

# As a former traffic cop, I see the evidence first-hand – speed cameras aren't a tax grab, they make cities safer

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Cars zoom past a vandalized traffic speed camera beside High Park in Toronto on Thursday August 24, 2023. This one camera sits at the location of multiple fatal crashes and produces millions of dollars in fines, the most of any camera in Toronto. Frank Gunn/The Canadian Press

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When Ontario Premier Doug Ford called automated speed enforcement cameras a "tax grab" and said municipalities should get rid of them, I was shocked.

Automated speed enforcement cameras aren't political gimmicks and shouldn't be discussed in a way to try to win votes. They're proven tools that save lives. Calling them a tax grab isn't just wrong, it's dangerous.

Today's cameras are more targeted than the photo radar scrapped in the 1990s. They're confined to community safety zones near schools, parks, hospitals, retirement homes and high-collision corridors. These aren't random placements.

The evidence is overwhelming. [The Region of Waterloo cites global studies](#) showing speed cameras reduce crashes by up to 50 per cent and serious or fatal injuries by up to 44 per cent.

A [2025 CAA South Central Ontario survey](#) found 73 per cent of drivers slowed down when approaching an Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE) camera. About 52 per cent report they do not speed up again after passing. Approximately 23 per cent of Ontario drivers say they have already received an ASE ticket, up from 17 per cent the previous year. These results reflect changing driver behaviour, not just attitudes and it screams that speeding is a huge issue.

A [study](#) by the Hospital for Sick Children and Toronto Metropolitan University published in *Injury Prevention* in July 2025, covered 250 Toronto school zones between 2020 and 2022. It found a 45-per-cent drop in speeding, an 88-per-cent reduction in vehicles exceeding the limit by 20 kilometres an hour or more and a 10.7-kilometre-an-hour drop in the 85th percentile speed when cameras were active.

And here's the most important point: speed kills. The faster a vehicle is going, the greater the force of impact and the lower the chance of survival. Collisions at 50 km/h are far more likely to result in serious injury or death than collisions at 30 km/h.

especially if you've racked up multiple envelopes.

So why the allergic reaction to accountability? The complaints are excuses. People don't like getting caught breaking rules they want to break. The critics of cameras are the violators and why should we listen to the people who are making the roads less safe?

[TIRF's Road Safety Monitor](#) surveys consistently show that Canadians rank speeding and aggressive driving among their top concerns and they recognize that excessive speed makes crashes more severe.

Camera enforcement hits your wallet but not your license or insurance. For many, that's a benefit. Yet somehow it gets twisted into the "tax grab" narrative.

My solution is simple: These tickets should carry demerit points. Better yet, remove the fine completely, so it's purely about accountability and safer driving. The penalty would be losing your privileges and possibly a rate hike. I'm sure we'd see a shift in behaviour.

Here's the simple truth. If cameras didn't work, nobody would complain. The people complaining are the ones getting caught. And the [City of Toronto's own published ASE data proves it](#). In 2024, the program issued 528,672 tickets, an average of 44,000 per month or about 1,450 every day. At one point, when all 150 cameras were live, they issued more than 94,000 tickets in a single month. These are not anomalies. They are proof that speeding is widespread and enforcement is essential.

Every driver has the option to avoid tickets by simply following the law and driving safely.

Cameras aren't a tax grab. They're a consequence designed to motivate

In Toronto, when local road speed limits dropped from 40 km/h to 30 about a decade ago, [pedestrian deaths and serious injuries dropped by nearly 67 per cent](#). Nationally, Transport Canada [data](#) reported by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) shows that almost one in four fatal crashes in 2021 involved speeding or driving too fast for conditions.

So, if the data is clear, why the pushback?

Ford said, "If you want to slow traffic at school, you put the big, huge signs, big flashing lights, crossing area, people will slow down. This is nothing but a tax grab."

But that's just not true. We already have speed limit signs everywhere and, as required by law, there are signs warning drivers that speed cameras are ahead. Yet, people still choose to speed.

If signs worked on their own, we wouldn't need cameras or tickets.

Some say speed bumps are the solution. Speed bumps do slow traffic, but they delay emergency vehicles, interfere with snow clearing, cause unnecessary wear on vehicles and punish law-abiding drivers along with violators. That's not enforcement.

Others complain it feels unfair to get a ticket from a camera instead of an officer. The truth is the only difference is that an officer might not be there to catch you. Cameras don't get tired, they don't take breaks and if you speed in a community safety zone, you're absolutely getting caught.

Another complaint is the delay in receiving tickets. Weeks can pass before a ticket arrives by mail because charges are manually reviewed before being processed. Sure, instant feedback would be better, but the delay doesn't erase the offence. If anything, the surprise in the mailbox might sting more,

drivers to make better, safer decisions. They protect children walking to school, seniors crossing the street and every driver who just wants to get home alive.

If we want safer communities, the right choice is to strengthen enforcement, not tear it down. Cameras aren't a tax on drivers. They're accountability for violators. Removing them won't save money, it will cost lives.

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