

Anthony Furey: Doug Ford is right, every cash-grabbing speed camera must go

Cities had a chance to improve them, but they couldn't be bothered



A funny thing happened earlier this year when many residents of the City of Vaughan complained about speed cameras and one of them was even knocked down shortly after 10 cameras were installed this spring.

Before the cameras were installed, Vaughan Councillor Gila Martow anticipated the backlash and proposed a number of revisions to make the system less punishing. The rest of council didn't support her on it, but they soon learned the hard way after complaints came flooding in. To their credit though, council then voted for a complete pause to issuing fines until this fall when they'd reassess the issue.

How about that? Mayor Steven Del Duca, Coun. Martow and other members of council listened to their constituent complaints instead of telling them that beatings would continue until morale improved.

If only the same sort of common sense leadership was on display in the City of Toronto. Speed cameras are the hot button issue right now, after a whopping 16 of the roadside cash grabbers were recently taken out by vandals in the middle of the night.

For a while it was a single camera — on Parkside Drive in the High Park neighbourhood — that was repeatedly vandalized. But now it looks like the attacks have gone citywide.

We can't have members of the public repeatedly vandalizing city property. What we also shouldn't do though is continually replace these cameras just to prove a misguided point.

Instead of throwing good money after bad, the City of Toronto now has the opportunity to make a somewhat graceful exit from the speed camera cash grab racket.

And make no mistake about it, a racket it is. The Parkside Drive camera, as of this spring, had issued 67,800 tickets generating \$7.2 million in fines since it was created in 2021. That's a single speed camera netting almost \$2 million per year in revenue for the city.

Some local safety advocates in the area are even against the camera because they believe the City uses it as an excuse to say they are dealing with reckless driving in the area when what they'd prefer is a greater police presence to make more meaningful, and more discretionary, interventions.

Toronto traffic is horrendous. It's harder to get around than ever. This is leading people to make increasingly dangerous choices when driving. It's not a good situation and we need to cool things down. But setting up cash grabs to nab drivers for going 42 km/hr — the speed I was going the one time I received such a ticket while driving down an empty thoroughfare one night — is just punitive.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford was speaking for regular hardworking people when he said he wants cities to remove them and if they don't his government will do it for them.

"They should take out those cameras, all of them," Ford said in the wake of the vandalism. "This is nothing but a tax grab."