

Forwarded this email? [Subscribe here](#) for more

Weekly Wrap - July 25, **2026**

The expense account keeps growing, wildfires getting worse, by-elections and even more by-elections. Plus, the SDF saga reignites. Here are some headlines from the past week.

TED HSU

JUL 26

READ IN APP

More on Ford Government's expense scandal

Last week, news broke that PC MPPs had expensed nearly \$100,000 on hotel stays in the cities where they live. The week culminated with the resignation from cabinet of the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, Stan Cho. Since then, opposition parties have called for the other ministers embroiled in the scandal to resign, with many also calling on Cho to step down as the MPP for Willowdale.

Thanks for reading! Subscribe for free to receive new posts and support my work.

Subscribed

Since then, it was also revealed that Labour Minister David Piccini's PC riding association spent tens of thousands of dollars on hotels, restaurants, limousines, and the private and exclusive Albany Club in Toronto. Piccini's staff said the expenses were related to fundraising activities and constituency business. Reports have also pointed to divisions within the PC caucus, with some members frustrated by Doug Ford's handling of the scandal while others are concerned about the impact on their own planned fundraisers.

As this story continues to unfold, one thing is clear: money has distracted this government's members away from focusing on the things Ontarians really need.

Worst wildfire season in Ontario

2026 is on track to become Ontario's worst wildfire season on record, with over 728,363 hectares burned and more than 1,800 residents evacuated. Most of the

fires have occurred in the northwest and affected several First Nations communities. Many homes and infrastructure have been destroyed, and the toxic smoke has triggered air quality alerts for much of Ontario and parts of the United States for several days. Currently, there are over 150 active fires across Ontario (see the Live Fire Map).

Canadian climate scientists have linked the increasing intensity and frequency of wildfires to climate change. According to Climate Data Canada, a collaboration led by Environment and Climate Change Canada and other climate science organizations, climate change means more "fire weather": hotter temperatures and lower humidity, which contribute to drier forests and vegetation. In turn, these conditions lengthen wildfire seasons and make larger and destructive fires more likely.

In addition to the destruction of communities, we all feel the negative health effects of wildfire smoke, as well as the broader environmental and economic impacts. It is imperative that we address climate change and invest in strategies to prevent and manage wildfires more

effectively, including, realistic budgeting for firefighting, enhancing emergency preparedness and swift action to support disaster affected communities.

Skills Development Fund Accountability

The Ford government has taken a Skills Development Fund (SDF) recipient to court for breach of contract. The defendant now claims it gave away the \$3.3 million it was awarded for job training to other organizations. The defendant, Justice Fund founder Yonis Hassan, claims the funding was distributed to 49 community organizations and companies. However, when contacted, none of the organizations said they had received skills development funding from the Justice Fund.

The Ford government is arguing that the Justice Fund used SDF funds for “unjust enrichment” and is seeking repayment of the grant. In response, Hassan has launched a \$3 million countersuit, alleging defamation. The process by which SDF fund recipients were chosen by the Ford government has been controversial ever since an Auditor General report found that certain low-

scoring proposals got funding, and high-scoring ones did not. Neither the process nor individual scores have ever been made public.

Upcoming By Elections

People who are unhappy with the Ford PC government sometimes ask me what can be done. They talk about recall petitions but our system doesn't have them. They ask about confidence votes, but a majority government doesn't lose them.

Now there is an actual opportunity for people to express what they think by voting or campaigning. Three by-elections are expected to be called on Wednesday, August 5th in the ridings of Scarborough Southwest (the NDP Deputy Leader, MPP Doly Begum quit to become the federal Liberal MP), York-Simcoe (PC Minister Caroline Mulroney quit) and Hamilton East – Stoney Creek (PC Minister Neil Lumsden quit). Election Day would be Thursday, September 3rd.

If you want to participate in any of the three by-elections, pick a candidate you want to support and get

involved!