

25 novembre 2013

**SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2013 /
LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES**

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 19, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to be in the House today to speak on Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. I understand we have spent nine hours and 47 minutes on this. However, I'd like to point out that I've talked to our critic, the member from Cambridge, and got his thoughts on this, and we certainly have some strong concerns on what's actually happening in our education system today.

Mr. Speaker, I know there has been a lot of discussion on this particular bill, but I think what is important is what we as MPPs are hearing about education and what we're hearing from the general public on some of this legislation. Really and truly, the thought of the government actually being at the table with all of the money that is spent on education and all the collective bargaining units—I think it's likely considered to be a fairly decent idea. I know that's the intent of this. I guess the government would come to the table and it would be—whether or not the school boards would prefer that method or not, I haven't gotten that particular feedback from my riding.

However, I wanted to point out that what we want to see on this side of the House is what we're hearing from the public and what we're hearing in our constituency offices, and that certainly goes back to regulation 274. I don't know if there's a member in this House who doesn't hear continually now about all the young teachers we see graduating from their universities and teachers' colleges. They're moving towards their teaching career, and absolutely—I'm not sure how that works as far as the way they're funded. However, there's just a tremendous number of young teachers who are not getting an opportunity even to get their foot in the door, even for like one hour of time to supply teach. That's what I hear on a regular basis.

Actually, what I'm hearing now, Mr. Speaker, is parents are writing me letters. They're coming to my office; I'm meeting them at functions, even on the weekend. It actually happened a couple of times at parades on the weekend over the Christmas season. I can tell you, I heard clearly that they were kind of upset that they ever sent their kids in to teachers' college, because some of them now have been there for two and a half, three years and have had almost no opportunity to teach at all. So that has been a real problem.

We, on this side of the House—I think I can say that on behalf of our critic, and some of the other folks may have mentioned this as well—would like to see regulation 274 changed so that we can actually make sure that a lot of people get more of an opportunity in this, and that the best teachers are there teaching.

Certainly we get a lot of complaints. I hear it all the time from people, saying, “These people retired, and now they get 50 days of teaching a year. That’s taking away the opportunity for young teachers. In a way, it’s kind of like double-dipping.” We hear that continually. I would be interested, on some of the comments coming back, if anybody is not hearing that, because it’s actually growing in my riding. The more we talk about education, the more it brings to light the fact that some of these young men and women can’t get any chance at all. Some of them have left the profession. They’ve gone back to community colleges. They’ve moved overseas. Some of them have gone to Korea. They’re maybe teaching some English courses or something like that in some foreign countries, but they really don’t want to be there. They’d rather be in their home province. I think that is something we have to zero in on.

I do want to say, while I’ve got an opportunity, Mr. Speaker—and I hope I’m not too far off the topic here, but in my role as critic for skilled trades and apprenticeship reform I’ve had a lot of really, really good communications with a lot of school boards around the province: some directors of education, people who are really interested in how we’re working with young people as far as working them into the trades as well. Almost everyone thinks that when we’re changing legislation and we’re here debating it—I’m getting a lot of feedback that we should be changing how the curriculum deals with getting young people into skilled trades and making sure that they get an opportunity to be educated early on that.

Last year, I had an opportunity in Regent Park Public School in Orillia. They asked me to go to a career day, and they asked me to go as an MPP to talk to the kids. It was a whole afternoon. For every hour, you were able to talk to a separate group of kids from grades 5 to 8 for up to an hour, and you would circulate with a different class every hour. I told them, of course, about politics, what it was like to be down here at Queen’s Park and how the system worked. There were some kids interested in that, of course, the same as how there are these young people who are pages here in the Legislature today interested in that. However, when I told them about my background in the trades—I’d been a plumbing contractor and worked in the mechanical trades—I actually made a special attempt to talk about that because I wanted to make sure that the young people knew that there were real opportunities beyond high school if they made sure they went into the skilled trades and took training in that area.

Many other jurisdictions in the world do that—some of the European jurisdictions—where they actually try to pinpoint some of the abilities that young men and women may have in very early years in education. I think we’ve got to do that, Mr. Speaker. I’m hearing it over and over again. I hear it from my stakeholders that work with me in apprenticeship reform. I think if there’s one area that any government can make a major improvement on, it’s making sure that we actually start to funnel kids to a certain area if they show that expertise in the early years.

What that costs, I don’t know. I know we’ve taken most of the shops out of most of the schools, but so many people are so—they’re not academically inclined, but they’re inclined to work with their hands and they really get it, as far as the trades; they’re able to work in all the different trades. I think it’s a real opportunity for government, no matter who’s in power, to actually take those steps to make sure that we can do more in that area.

One small step—but it has already proved to be quite positive—is the fact that we have the double-credit system in some of our community colleges with certain high schools. Kids who are in high school or secondary school actually get a chance to take courses at a community college. They have already proven with that that a lot of those kids will go on and take technical

programs or different skilled trades areas at some of the applied arts colleges, and I think it's really important that we do that.

We're looking at the whole education system today, looking at how many people need jobs who are qualified to be, say, in the teaching profession, and yet we've got thousands of job opportunities coming down the road in the skilled trades area in the province of Ontario. I'm not sure what the College of Trades is doing on that; I don't think they're doing anything as far as lobbying the school boards or the Ministry of Education on how you better educate people to look at a future in the trades, but I think that's one area.

I know I'm right off topic as far as Bill 122, but the reality is that in this bill we're talking about what we can do best for our young people and what we're hearing out there. So I wanted to bring that to the House today and basically say that, in my tours around the province, what I'm hearing is not a lot about collective agreements. I'm hearing a lot about young men and women getting an opportunity to work in a classroom, and what are we doing for young people in our education system that's getting them more involved in the skilled trades?

With that, I'd like to say that one school in particular, under the Simcoe County District School Board—I think it's the Bear Creek school, on the west end of Barrie—has done some phenomenal work out there. It's just a matter of getting the right teachers and the right principal in the right frame of mind to do a lot of really interesting projects. After touring that school, I know that some of the schools, in fact, really want to be directed toward the trades and want to basically make that classroom open to everybody and look at all the different options for the future.

My time is up, Mr. Speaker, but I do appreciate the opportunity to say a few words, and I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to respond to some of the comments that were made by the member from Simcoe North. I'm glad he mentioned that he was way off topic, because for the most part he didn't talk about Bill 122 at all. But he did mention some very important issues around skilled trades and the need to accelerate experiential learning opportunities in education in the province of Ontario. We are probably very closely in agreement on those issues.

Bill 122, though, essentially brings some clarity to collective bargaining—much-needed clarity on the roles of school boards, the roles of the employer and the roles of the ministry. Of course, the reason we need that clarity is because Bill 115 was imposed on the education sector—not just teachers; people often talk about teachers, but there were educational assistants and support staff. Everyone who worked in education, last fall, was blindsided by this government's heavy-handed approach to collective bargaining. Of course, they were joined quite nicely by the PC caucus at the time, hand in hand, trying to impose a zero and zero contract on teachers even when zero and zero was actually on the table.

We actually do support the fact that clarity is needed, because in the absence of trust, which the Liberals have instilled within the education sector—and actually the absence of trust that the Liberals have within their own party—I think it makes a lot of sense. Not common sense—I wouldn't go to the Common Sense Revolution perspective—but I do think laying some ground

rules so that school boards, who are the employers, actually have a valid role, so that they can bring the voices of their students and their communities to the table.

So we, of course, will be supporting this, and we look forward to it getting to committee so that we can address some of the gaps that exist right now in the legislation as it's presented.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: Just commenting on my colleague from Simcoe North, who, I guess, talked about something he believes strongly in—that is, the need for more of our students to look at skilled trades as a possible career option—I know there isn't enough emphasis on that, because there are amazing careers in all our skilled trades that our young people should consider.

The tragedy, though, is that if you look at popular television and popular media, they never portray people working in the skilled trades. Every time you turn on the TV, it's someone—I don't know—sitting around in a bar talking. That's what they do for a living? I don't know; I see these shows. They should show real-life situations where people in skilled trades do amazing work and build this province.

I'm glad he made those comments about that, but getting back to the real topic, Bill 122, we've been here debating this for quite a long time. I think what we need to do is get this before a committee to hear from the experts and to hear the people out there in Ontario who want to give their input on this bill. I just hope that we get on with listening to the people because I think that people across this province know how complex education is, given that there are so many thousands—tens of thousands—of teachers who have to work through these complex collective bargaining agreements. This is an attempt at bringing some rationality there. It is not an easy thing to do, and that's why we have to get this to committee and make this bill work the best we can. None of this is easy. It is extremely challenging, but at least this is a step toward bringing some kind of rationality to collective bargaining across this great province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I want to thank the member from Simcoe North, my esteemed colleague Garfield Dunlop, for the outstanding work that he has done with regard to the trades and the College of Trades and what kind of damage that's going to do to the province of Ontario in that particular area of job creation.

As has been mentioned here today, we are certainly baffled by this government at certain times. They've brought forward this piece of legislation, which is a retroactive piece, given the fact that they brought in Bill 115 last fall, which actually circumvented the school boards' ability to negotiate collective bargaining with the teachers' federations. This is nothing more than to mend those bridges that the Liberal Party has burnt in the hopes that, in the next coming election, they are going to gain the financial benefits of befriending the teachers' federations once again.

Although I think it's very good—and that's what government does; we put in place certain frameworks that we can work with, with our public sectors, in teaching and health care and so on. This falls very short, I feel, of what actually needs to be addressed.

I go to the comments made by my esteemed colleague Mr. Dunlop when it comes to actually addressing key issues in the education system like regulation 274, which I'll talk about a little later on when I address Bill 122.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for—help me.

Mr. Michael Prue: Beaches—East York.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Beaches—East York. Thank you very much.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is a privilege and a pleasure to stand up and comment on the speech made by my colleague the member from Simcoe North. I listened, as I always do, in rapt attention, trying to figure out whether or not he was actually talking to the bill. He did make a number of very good points about the trades and about apprenticeships and about how schools should be teaching them. But then again, I had to wonder because this bill has very little or nothing to do with that. This bill has everything to do with how collective bargains are going to be negotiated in the future.

As I sat there and listened and listened as the 10 minutes went, I figured that maybe this was a windup to maybe having a few bells rung. But I was surprised—and pleasantly surprised—when that did not happen today, because it happened the last time for about five hours. So I guess there really was some desire on his part to say something about education.

I think, though, we need to hear a little bit more about the collective bargaining process, and I am heartened that his colleague, who is going to speak, I guess, next or pretty soon to next, is more in tune with what the Conservatives have to say about the collective bargaining process and whether in fact this bill will help or hinder that process. We do know that the two were joined at the hip around Bill 115 there for a while, both thinking that this was the way collective bargaining should take place in the education sector, but there seems to be a slight parting of the ways: the Liberals, obviously having learned the lesson, and the Conservatives, about not to learn the lesson—and tell us how they're going to proceed. But I thank the member from Simcoe North for his edification.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Simcoe North for his response.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to thank the member for Kitchener—Waterloo and the members from Eglinton—Lawrence, Northumberland—Quite West and Beaches—East York for their responses.

What I was trying to get at—I know we've talked about the bill for close to 10 hours. However, what I was trying to do in my 10 minutes, Mr. Speaker—and I appreciate the time you give me—is, I don't hear a lot about the collective bargaining unit in my riding. That's what I was trying to get across. I was trying to get across to the House what I hear in the riding when I'm at different events. Very few people ask me about how collective bargaining units are done by the Ontario government and the school boards. I understand that it goes back to Bill 115 and they're trying to clean up some of what they consider to be the mistakes of Bill 115.

However, I just want to point out again, what I hear is that young teachers are not getting an opportunity to teach. I hear that all the time. Many have gone. After teachers' college, after two

or three years, they've not even taken the time to find anything, so they've gone off to other provinces or other countries or they've just found some other kind of job. I think that's what I hear, and I wanted to point that out.

Of course I hear, over and over again, about our students, which is the priority. Our students are the number one priority. What are we doing for those students to make sure that they're best trained for the 21st century?

What I'm hearing is that—you know what?—there is not nearly enough emphasis put on skilled trades in our elementary and secondary systems. I think there's an opportunity there for the Minister of Education—she's here today—and she must have people saying this to her all the time, this particular issue, because I can tell you that I hear it, in the few stops that I've made, that people want to know why there's not more emphasis put on directing people or funnelling some young people into areas where they might be best suited to help the workforce more. That's in the skilled trades area. We all know the demographics.

Although my time is up, I do appreciate the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's always a pleasure to rise in this hallowed chamber and debate, in a democratic fashion, many of the bills that are brought forward. Today in particular, we have Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

Mr. Speaker, you have to ask yourself why—as a government or as opposition or third party—we bring forward legislation. Usually, it is to address legislation that's outdated or we upgrade legislation that has been passed previously that doesn't necessarily address the concerns presently today.

This is one of the problems with Bill 122. It was created out of the fact that this Liberal government, over a year ago, brought forward Bill 115. We are all well aware of what Bill 115 did here in the Legislature and out in the general public in our education field. It brought much tension and much disagreement. One of the things that I resoundingly heard from a good number of trustees and board members was the fact that this Liberal government circumvented the negotiation process and went strictly to dealing with the unions themselves—the federations.

This piece of legislation that has been brought forward does put a framework in place that I think there is a chance that we could probably support. We would, however, like to see some adjustments to the bill brought in. Of course, we've proposed a sunset clause that would actually revisit this bill a year or so after negotiations have been brought forward, just to make sure that we get it right, because it's a waste of taxpayers' money if we keep bringing forward legislation that is actually going to have a detrimental impact on not only our education sector, but health care sector as well.

What we have here is a government that, as I said, circumvented the negotiation process. We have also seen this pattern develop with the Green Energy Act and the fact that this government has said that they would like to negotiate or sit down and listen and discuss with municipalities about implementing further green energy projects. However, we haven't seen much of this of late. The government says one thing and turns around and does another. So I ask you, Mr.

Speaker, through you to the Liberal government, why should we trust you when you bring forward pieces of legislation that you insist are going to be beneficial to the province of Ontario?

We've seen in the last week hundreds of jobs lost here in the province of Ontario because of ill-advised policies brought forward by this government. I would like to point out, Mr. Speaker, as I alluded to in my two-minute hit to the member from Simcoe North, that I am also hearing from many parents and graduates of the bachelor of education program in my riding—their sons and daughters who are now straddled with a lot of accumulated debt. You're looking at at least four years of post-secondary education to get a degree to go into the field of education.

One of the things that I found disturbing is that this Liberal government's solution to a lot of problems that they face is they kick the can down the road. You may have heard that saying before. They don't want to make the tough decisions or ruffle any feathers. Well, sometimes you have to ruffle feathers to get things done. You have to be someone who is willing to stand up and put into action the words that you say. We don't see that. What they've done with the students coming out of the bachelor of education program is they've said, "Well, we'll extend it another year." So they'll make it, instead of a one-year program, a two-year program.

Let's ask ourselves: What does that actually do? Is that actually going to find my son or my daughter or many of my constituents a job in the education field? Not necessarily. In fact, I would argue that all that's going to do is straddle my child with even more debt. Another year of paying tuition, your housing accommodations, your travel expenses. Right now, we're hearing from the universities and the colleges, from the students there, how burdensome these financial woes are for them right now. So this Liberal government wants to implement yet another year of education so that you can graduate with, instead of a \$35,000 debt, a \$45,000 debt or a \$60,000 debt, and you still can't find employment in the education system.

In fact, this government has said that they are going to address the issue of regulation 274. What have they done? What they've done is they've implemented and they've brought forward Bill 122, which tries to mend the bridges with the federations in the hopes that they can regain the financial support of the federations should there be an election called within the next year or so. This is nothing more than the Liberal Party trying to gain financial favour and befriending the federations once again. It does nothing to help employment here in the province of Ontario. It does nothing to create jobs here in the province of Ontario.

When I speak to and listen to principals regarding regulation 274—what this government has essentially done is taken the principals' hands and tied them behind their backs. They are no longer able to hire teachers who are best suited for their school, their school community, teachers who they feel are going to be best suited for implementing curriculum in the schools. What we have here, I would suggest, is a failure to communicate, and that's too bad. It saddens me.

But Bill 122 also brings forward some elements that they want to address, and we'll have to, again, see how that works.

There are other pressing issues in the field of education that I would like to see addressed as well. I think that Lisa MacLeod, our former education critic, and now Dr. Leone, our current education critic, have done a fantastic job of outlining what exactly we would like to see done in the field of education. Would it fall under the canopy or the framework of Bill 122? I think there's room for that. I think that we should have frameworks in place that actually define the

roles of teachers, the roles of boards and the roles of what we can do, moving forward collectively, so that we ensure that we have the best-taught students, not just in Canada but in the world. We haven't seen that in the last decade. The reason I'm here today is because of the Liberal policies that have been brought down in the last 10 years.

As Dr. Leone, my esteemed colleague from Cambridge, has pointed out, in the last six years, Ontario students have been falling further and further behind. Mr. Leone, the member from Cambridge, brought this up: How could that possibly be, when the Liberal government insists that our EQAO standards are doing fine? "They're fantastic. The students in Ontario should be proud of their great successes and advancements in the field of education. We're training our young people to be the best, that are going to be the best."

Mr. Speaker, that is not the truth, and I can tell you that first-hand. My wife can tell you that first-hand. My colleagues back home can tell you that first-hand. And it's not because the front-line teachers don't care about students; they do. But I have to say, it's this government and the policies that they've implemented that have tied the hands of the front-line teachers, that have them frustrated, and our education system is suffering for it. Bill 122 needs some work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure and privilege today to stand and have some comments for the member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

He talked about post-secondary education and how expensive it is, and how students are graduating straddled with debt—I think those were the words that he used. It's absolutely true. I am the critic for post-secondary education, and what I hear a lot about is the cost of post-secondary education.

But the bill we're talking about today is Bill 122, and that's the foundation that we want to create in our education system for students so that when they get to post-secondary education, they are prepared. In that part of it as well, Speaker, we need to make sure that we have the teachers happy with the work that they do, and that the students are receiving the best quality of education, which we know they are. There are such good teachers out there, and they're doing great work. I know they're in it because they love the profession, and they want to make sure that they relay all their education and all their knowledge to our students and feed them the best education they can have, so that when they do go to post-secondary education, they are prepared.

That's why it's important to get this Bill 122 right. We don't want to see division amongst teachers and school boards. The government has proposed that there's going to be a local table where you have the employer and the employees, which is the school board and the teachers, at the table. Hopefully, when they come together, they can work things out. That's where bargaining should be done: at the table, not in the Legislature, like Bill 115.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: From our side of the House, we've now had 10 hours of debate on Bill 122. Forty-five members have spoken to the bill, and all three parties, as we understand it, are in support of the bill. As the member has said, he's got some amendments that he'd like to see to

Bill 122. We would suggest allowing that to happen. Let's get second reading done, move it to committee and then work on some of the suggestions the member may have.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the member from Northumberland–Quinte West. I think the important issues he has raised are ones that require the additional time that has been mentioned, because of the fact that we're probably looking at, if not the most important, certainly a very close second in terms of the manner in which the future of Ontario lies on a go-forward basis.

It's always in the next generation, and so it behooves us that whatever steps we are taking, or whatever ideas we're putting forward, do have the full benefit of our comments, because the future hangs on how we go forward. I think this bill sets a precedent and is therefore something we need to have thorough time on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Just for the record, I want to point out that the government has extended this debate, and yet they keep getting up and saying, "That's enough debate." So it feels very much like games. Actually, that's really what it felt like for the front-line people in education in September 2012, when a little house of cards was going on here at Queen's Park, and all of a sudden the Liberals were these tough people against unions and brought in Bill 115 and held hands with the PC caucus and imposed a two-year contract of zero and zero, even though zero and zero was already on the table.

I just want to point out that New Democrats are happy to see this piece of legislation go to committee, because there are some big issues with it, even though we acknowledge that clarity for school boards, employees and the ministry is necessary.

One of the things we will be addressing in committee is the provision that allows the employer bargaining agency to be substituted in if, in the minister's opinion, the employer bargaining agency is unable or unwilling to perform its duties. It's basically an opt-out clause if the minister doesn't like the way negotiations are going. They put some language into this piece of legislation that would allow them to bring in a substitute. In my mind, I call this the Laurel Broten clause, because she didn't really like the way things were going last time, and when they went really bad, they went really bad.

Also, there's this other part about good faith with the crown: The employer should co-operate in good faith with the crown. I think that when you have language like that in legislation, "good faith" might mean different things to different people. So we have some concerns with that very subjective language.

We're going to get this to committee, though, regardless of the extended debate. It will get there, and we will work to make it a stronger piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now go back to the member for Northumberland–Quinte West for his reply.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I just want to thank the members from London—Fanshawe, Thunder Bay—Atikokan, of course my esteemed colleague from York Simcoe, and Kitchener—Waterloo for their comments.

I can appreciate how some might be a little frustrated that this bill hasn't been sent to committee already. But, at the same time, I felt passionately enough that I would like to address this bill, and I hadn't had the opportunity yet. I think it's the democratic process, and it's our right to do so. I appreciate what the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan pointed out, but I also appreciate that he loves the fact that we live in a democracy, and we're allowed to have that opportunity.

There are definitely going to be amendments made to this bill when it goes to committee, and that's going to be great. We're going to hear from various stakeholders who are also going to bring forward their ideas as to what and how we can make this bill much, much better.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, we are going to be putting forward the sunset clause that would allow government to revisit the framework that's being proposed and brought back into place, just to make sure that we do get it right. I can't emphasize this enough, because many times I've seen bills move forward and go to committee and come out of committee that have been passed that I think because—the member from Kitchener—Waterloo pays attention to language and words, and the language and wording in those bills are inadequate, and we know that we're going to have to revisit this at a further date.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have a few minutes in which to discuss some of the implications around Bill 122.

First of all, the basis of this is formalizing a provincial role in the bargaining process. Historically, unions would have negotiations going on with their corresponding board, and if the negotiations reached a certain impasse or a certain point in time, then the federation was always in the position to call for a vote, which meant that the provincial negotiators actually came in and took part directly with the negotiations between them and a particular board.

In essence, the unions have had provincial bargaining for many, many years. They just did it on an individual basis. Of course, this allowed for negotiations to include certain benefits in one part of the province that were not in another part of the province, and very often, as time passed, those particular benefits would then find their way over in later bargaining between a different board and its teachers. So, in fact, for some time the provincial oversight by the negotiators for the unions has always been there. The board is not in the same position, and so now we have the province in that role where it is now sitting at the table. I think it's important to understand sort of the way in which this has morphed from local communities with local leadership making decisions for the locality.

This is a process bill. It deals with this particular process and modernizing—I think most people would agree—the process. But I think that, for many of us, we would like more. We want more than a process bill. This is a ministry that has a \$21-billion cost, \$21 billion per year for the Ministry of Education. It's interesting to note that, since 2003, there has been an increase of that budget by \$8 billion more, with 250,000 fewer students. So if people are expecting a results bill, this is not the right one to be looking at.

It's a bit disconcerting, again, because if you look at international test results, they indicate that in fact Ontario is in a decline in student achievement when compared to other jurisdictions. When I listen to the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Finance talking about the innovation that's just around the corner, it makes me a little nervous because I think that's dependent on having those kinds of test scores that place us in that international league.

In fact, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario has recognized that there's a gap between the expectations of those leaving secondary school and their arrival in post-secondary education. That's a huge issue. Universities have commented on students not being well prepared for post-secondary admission. So there's a lot of work to do in following up on that.

As I say, it's a process bill, not a results bill, and I think that when you look at things like regulation 274, it's really unfortunate that what we are looking at here is something that should be the power of the principal. In fact, I think hiring should be the principal's prerogative. In my experience, people purposely looked for a variety of qualified staff. They looked for a variety—a panoply, if you like—of talent, of interest, of experiences, of teaching style, of age or ethnicity. I think that it's designed in a way that they can expose students to the fullest possible range.

Why? Because teachers are role models. They are mentors. Different students learn differently. Different teachers have different teaching styles. These are all things that should be taken into account. The notion that it should be based on one criterion, that of seniority, simply flies in the face of the whole idea of a principal being able to put a staff together that will reflect the best interests of his students.

It's also something that allows him to have what I refer to as the mild eccentricities of individuals. I think of one particular case where I know that that's how some people would have described this particular teacher. One of the things that struck me was that she inspired kids who would never have stayed in school without her, and it's those kinds of opportunities that I feel are overlooked by taking such a narrow approach in this regulation.

I think back on the kids who would have been influenced by this particular teacher. Then there were the kids who were influenced by a phys ed teacher, and they would stay in school for the football season, but then they got hooked a bit and they would stay for the rest of the year. Those are the kinds of people we want teaching our children. Those are the kinds of people we want representing us, and age has nothing to do with that—and I guess I mean that seniority has nothing to do with that.

I recall a colleague of mine who was a World War II veteran, and the stories that she could tell students and the experience that she brought to the teaching experience—she probably would have her job on the basis of seniority, but that's not the point. The point is what she had to offer to students. I think that in every school, everyone should be able to see themselves as being part of that puzzle, of fitting into that jigsaw puzzle to make the complete picture, in order to be able to inspire young people to take whatever direction in their own personal lives they can find so that they can move forward and be successful.

Teachers have a unique opportunity, and to be able to provide that kind of leadership in the community is the ultimate of the principal—as I say, a principal's prerogative. He's the one who should be putting those pieces together in such a way that his students' needs will be best addressed. There are many examples of teachers who have provided that kind of leadership, but it's always on the basis that some people are going to thrive on one person's teaching style or

leadership and other kids are going to learn better from someone else. You can't make it regulated on the issue of seniority. Ontario students deserve better. If we want that innovation and those scores, we have to do the very best, and the very best is hiring the most suitable. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a pleasure to comment on my colleague the member from York–Simcoe's speech, and I listened to it again. It's not so much that she was talking about the bill; she was talking about the influence of teachers. I think very often we are forgetting, even within the confines of this bill, which is the collective bargaining principle and how the teachers collectively bargain so that they can get proper wages and working conditions and health benefits and all the things that come from that—you still have to remember—I listened to the member from York–Simcoe talking. You still have to remember that these teachers are often very incredible people. She talked about teachers who have sometimes influenced the students simply because of their love of football, sometimes because of their love of learning and sometimes because of turning a kid around who is thinking that school is not for him or her. Those are the teachers that we need to have in the system, but part of the way that we keep them in the system is by a whole system of collective bargaining. They have to feel secure within the job. They have to feel secure that their seniority matters. They have to feel secure in the job, that the amount of money they're being paid is commensurate with the work that they do and with the education and the qualifications that they have.

The collective bargaining process is that sort of great leveller, where the teachers come together once every couple of years and sit down on an equal footing with their bosses, whether those bosses be here in the Legislature or the school boards across Ontario, and say what is a fair process for them, for the students that they teach, for the education system and indeed for the government of Ontario. So I thank the member from York–Simcoe for her contribution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to respond to the comments from the member from—I have to find it.

Mrs. Julia Munro: York–Simcoe.

Hon. Liz Sandals: York–Simcoe; thank you.

There were a number of comments about various educational issues, but I think somebody made the comment earlier that they hadn't heard people in their constituency talking about collective bargaining. I would like to say thank you. That's a bit of a compliment. The reason they're not talking about collective bargaining is because at the moment we're not doing it and life is calm. But there is some urgency here because all the collective agreements in the province will expire in August 2014. I think, if we want to keep constituents not talking about collective bargaining, we need to find a better way to do it than what unfolded last time. We admit that.

What we're proposing here is a way of doing collective bargaining a bit differently that has general agreement between the people who are going to be doing the collective bargaining. The point being here, we need to get on with passing this legislation so we can do collective bargaining differently. What that means is that we need to get this bill to second reading vote.

We've had over 10 hours of debate. Yes, the government did ask to have the debate carry on when we reached six and a half hours, but I need to explain to the viewers that that's because we did not have all-party agreement on actually having that second reading vote. So if everybody would agree on having the second reading vote, we would be delighted to stop debate instantly. But as long as people keep getting up and saying, "Well, we want to talk some more," more talking will happen. I would encourage us all to agree on having the second reading vote and get on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, I want to get up and talk some more. I hope that's okay. I don't think I'm breaking any guidelines or rules here. That's why we're here.

I very much enjoy the presentations from the PC member for York–Simcoe. The member is also a member of OSSTF. Her presentation followed the presentation by the PC member from Northumberland–Quinte West, who is a former member of OSSTF. I'm a PC member; I'm a former member of OSSTF. I'm sure there are lots of former high school teachers on the other side as well.

I think I can speak for these two members, as former high school teachers: We take education very seriously. I say that in the context that I certainly found teaching high school was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed it. I really enjoyed the kids; I enjoyed the students. I taught grade 9 through to grade 12—large classes. I was in the tech wing. I taught agriculture and environmental science.

It's too bad, when we stand up to speak, that we don't talk more about the students and the kids. I know the Minister of Education just stood up to speak. I don't know whether she mentioned "student" or "pupil" at all. I know that someone did a count. I think she mentioned students maybe four times in her opening speech, and I emphasize only—only four times.

That's the nature of this legislation, and it seems to be the nature of the school system we have now. It was a profession when I taught. It seems to be dominated by organized labour, and when we talk about education in this House, we seem to spend all our time talking about labour relations and collective agreements and collective bargaining. I think that's a little sad.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I certainly don't mind getting up and talking about public education, but I do think, though, it is incumbent on us to actually talk to the legislation that's before us. For the most part, people have been talking about regulation 274, which has to do with seniority and has to do with hiring and has to do with principals. What's before us right now is a piece of legislation that is trying to provide some clarity around the rules of collective bargaining and negotiations, around employers and around the role of the ministry and the role of employees—the employee bargaining agents. That's what we're supposed to be talking about, and yet here we are extending this debate and criticizing aspects of the education system, which in some instances actually should be criticized. I mean, education needs our constant attention. We should be working more collaboratively together to address the emerging needs of the 21st century learning skills that are needed. Yet we are talking about a piece of legislation before us right now that is a response to a time of crisis in the province of Ontario.

What the PC caucus doesn't seem to understand is that collective bargaining does matter. It does matter, because peace and stability in education does matter, and this Bill 122 is essentially a response to a time of crisis: a manufactured crisis, a crisis that was brought upon the people who work in the education system and the students—yes, the students. When you talk about classes, when you talk about education, when you talk about the conditions by which students are learning in our schools and the levels of tension and crisis that were brought about by Bill 115, you are talking about students.

What needs to happen—if people aren't going to continue to talk about actually bringing clarity to the collective bargaining process—is that this piece of legislation needs to get passed so we can fix it when it gets to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return now to the member for York–Simcoe, who has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the comments made by the members for Beaches–East York, Haldimand–Norfolk and Kitchener–Waterloo, and the Minister of Education.

In my remarks, I did refer to the bill, and I certainly thought that giving a historical framework made it clearer that, obviously, this is moving forward and modernizing a process. However, the issues that pop up around it are ones, I think, of equal concern. When several speakers referred to collective bargaining, this is the only opportunity that has been provided to be able to raise issues around regulation 274 and the question of seniority. As I understand it, this is in terms of recognizing priority over hiring. It still recognizes the value of the collective bargaining process.

To those who look at the question of the timing of this debate, I think that, as many have said, there is an opportunity. This is our opportunity to make comments, and it's our prerogative to continue to make them. Democracy is not necessarily the most efficient method, but one that provides people with the freedom and opportunity to make these comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for further debate, I would remind members that, when we're debating this bill, members should ensure that their remarks come back to the bill. I realize that it's an education debate and there are other issues that members want to bring forward, but really, the remarks need to come back to the subject that is raised in the bill. I would just remind members of that before I ask for further debate.

Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: In that vein, I will try to speak directly to the debate, as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo indicated that we should, and, of course, taking your guidance as well. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 122 today. There has been quite a lot of discussion on this particular act, and I'm glad that I had the opportunity to hear the positions of all the members of the Legislature.

We have spent a considerable amount of time on this bill this afternoon. The government has prioritized technical issues to do with the education sector in regard to bargaining rights, but if by working our way through this bill we can expect to get to the government's plan to grow the economy and create private sector jobs for Ontario workers a little sooner, then I'm all for it.

Bill 122 applies to all school boards in the province. It implements a two-tier process: local bargaining and central bargaining. The crown will be legislated as a party at the negotiating table, along with school boards and the teachers' unions. The crown will only participate in central bargaining, but not local bargaining.

Bargaining cycles will be established on a two-, three- or four-year basis, and the same cycle will apply to all contracts, which would ensure that all teachers negotiate at the same time. They would legislate a five-day notification period by either party before a strike or lockout action.

These are all very targeted and specific measures, designed to correct a number of complaints that the school boards themselves and teachers' unions voiced with the last negotiations in the province. It's quite obvious that this Liberal government is eager to mend its relationship with the different unions of Ontario.

Rather than listening to the official opposition and working towards achieving an across-the-board wage freeze for all public sector employees, regrettably, this government's actions appear to target Ontario teachers specifically. The parties at the table obviously had a comfort zone, and they chose to go along with the ministry at that time. The school boards were upset, the unions were upset, and eventually, because of a loss of school activities, parents and teachers were also upset. Of course, we all know what happened since then. Bill 122 is the latest "mea culpa" from the new Premier to the teachers.

When we hear about education from our constituents, it's often coming from parents who have certain concerns about what's happening in their schools. They want to know that schools are a safe, nurturing place for their children, and they also want to know what their children are learning and if it will prepare them for their lives ahead. While this bill has nothing to do with the actual education agenda, it's certainly worthy of our discussion, because we're all aware of the turmoil that happens from a disruption in the regular operation of our education system.

Bill 122 looks to clarify exactly what the Ministry of Education's role will be in the collective bargaining process. We know that the ministry will be responsible for setting policies and guidelines for school boards, for allocating funding to school boards, using a funding formula for the establishment of the provincial curriculum, for setting requirements for graduation for diplomas and certificates, and creating lists of approved textbooks and other resources to be used by teachers and students in the classroom. Finally, school boards themselves are responsible for deciding how to spend the funds they receive from the province, for things like hiring teachers and other staff, and building and maintenance supplies.

Last year, the government's total investment in education was \$22 billion. After health care, our education sector represents the biggest investment. That's why I do believe that bringing some additional structure to the process of negotiating the collective bargaining agreements for the school boards will be a good thing for the province.

I must say, however, I am disappointed with a number of the things that have taken place in the last couple of weeks in regard to the economy and in regard to the H.J. Heinz closure, the announcement in my riding of Imperial Oil, and a number of other things that we think we should get moving on this agenda; move it forward.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that I'm very disappointed with the actions of this government—inactions, actually, of this government—and I must move adjournment of the debate at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bailey has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1721 to 1751.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the members to take their seats.

Mr. Bailey has moved the adjournment of the debate. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing to be counted by the table staff.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing so as to be counted by the table staff.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 0; the nays are 31.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

The member for Sarnia—Lambton still has the floor. I recognize the member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Well, before I was so—I was going to say rudely interrupted, but I guess interrupted by myself, I would like to go back to where I left off.

One of the key facts of this bill, Bill 122—

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's hard to hear for the heckling, Mr. Speaker, but anyway—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes. I appreciate that. I have to hear the member for Sarnia—Lambton. He's just right there, and I can't hear him, so I would ask the members to come to order.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Speaker. I know this is important—erudite comments, and I want you to be able to hear them.

Where I left off earlier today: This act applies to all the school boards in the province. It would implement a two-tier process, as I understand it: local bargaining and central bargaining. The crown will be legislated as a party at the negotiation table—now, that's new; that's a new part to the bill—rather than just school boards versus teachers' unions.

The crown—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: I can't hear the member, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, for the heckling; Mr. Speaker, they can't hear the member.

The crown is entitled to participate in central bargaining but not local bargaining. The bargaining cycles will be established on a two-, three- or four-year basis, and this same cycle will apply to all contracts, which would ensure that all teachers negotiate at the same time. A five-day notification by either party before a strike or lockout action would be called for.

We also think that formalizing the government's role as the employer in negotiations makes sense, because the government, representing the taxpayer, is actually footing the bill at the end of the day. This bill is mainly about setting a negotiating process, and it's not about improving education at the end of the day. I've heard most of the speakers who rose to speak today, from all sides of the House, especially the third party and our party, talk about how they would like to see improvements in education. This bill wouldn't do that.

Nobody yet knows if this will be a good process. Time will tell. It's hard to predict whether it will even be successful. There should be, in our opinion, a sunset clause so that this legislation could be reviewed after the next round of bargaining. I think that's something that, when the bill goes to committee, we probably will move.

This is a highly technical bill, as many people elaborated and commented on earlier. It entirely involves labour relations. Through the process that ended in Bill 115, the government of the day destroyed their relations with the unions and the school boards. They basically ignored the school boards.

Our solution then, and it continues today, was that a broader public service sector wage freeze applying to all employee groups was a more appropriate method, but the government didn't choose to move in that way. Included amongst our priorities are amendments to regulation 274, which defines a teacher's duty to reflect what they actually do in a day, and wage restraints are not covered by this bill.

We asked the government to clear the decks so we could talk about the economy, and this is another bill that, in our opinion, does not do this.

Stakeholder relations and reaction to this bill has been to wait and see—not a no, and not a yes. Since this bill does little more than set a process for bargaining, some of those hot-button issues we would like to discuss are left out. They would either have to be negotiated or introduced in different legislation.

Mr. Speaker, some of the policies that we are creating in this Legislature—not only do we have more than two million students—our kids, at the end of the day; my grandchildren and yours—in the system, but we have more than 100,000 people who are directly employed in this sector. So it's a very big issue that we have to face in terms of the growing demands of our elementary and secondary schools.

In addition, the ministry obviously has a role in this system. They are also the funder of how we pay for this system. More than \$20 billion, as I have previously noted, is being spent on our education system today. That number is more than \$8.5 billion more than occurred in 2003, when this government was first elected. So spending is up significantly in this sector, and student enrolment is down.

The question we're going to talk about and explore a little bit more is whether we have in fact received a bang for our buck, whether that increased investment has led to what I think all parents want—I know we do, for my grandchildren and, I'm sure, for everyone else in this room—which is, what is improving the quality of education for our students and our kids? I think the jury's still out on that.

I know that this government likes to talk about gains in the system, but I'm going to spend some time that I have left, my remaining time, talking about some of the maybe myths about the gains that they have currently employed.

There are 72 school boards in the province of Ontario: 31 English, 29 English Catholic, four French public and eight French Catholic. There are also several school authorities that oversee schools in hospitals and treatment centres and remote regions of the province; that's something that I didn't know. There's a vast array of folks who are also involved in education today, not just the students and the teachers, but also from the employer side in our school boards.

Am I done?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Done for the day. Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.