

TED HSU - MPP Report - Ontario Provincial Liberals

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Weekly Wrap - June 14, 2025

Grocery stores concerned about alcohol sales, housing starts at 2009 levels, Ontario finally has a long-term energy plan, and more. Here are some of this week's headlines.

Ted Hsu

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### **Ontario housing starts lowest since 2009**

Ontario's financial watchdog [reports](#) that Ontario's housing starts are the lowest they've been since 2009. This news is disappointing, but unsurprising. It feels like every few months I comment on housing starts hitting a new low. The Housing Ministry has commented that housing starts have been worsened by Trump's tariffs, and while that may be true, the Ford government needs to rethink its approach. Prioritizing big, sparse developments isn't the answer. We need more affordable homes built with gentle density and modest design.

Toronto's [success](#) with allowing four-plexes, even moving toward six-plex approvals, is proof this approach can work. Especially in rapidly growing urban areas, serious consideration of gentle density is long overdue.

### **Codewords used to conceal Greenbelt documents**

Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner found that government staff used [code words](#) to refer to the Greenbelt, such as "special project," "G\*\*," or "GB", to help the government evade freedom-of-information requests and record keeping laws. Combined with business being communicated across different government and personal devices, these tactics have made it harder to assess the full extent of misconduct.

This isn't just poor record-keeping, the Commissioner sees it as a purposeful attempt at sidestepping public accountability. These actions add to a troubling pattern of disregard for transparency and raise serious concerns about the government's commitment to accountability.

### **New Long-Term Energy Plan**

The Ford government has released its first long-term energy plan, [Energy for Generations](#). We have been expecting it since January, so it is late but still welcome. The last long-term energy plan for the province came out in 2017. One important thing about this new plan is that it takes an integrated approach – combining plans for elements like electrical power, transportation fuels, heating, storage and efficiency. We should be switching from gasoline to electric vehicles for transportation, and from natural gas to heat pumps for home heating. So an integrated plan is essential. One difference between this government’s plans and my view is that I think we need to put more emphasis on renewable energy and storage, and a faster transition away from fossil fuels. I also think we are very behind when it comes to updating our electricity grid. Especially during the first few years of the Ford government, we lost critical time to plan, adapt, and build the energy infrastructure needed to meet our climate goals in time while providing affordable and reliable energy for the economy.

### **Grocers concerned over retail alcohol expansion**

Grocers are pushing back on the Ford government’s alcohol expansion plan, calling it unfair and unsustainable. At issue is a return-to-retail requirement that forces larger grocery stores more than 5 km from a Beer Store to operate their own bottle-return systems, a requirement not imposed on other retailers. Grocery stores have also been excluded from LCBO’s most recent wholesale discount increases, further exacerbating financial pressures.

Rather than spending over [\\$600 million](#) to fast-track retail alcohol sales, the government should have saved money and taken the time to ensure that the necessary supports were in place to fairly support the expansion of alcohol sales for all retailers.

### **Bill 33**

The Ford government’s Bill 33, Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025, is [drawing criticism](#) for its proposed changes to post-secondary education. One major concern is a provision allowing the Ministry of Education to decide which mandatory student fees are permitted.

Student associations [warn](#) this could jeopardize essential services which are tailored to their unique communities—at Queen’s University, for example, ancillary fees fund bus passes, a food bank, and academic support and wellness programs.

The bill also mandates that admissions decisions be based on ‘merit’, though the government has not defined what that means. It’s my opinion that these proposals are an attempt by the government to regulate themselves out of a crisis they helped create. Ontario has the lowest per-student funding in the country, and instead of addressing the core issue, the province is scapegoating students in an already underfunded post-secondary system.

(Le Francais suit)

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