cars."

The cost of a test has been capped by the government at \$30 (tax excluded) and \$15 for a retest. The actual cost may vary below the \$30 limit, depending on the competition between Drive Clean facilities.

The test itself should take less than 20 minutes. A vehicle is driven onto a machine called a dynamometer that looks like a treadmill. It allows the vehicle to be driven

on the spot at different speeds to simulate road conditions. A special probe is inserted into the tailpipe. This probe is connected to a computer which analyses the pollutants in the exhaust.

The vehicle is accelerated to a steady speed of 40 kilometres per hour. Several readings are taken. The computer calculates an average of the readings and prints out a report telling whether the vehicle has passed or failed. A successful test report must be taken to a Ministry of Transportation licence office or kiosk to

renew the registration or to change ownership.

It's expected that about 80 out of 100 vehicles will pass the Drive Clean test the first time, based on experiences with similar programs in other jurisdictions. Those that fail will have to be repaired and retested as many times as it takes to get a pass. The government has also put a \$200 limit on the first-time repairs that will be required for licence renewal if a vehicle fails its first emissions test.

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