

Council condemns Ford government's handling of ASE ban

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Over 90 per cent of speeding tickets issued to non-residents while speed cameras were active

Shelburne council rejected what it called 'unsupported claims' by Premier Ford that speed cameras were 'total cash grabs' during its Monday, Nov. 24 meeting. Council said the premier's irresponsible approach to banning Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE) has resulted in unwarranted hostility towards town staff.

Following the Ford government's move to ban automated speed enforcement across the province, the Town of Shelburne has condemned the handling of the situation, saying that Ford's fast-tracking of the ban, without meaningful public debate or consultation, was irresponsible.

Shelburne Mayor Wade Mills said he believes Ford mishandled the program in its entirety, reminding council and meeting observers that it was originally a program Ford endorsed.

'I think the way this was handled by our premier was unfair and dangerous, quite frankly, to municipal staff,' he said.

'Let's remember that this was a provincially initiated program. This was a program that the province decided that it wanted to follow.'

He continued by criticizing the premier's rhetoric surrounding the ban, which the mayor said put town employees in the crosshairs of disgruntled people.

'People change their minds, but to do it in such a way as to accuse municipalities of being tax grabbers and greedy, I think it really puts our staff in the crosshairs of some angry residents who were feeding off the rhetoric used by the premier,' he said.

'Again, he is the premier; he's entitled to change his mind, but I think the way (he) handled it all was irresponsible.'

Mayor Mills' comments were echoed by Councillor Len Guchardi, who praised town staff for weathering the hostility from upset locals and harshly condemned Ford's rhetoric.

'I want to commend the staff for having to deal with the hostility that was created by the comments made by the premier,' he said. 'Shame on (him), he owes every municipality in this province an apology for how he put our staff in peril and created a situation where unwarranted hostility was directed at them.'

Guchardi also said that Ford used municipalities as scapegoats while avoiding any responsibility on the provincial level.

'Remember, from 2022 this province collected approximately 30 per cent of every ticket that went right back to provincial coffers,' he said. 'So to absolve themselves of saying 'hey, it's not a tax grab for us' and then turn around and say that the municipalities are the villains ? it is unethical.'

The town has released data collected by its ASE cameras in the roughly two months they were active.

From Sept. 5, when their cameras went up, to Nov. 14, when they were deactivated, the town said that the cameras captured 2.1 million vehicles and issued 57,055 penalty orders. This averaged to 827 penalties per day.

According to the town, 65 per cent of the tickets were speeding violations along the Main Street East and West routes that run through town.

Local residents were also observed to be the extreme minority among speeding ticket recipients, with over 92 per cent of tickets issued to non-residents.

As a result of the cameras, town staff said they observed reductions in speed of three to five kilometres per hour in ASE zones, demonstrating, in their words, a tangible effect on speeding.

Mayor Mills said that the irony now is that local taxpayers will be paying more for speed enforcement going forward, as the town will need to redirect resources to other methods.

?We're moving from a system where those who violate the law are penalized with a ticket, to a system where now we're all paying for it,? Mayor Mills noted.

Shelburne residents were mostly unaffected by the speed cameras, with the majority of speeders being out-of-town residents.

Now, the town said, everyone will be affected as additional costs will be needed to invest in different forms of speed enforcement, and physical checks like speed bumps will slow everyone down.

An additional briefing will be presented in early 2026 with the full financial details of the Town of Shelburne's ASE program. This will include total revenue collected while it was operational.

As previously reported, because the town chose a revenue-sharing option rather than outright purchase of the cameras, there will be no immediate cost to taxpayers due to the cancellation of the ASE program.