To Be or Not to Be -
Clarifying the Dilemma of Speed Cameras in Ontario.

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November 14, 2025, marks the day when automated speed enforcement (ASE, commonly known as speed cameras) became officially banned across Ontario. This move by the Ontario government sparked intense debate across city halls and traffic safety circles. Premier Doug Ford criticized the devices as "cash grabs," arguing that many municipalities use them primarily to raise revenue rather than improve safety. In their place, his government promised to promote or subsidize physical traffic-calming measures, such as speed bumps, raised crosswalks, curb extensions, and roundabouts. The question now is whether this reversal is a step forward or backward in Ontario's road safety strategy.

The Ontario Shift: From Enabling to Banning

Ontario first enabled municipalities to deploy speed cameras through regulation in 2019. Proponents at the time argued that the cameras could act as a tool to slow traffic in school zones and community safety zones. Fast forward to 2025: Ford's government has taken the position that many municipalities now rely on these cameras as a source of revenue. He cited figures such as one Toronto camera issuing over 63,000 tickets and generating more than $7 million in fines. He contends that if cameras truly worked to suppress speeding, such high volumes of infractions would not persist.

In his place, Ford proposed a new provincial road safety fund to support municipalities in deploying physical calming measures alongside enhanced signage, education, and enforcement. This move has been met with disappointment from municipalities and road safety advocates. Over 20 mayors have urged Ford to compromise, warning that removing speed cameras would have a serious negative impact on road safety. The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police has likewise stated that speed cameras have

been proven to reduce speeding, change driver behaviour, and make roads safer.

Statistical Evidence

To assess the effectiveness of speed cameras, it is essential to review previous research to determine whether their use has reduced speed, crash frequency, or crash severity. A study by SickKids and the Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) found a 45% reduction in speeding in school zones following the implementation of speed cameras. Speed data from Brampton and Mississauga indicate that the implementation of speed cameras has resulted in an average speed reduction of approximately 9 km/h, with some sites experiencing reductions of up to 20 km/h. In York Region, the installation of speed cameras resulted in a 15 km/h reduction in average speeds and a 25% increase in compliance with posted speed limits. In Waterloo Region, following the implementation of speed cameras in February 2025, the average speed in school zones was reduced by 15 km/h. A 2025 research study by CAA South Central Ontario found that speed cameras have a positive influence on drivers' habits. Specifically, 73% of Ontario drivers slow down when approaching speed cameras, and 52% report they're unlikely to speed up after passing through areas with speed cameras.

Why Don't We Simply Replace Speed Cameras with Other Physical Measures?

Premier Ford suggested that speed cameras can be replaced with other physical traffic calming measures, such as speed bumps, raised crosswalks, curb extensions, and roundabouts. However, we must remember a few facts regarding this approach:

a) While most of those physical measures, such as roundabouts, raised crosswalks, or curb extensions, are primarily applicable at intersections, speed cameras are most effective in mid-block segments.

b) Roundabouts require space and capital investment; therefore, they are often infeasible in dense urban areas.

c) Speed bumps are challenging in Canada due to their interference with snow removal operations and the slowing of emergency vehicles.

Finally, each tool has situational strengths and weaknesses; effective road safety strategies depend on combining multiple measures. Road safety is best achieved through a combination of:

a) Engineering and Design (calming geometry, street redesign)
b) Enforcement (automated and manual)
c) Education and Awareness
d) Policy and Regulation (speed limits, zoning)

Speed cameras are not a panacea but one of many tools in the broader toolbox. Removing them entirely without bolstering other measures could leave enforcement gaps. Physical measures must be well-planned, adequately funded, and evaluated over time. Where mid-block speeding remains an issue, targeted or limited use of cameras could be reconsidered.

Balancing Philosophy, Politics, and Evidence

The Ford government frames the move as an affordability and fairness measure. Critics argue it undermines proven safety enforcement. Statistical evidence from Ontario suggests that speed cameras can reduce speeding, as well as the frequency and severity of crashes. However, road safety depends not merely on keeping or eliminating speed cameras, but on whether the replacement strategies, including infrastructure, signage, and education, can sustain or improve safety outcomes. The dilemma, to be or not to be, is thus less about the cameras themselves than about how Ontario chooses to balance design, enforcement, and accountability in pursuit of safer roads.

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Dr. Essam Dabbour is registered as a professional engineer (P. Eng.) in Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia. He is also a Fellow of the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) and a certified Road Safety Professional - Level 1 (RSP1) and Road Safety Auditor. With a Ph.D. in Transportation Engineering and over 35 years of combined academic and practical experience, Dr. Dabbour is widely recognized as a leading expert in road safety. Dr. Dabbour is also the instructor of three courses for municipal staff across Ontario, focused on managing municipal liability and enhancing safety for all road users. Dr. Dabbour has authored more than 60 articles in leading academic journals and professional publications on topics related to road design and traffic safety. He is currently the president of EDA Forensics, specializing in the engineering investigation of traffic collisions and other incidents to help the legal and insurance communities determine liability.