

## 7 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 6, 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.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I am honoured to stand in this assembly on behalf of my constituents in London West today to deliver my inaugural speech. I think I'm the last of the gang of five, as I've heard some people refer to us—affectionately, of course.

I want to begin by thanking the people of London West for the trust they have placed in me and their willingness to empower me as their voice. It's an enormous responsibility and one that I take very seriously. I also want to thank the hundreds of volunteers who worked so hard on my behalf, who spent countless hours knocking on doors, putting up signs, distributing leaflets and talking to voters on the phone. Special thanks to my NDP caucus colleagues, who took time out of their incredibly busy schedules—and I've come to realize over the last few months just how busy their schedules are—to come to London and help in my campaign. I can tell you that the motivation, the enthusiasm, the dedication of our volunteers was perhaps the single most important factor in my by-election success.

But there are other key factors that made a huge difference and contributed to my being here today. In particular, I want to thank NDP leader Andrea Horwath for her efforts in London West, not just during the by-election but in the many months leading up to the campaign. Her regular questions in the Legislature about London issues, her frequent visits to our community and her commitment to getting results for the people of Ontario were noticed by the voters of London West. And although the people of London West did not have a history of voting NDP, they had a strong desire for change. They liked what they saw in Andrea Horwath and the Ontario NDP.

They also liked what they saw in me, as a working mother and professional policy researcher, a person of integrity who had served for 13 years as a trustee on the Thames Valley District School Board, whose roots in the community were deep and whose motivations for entering public life were clear.

One of the things I heard most often during the campaign was people's lack of trust in politicians at all levels of government, and I can't imagine what I would hear now with the auditor's report on the gas plants, the Senate suspensions and other recent events. But when I decided to put my name forward, I wanted to challenge the cynicism that so many people feel about politics. I wanted to show that principle and integrity can trump political self-interest. This was, in fact, what led me to declare as a candidate for the NDP.

In particular, it was the imposition of Bill 115, the politically motivated attempt to gut collective agreements and flex some muscle against public sector unions, that became the tipping point in my decision to run for provincial office. I know that Bill 115 was an important factor in the

election of my friend and former trustee colleague, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, and it is in many ways the elephant in the room for the bill we are debating this morning, Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

Bill 115 was the Liberals' final offer during the last round of collective bargaining, if what happened last spring could be called bargaining at all. Bargaining is supposed to be a process in which both sides bring issues to the table and negotiate and discuss about the priorities they want to achieve. It is a process of give and take, in which both sides recognize that they may have to give a little here to move forward in other areas. This is not what happened last spring.

Instead, the Liberals placed a series of non-negotiable items on the table and said to both unions and school boards, "Take it or leave it, and if you don't take it, we're going to force you to take it by legislating collective agreements." I know all this because I was there. I was there as a trustee and former chair of a school board, and I was there as a member of the executive of the Ontario Public School Boards Association. I was, quite frankly, appalled by the government's willingness to risk all the gains that had been made in public education over the years and to throw our system and our students into turmoil.

I don't mind saying that gains had been made in public education, particularly since the crisis under Mike Harris and the Tories, because I am someone who believes in acknowledging when good ideas come forward, regardless of which party they come from, if those ideas are going to improve the lives of the people of this province. In fact, I was ready to leave partisan politics back in 1995, when I moved to London with my husband, who is a political science professor at Huron University College, after having worked as a political staffer to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations during the NDP government.

I had done my undergrad at Western and looked forward to returning to London and making London my home. I was raised in Dundas, Ontario, the eldest of three children born to immigrant parents; my father is German, and my mother was from Scotland. They arrived in their teens with little formal education and, in my father's case, very little English. But my father was able to learn a trade as a carpenter and, thanks to his union, earned a decent living enabling him to support his wife and three children.

My brother, who is now 50 and lives at home with my dad, has an intellectual disability. It was the experience of growing up with him, and seeing the bullying he went through at school and my mother's efforts to advocate on his behalf, that contributed to my interest in public education and my commitment to ensuring that students have the supports they need to be successful. It was also what drew me to the NDP, the party most committed to the full participation of people with disabilities.

I joined the NDP when I was doing my master's in political science at McMaster University, and became involved in the 1987 federal by-election in Hamilton Mountain. As a young woman, I was inspired by NDP candidate and former Ottawa mayor Marion Dewar, who became the first of many strong women mentors for me. Marion ran successfully in that by-election and offered me a job on Parliament Hill.

After three years in Ottawa, I came here to Queen's Park in 1990 to work in the minister's office with Marilyn Churley, another important mentor for me and someone who later broke new ground for women across Canada as Ontario's first woman Deputy Speaker.

Following the 1995 election, we moved to London, where I was able to spend some time at home with my family. My son was a toddler at the time, and I had a brand new infant daughter. I also returned to school for a postgraduate certificate at Fanshawe College and embarked on a career as a communications consultant and, later, policy researcher. For the past decade, I have worked at Academica Group, a private sector research firm located in London West.

When my son started JK in 1997, I was excited about taking on a new role as a parent and becoming involved in my school community. But I was shocked and dismayed by the chaos created in education by the Harris government's radical overhaul of school board governance and education funding.

When the first post-amalgamation election was held in 2000, I decided to run for the Thames Valley District School Board. I was proud to work with trustees across the province to advocate for students, including Premier Wynne and Minister Sandals, who were both trustees at the time, in opposing the Harris cuts and demanding that public education be adequately funded.

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But of all the initiatives I've worked on over my years at the school board, I'm proudest of the work I did on behalf of LGBT students in 2003, who held a protest on the lawn of the school board because they did not feel safe in our schools. This was before same-sex marriage was legalized in Canada and long before the province legislated gay-straight alliances. To address the student concerns, I led an ad hoc committee that developed a comprehensive action plan, including GSAs, to address discrimination against LGBT students.

At the board, I've had a long-standing interest in the needs of marginalized and at-risk youth, and sat for many years on the special education advisory committee and the First Nations advisory committee.

I also had the opportunity to meet regularly with area MPPs, and I have to say how impressed I consistently was by the interest and commitment to public education that was shown by MPPs from all three parties. In particular, I want to acknowledge the member from London–Fanshawe, now my colleague in the NDP caucus; the Minister of Health, who is also the member from London North Centre; the member from Oxford, Uncle Ernie; the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London; and the former member from London West, Chris Bentley—who all took the time to come to meetings with trustees to hear the school board perspective on provincial issues and to take the concerns forward to Queen's Park.

As the new member for London West, I want to thank former MPP Chris Bentley for his 10 years of dedicated service to our community. During the by-election, I heard lots of concerns about the gas plants and the Liberals' record in government, but at the same time, people also told me about the respect they had for Chris Bentley as a person and as someone who was active and involved and committed to his community.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the issues that were top of mind for people during the by-election and the issues on which the voters of London West expect to see their government take action. London West is largely a residential community with higher-than-average income levels and higher-than-average levels of education. It has many unique neighbourhoods that are known for their strong sense of community and civic engagement, with residents who come together to celebrate and collaborate on community projects. It includes London's largest urban

green space, Springbank Park, the setting for many charitable walks and community picnics that demonstrate the spirit of generosity and volunteerism that is the core of London West.

The riding is also enriched by the many immigrants and new Canadians, primarily from the Latino and Muslim communities, who share their culture and traditions and strengthen intercultural dialogue and exchange.

Many of the residents of my riding are white-collar professionals and knowledge-economy workers employed in MUSH sector jobs in municipal offices, the university, schools and hospitals. London lays claim to several world-class medical research facilities as well as the high-profile post-secondary institutions of Western University and Fanshawe College. I'm proud to say I'm a graduate of both.

Although the riding does not have a large number of manufacturing firms, many manufacturing sector workers live within its boundaries and have been hard hit by manufacturing job losses following the 2008 recession. Just yesterday, I received a phone call from a constituent whose daughter was laid off by Kellogg's after 30 years in the factory. Now 50 years old, this woman is worried about whether she will be able to find another job at all and how in the world she's going to manage until retirement.

The riding is also home to many retail and service sector workers, now called the new "precariat," who are struggling to make ends meet in low-wage, precarious employment.

As with many urban centres, there is also growing income polarization within the riding. There are areas of great affluence side by side with neighbourhoods made up almost entirely of public housing. My colleague John Vanthof knows something about that. The residents in these complexes face deeply rooted challenges of poverty, ill health and unemployment. I want to thank John for the day he spent canvassing with me.

There are clusters of apartment buildings filled with recent newcomers who face all the challenges involved in settlement and immigrant integration, as well as the barriers to employment created by lack of recognition of their professional skills and educational credentials.

But most of the riding is made up of middle-class neighbourhoods with families who are caught in the dual squeeze of caring for aging parents and raising their children. Too many of these families are seeing their kids graduate from post-secondary education without any prospects for work in London or indeed anywhere in southern Ontario.

As MPP for London West, I'm excited about the opportunity to participate in developing solutions to some of these challenges by applying the research I've been involved in as director of policy at Academica Group. Working in the private sector, in a firm with less than 20 staff, my experience at Academica Group has given me insights into some of the challenges facing the small business community. With much of my research focused on post-secondary education and the labour market, I bring detailed knowledge of issues related to youth employment and transitions from school to work.

For too long, Ontario's approach to bridging students from education to the labour market has been haphazard and inconsistent. For the past three years, I've been leading a multi-phase project for the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, or HEQCO, involving 14 Ontario

post-secondary institutions. The project looked at issues around post-secondary work-integrated learning programs, such as co-ops, internships, field placements, practicums and service learning. Using data gathered from employers, faculty and post-secondary graduates, the study is identifying the kinds of supports needed by employers to offer work-integrated learning opportunities to students, and the supports needed by students to enable them to apply their learning to real-world experiences and to critically reflect on their experiences when they return to the classroom.

I've also been working locally with the London Economic Development Corp. and the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board on an innovative local labour market information project that will be launched in the very near future. The project brings together stakeholders from business, education, employment service providers and government and uses best practices identified by the OECD to better utilize skills in the local economy.

I want to mention two other projects I worked on that had great meaning for me and offered policy insights that I will take forward as MPP. One was a study of bridging programs for internationally trained professionals, programs that helped them bridge the gaps in their foreign qualifications and meet the criteria to practise their skills in Ontario. Another was a series of advocacy and awareness initiatives to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities.

In addition to these policy priorities, I am also excited about being able to support some of the incredible things that are happening in London right now that have the potential to transform our local economy, given the right kinds of government and community investments.

Recently, I had the privilege of meeting with people in our community who are truly change agents, along with NDP leader Andrea Horwath and the member from London–Fanshawe. We met with the board of Emerging Leaders, a community-led initiative that is focused on the retention, development and engagement of young people aged 20 to 44, to create a more vibrant, inclusive and dynamic London community.

We also met with representatives from the London Youth Advisory Council, an elected municipal body with the mandate to engage and empower youth and to give young people between the ages of 15 and 25 a voice in building a better city.

Emerging Leaders and the London Youth Advisory Council have launched a campaign urging local employers to hire young people without requiring them to have three to five years of work experience. This recognizes that today's young people are better educated than all previous generations, but are caught in a Catch-22 of "can't get a job without experience" and "Can't get experience without a job."

We also met with representatives of Pillar Nonprofit Network, which works on behalf of more than 300 London non-profits to support cross-sector collaboration between the private sector, the public sector and civil society groups as a means of addressing poverty, fostering social innovation and increasing the collective impact of non-profit organizations in London.

Pillar is leading an effort to grow the social economy—that is, businesses with a social purpose—which, as we know, is not only a vital component of a dynamic economic development strategy, but is also one of the best ways to create jobs for youth and marginalized workers, while addressing human, environmental and community needs.

I want to thank MPPs on all sides of this House for the warm welcome you have given me since I first arrived in this place, and in particular, my NDP caucus colleagues. I'm looking forward to working with MPPs from all parties, and I've seen some of the consensus that has been achieved when we work hard on legislation to identify some common ground and move forward to achieve common goals. I am committed to putting in place a robust policy framework that will enable the social economy to thrive, ensure that quality health care services are there when people need them, enable seniors to age with dignity in their own homes or in quality long-term-care facilities, and create an inclusive economy which everyone can participate in and benefit from. Thank you very much, Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Mike Colle:** It really is refreshing, and also hopeful, listening to the member from London West. She obviously is a very dedicated, committed representative of her riding. What's refreshing about what she said is that—too many times in politics, we see people present themselves as candidates, and when I ask them all, "What did you do in your community? What did you do?" "Well, no, I want to be elected." This member from London West obviously has a proven track record of fighting for what she believes in. She's passionate and also very knowledgeable. So I think the people of London West, despite that it's not our party—I think she's going to add a lot to this Legislature, and I think she's going to do a lot of good work for the people of London West, because she has the knowledge, the commitment and the attitude that we're here in this place to find common ground and to get things done for the people of whether it be London West or all of Ontario.

As you know, for too many days in this Legislature—most of the time, sadly, is being spent on playing political games. That does not benefit the people of London West; it doesn't benefit the people of Ontario. As she listed, there are so many issues facing the people of London West, as are facing all of our ridings. The work we've got to do is to get a handle on those issues to benefit the people. I've been here for a number of years, and I can tell you I am still hopeful that we can do a lot of good. There's amazing power in this Legislature to do good. That's what we should be concentrating on. If we can get that kind of attitude demonstrated by the member from London West and her knowledge—I think there's a lot of beneficial results for the people, whether it be in education, whether it be for people in need. So I want to congratulate the member for her very meaningful speech.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** The member for Cambridge.

**Mr. Rob Leone:** I want to first of all congratulate the member for London West on her maiden speech. One of my favourite times in this Legislature is to sit and listen to folks who are new to this place give their perspective and offer their thanks to the voters who entrusted them. I think we all share one thing here: As 107 men and women, we are entrusted by our constituents to represent them, and to represent them well. I think this is an opportunity for us to share a little bit of insight into ourselves, when we provide our maiden speeches, and I got a little bit of an insight on the new member from London West, her background, her experience and some of her interests. But most importantly, I think what we all can aspire to do in this Legislature—is that we're here to represent our constituents. What I heard in the member from London West's speech today is that she intends to do exactly that.

I think that sometimes in the cut and thrust of debate in this Legislature we actually forget a little bit about why we were sent here and who we are here to represent. Each and every day that I stand in my place as the member for Cambridge, I have to remind myself that this is about not myself and not my political party but about the people that I represent. I hope that the member for London West—I think she obviously shares that perspective and shares that commitment to her constituents, much like each member of this Legislature, 107 of us, who had to do the same thing: seek election, do the cut and thrust of debate through that process and finally have the opportunity and privilege to serve in this wonderful, wonderful place.

So I want to congratulate the member from London West on her election and on her contributions to this place and to the debate that we're going to have now and in the future.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** The member for London—Fanshawe.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I am so thrilled and very proud to stand here today and welcome the member from London West, and congratulate her for a wonderful speech. It was very informative and educational, and I learned a lot of things about the member today, more than I have since I met her.

I also want to say that I'm very honoured that she is here, because I know she is going to represent London West constituents 100%. Her dedication and commitment to her job are very well received, and it's very evident that that's what she is here for. She's here to work for the people, and she's here to get results. That's what our party has been doing—since we've been elected in 2011. We're here to make sure that life gets better for the people of Ontario.

I'm also very proud of the fact that the NDP is one of the only parties here in the Legislature—the only one, I should correct myself—that has almost 50% representation of women. We know that it's very difficult for women to make those decisions to run in politics, because they do have that juggling act of being a mother, a wife, a partner, a career person—and those things are difficult—and it takes a lot of gumption to run for office. I know that women have a difficult time to make that decision, when they're asked to run, but I think the face of politics is better when women are involved.

So again, I say congratulations and welcome to the Legislature. You're a wonderful addition to the team. I know that all the colleagues here in the House—and it sounds like all parties—are very enthusiastic to have you here, and we appreciate that you said “yes” and won the by-election. We look forward to you doing a lot of things in the Legislature for the people of London West.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** Questions and comments?

**Ms. Dipika Damerla:** I would like to begin by also congratulating the member from London West on her maiden speech, and again, like the member for London—Fanshawe said, I learned a lot about you. I'm very impressed by your record of service and the experience you bring. Especially, I did not know that you were a school trustee. That certainly brings a new lens to the debate we are having on the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013. I know that you will be able to bring a wealth of perspective to this, having worked in the trenches in the education sector. So thank you so much and, once again, congratulations. I wish you very well.

I do want to spend a few minutes speaking about Bill 122. At its core, it's very simple: If I'm paying for something, I want to have a say in how it's spent. That's what this is about. This is about giving the province of Ontario, which is the primary funder, in fact the only funder, of public school education, both the Catholic and the public school sectors in Ontario—there is no formal role in bargaining for the province, and that is what this act seeks to do. What it's seeking to do is say that there are three stakeholders in this: There are the employer groups, there are the employee groups, and then there is the funder, which happens to be the province of Ontario.

This is much-required clarity. I mean, we've been at the table in an informal way, and sometimes it has worked and sometimes it hasn't worked. It's important to learn from the past and build on it, and that is what this bill does. So I'm very pleased that we have brought this forward. It's a made-in-Ontario model. It is unique. It is tailored to our special needs, our funding model. It's much needed, and I believe we need to bring it in place before the next round of bargaining within the school system occurs. I look forward to support from all parties.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** The member for London West, you have two minutes.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I want to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, the member from Cambridge, the member from London–Fanshawe and the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for the wonderfully kind comments you made. I feel somewhat at a disadvantage, because you now know all about me and I'm going to have to look through Hansard to find out the same things about you. But many of the comments you made apply equally to everyone in this House. Collectively working together, finding that common ground, we can do good, as the member from Eglinton–Lawrence said, and we can represent our constituents with integrity, with principle and with a commitment to bringing forward the concerns that matter to the people who live in our communities.

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I want to acknowledge the comments that were made by the member from London–Fanshawe about the importance of electing women to public office and the obligation that all of us have, as women legislators, to mentor young women and encourage them to recognize that they have a voice, that they have a role to play in public life—because it is challenging for women to want to enter the cut and thrust of politics. It can be intimidating and it may not be an environment that women feel particularly comfortable in.

As the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville said, we all bring incredibly rich and varied experiences and backgrounds to this place. Together, we are making democracy better when we have that exchange of ideas and opinions across the House and work together to do good things for the people of this province.

**(INTERRUPTION POUR LA SANCTION ROYALE D'AUTRES PROJETS DE LOI)**

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** Further debate?

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Speaker, at the start, I'd just like to say that I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Labour.

Before I get under way, I want to join with my colleagues in complimenting the member for London West on her excellent maiden speech. We welcome her. She's been a fine member. Her contributions in the Legislature have always been positive and constructive and well-researched ones, and I think this is the kind of member that gives all elected members a good name.

Applause.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Thank you for that thunderous applause.

Speaker, we're here to talk about Bill 122. Bill 122 is a continuing step forward in the evolution of a process, a process to do something that is by its definition very, very difficult. If passed, the legislation would create central tables where government trustee associations and unions or teacher federations could resolve monetary and policy issues in collective free bargaining.

There is some urgency to do this. Virtually all collective agreements in the education sector will expire next year—August 31, 2014.

Now, to put some scope on what I said earlier, that this is a large and complex problem, there are some 472 different collective agreements covering 127,000 full-time-equivalent regular teachers, an unspecified number of occasional teachers and 67,000 unionized support staff. This speaks to the need to be able to approach this very large and very important set of collective bargaining with a much better approach than we've had in the past.

The intent is to have the boards and their unions be able to resolve local issues in free local collective bargaining. If passed, the legislation would create two strike or lockout windows at the provincial level and at the local level. If passed, the legislation would also provide for three-way ratification at the central level by the government of Ontario, trustee associations and unions.

One may ask what entities are involved in this. If passed, the legislation establishes central employee bargaining agents for teachers, who would be encompassed under the following: the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

Again, if passed, the legislation would establish the following central employer bargaining representatives: l'Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques, l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association.

This is important because as Ontario has developed, we've also evolved forward in the manner in which we've approached that collective bargaining. Since some 15 years ago, local school boards have had little authority to directly levy taxation and, as such, to generate local funding. However, those same boards have retained sole authority to bargain collective agreements. So it speaks to the essential need for both resources and responsibility in this.

The province provides the funding for the sector but, conversely, has no statutory authority to participate in collective bargaining. As a result, this framework, undertaken with the best intentions of two governments, ours and the one that preceded us, has produced some real

confusion about the roles and responsibilities between school boards, between trustee associations and the government.

Under the existing framework, flawed as it was, the government offered three voluntary provincial discussion tables, in 2004, 2008 and 2012. Last year, in 2012, some parties chose not to participate in the provincial discussion table, and it resulted, in August 2012, in the government enacting the Putting Students First Act that, in the end, imposed collective agreements on the education sector.

This was an outcome that no one sought, it was an outcome that no one was happy with, and it's an outcome that, very frankly, this legislation, if enacted, would seek to mitigate by providing a means for the different parties to arrive at reasonable, fair consensus to produce a better-quality collective agreement and, very frankly, one with a better process.

Early in 2013, this year, the government began discussions with the parties to agree to new terms outlined in a series of memoranda of understanding to be appended to the 2012-14 collective agreements.

I'm sure that the Minister of Labour has many more enlightening comments to offer, and I thank you very much for the time.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** The Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Yasir Naqvi:** Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me and giving me the opportunity to speak.

I want to thank the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for his comments on this very important bill, Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013.

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First of all, Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Education for her commitment and dedication and extremely hard work on drafting this particular bill. I speak at first hand, given the close proximity in which the Ministry of Labour worked with the Ministry of Education in the whole consultation process with our partners in education and also the labour relations expert board within the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education in crafting this particular bill. There was quite an unprecedented level of close collaboration that went into the drafting of the bill, because we really wanted to make sure that the bill reflects the very balanced labour relations that are the hallmark of labour relations in Ontario, especially under this government over the last 10 years. Therefore, quite an effort and due diligence was put into the consultation phase and then the drafting of this bill to ensure that from a labour relations view, all the key elements that are outlined for a balanced labour relations system in the Ontario Labour Relations Act are maintained and reflected in this bill.

I want to thank the Minister of Education. Not only did she bring her own expertise on this file as a former school board trustee, but she really went out of her way to seek the advice of the Ministry of Labour to make sure that we've got the right balance in this particular bill.

I also want to thank all our education partners—the teachers' federations, the school board associations, the trustee associations—for their hard work and good advice as this bill was crafted, because we wanted to make sure that all partners are working together in getting the

right balance, in getting the right piece of legislation, a process that really will help advance our cause of a better education system in Ontario. I feel that this bill really does accomplish that.

Speaker, I think we have spoken often in this House, and it's worth repeating, of the great accomplishments that we have made in education in the last 10 years in our province. It has been a great aspect, a part of the attention of our government, to ensure that education continues to grow and that our children are getting one of the best educations. I want to thank teachers and all our support workers and everybody who works in the education sector for their hard work in getting us where we are today in terms of building one of the best and strongest education systems Ontario has ever had, perhaps, and that the results show Canada has, and making us so competitive around the world. I just look at the results in my community of Ottawa, and specifically my community of Ottawa Centre, the kind of great results that we're seeing in education, the level of education our children are getting, how engaged they are. For me, one of the key issues has always been narrowing the gap between those children who have a lot of the benefits and privileges and those for whom English or French may not be their first language or who are new to our community, new to our province. We are starting to see the narrowing of that gap taking place so significantly that we're really creating a level playing field, we're really making sure that all children in our education system are given equal opportunities to succeed. That has been a great achievement of the investments that our government has been able to make in education over the last 10 years.

Full-day kindergarten alone is making a tremendous impact. I've had the opportunity to speak to many parents, in my community of Ottawa Centre, whose children are going to full-day kindergarten. It's interesting to talk to those parents who have one child who went to a half-day program and one child now going to the full-day program. They will tell you themselves the great difference they're seeing in the development of their children. The child who is going to full-day kindergarten—his or her skill set, his or her competencies in social behaviour, in the learning of different things as a four- or five-year-old is tremendous. Parents know these differences and they are able to share that with you, and it's very heartening to see that.

I've got about 75% of the schools in my community of Ottawa Centre now offering full-day kindergarten, and there is a lot of excitement around that program. In fact, parents in the remaining 25% of schools which will be offering full-day kindergarten in the next academic year ask me often when that is going to happen, because they want the opportunity for their children to be able to attend full-day kindergarten.

Not to mention the kind of investments we've made in making sure that we have good school facilities—in the city of Ottawa alone, since 2003 we have built, renovated or expanded about 40 schools. That is just a tremendous investment, and I thank the Ministry of Education for really having confidence in my community of Ottawa and being able to create a world-class education system, amazing schools and facilities that are giving a whole new, great opportunity for our children to grow.

We want to make sure that those successes continue to grow, and in order for those successes to continue, we need to make sure that we have strong labour relations within our school system, that we remain on the path of strong partnership with our teachers and with our education support workers so that that level of quality of education, that focus on children remains very much part and parcel of our education system. I think that is the real foundation, that is the real glue that makes our education system succeed.

The key element of this particular bill, Bill 122, is to ensure that we have fair and balanced labour relations so that we can continue on that particular path. I'm really proud that our government has worked hard to restore fairness and balance in labour relations over the past 10 years, repairing the relationships that were broken before our government came into office. The result is that 97% of labour contracts in Ontario are now settled without disruptions. That is a remarkable achievement and a record that we need to continue to go on. This bill in particular is a great example of what can be accomplished when parties work together. We want to ensure that Ontario's education system remains one of the best in the world, and our goal is to improve student achievement and well-being and take our education system from great to excellent while ensuring long-term financial sustainability.

As I mentioned earlier, our respective ministries, Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education, worked very closely, and we're really proud at the Ministry of Labour to be able to assist in helping develop a model that is outlined in this particular bill that will work for Ontario's education system and make sure that our children succeed.

Speaker, this proposed legislation is needed to create central tables for collective bargaining with formal rules for the province, trustee associations, school boards, teacher federations and support staff unions. By creating a formal provincial level of bargaining, recognizing the unique roles of each party, this legislation would ensure a stable framework for labour negotiations that will ensure a fair and binding process that is clear to all parties.

So what is this bill trying to do if it is passed? The proposed legislation would create two tiers of bargaining. At the central tier, the government and the trustee associations form a management team to bargain central agreements with unions. At the local tier, the local school boards and their employees would bargain local agreements. So one key, fundamental element of this particular piece of legislation is having two tiers of bargaining, one at the central level, where government is very much part and parcel working along with trustee associations and, of course, then the second tier, which is at a local level, where local school board trustees are negotiating with local teacher federations.

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The second key element of this bill is to create a formal role for the government at the table. The proposed role will allow the government to formulate mandates in partnership with the trustee association and to participate in central bargaining on the key issues. That's a very important step, Speaker, because up to now, as you may know, the government's role was not formalized.

Up to now, the last three rounds of negotiations, if you look at it—when the central bargaining took place, that was totally on a voluntary basis, where the government, as the funder, invited all parties to come around the table and was able to negotiate. That's how the 2004 negotiations were done; that's how 2008 was done. They worked in those two instances. We know that in 2011 we tried to do the same thing, and it did not exactly take shape the way that it did in the first two rounds of negotiations. What we are doing through this bill is formalizing that whole process, central bargaining, and formalizing the role for government as the funder in that negotiating process around the table as well, which is key.

The third thing this bill does is to establish trustee associations as the statutory central employer bargaining agents for each of their respective sectors for the purposes of central bargaining—

again, a very important role for trustee associations, making sure that that local voice is present at the central level, working along with the government as a joint management team representing the point of view of the employer.

Lastly, in terms of a key feature of this bill, it's that it creates a three-way ratification of central agreements between the government, trustee associations and unions. In other words, all three parties—the government, trustee associations and the unions—would have to ratify the agreement in order for it to pass. Again, it's a difference from how the system has worked in the past, where the only two parties to the agreement were the trustee associations—the local school boards, in essence—and the unions. In this case, we're sort of formalizing what has happened, essentially, in the last three rounds of negotiations and making sure that all three parties have a role to play.

Speaker, this model really helps us ensure that there's constructive dialogue and that we're maintaining positive relationships. It really allows for parties to work together—again, keeping in mind that there are balanced labour relations practices that are very much part and parcel of the whole negotiating process. We know through Supreme Court decisions, like the BC health decision and the Fraser decision that emanated out of Ontario, that good-faith bargaining is very much the essence of collective bargaining as a charter right. We have worked hard, working along with the Ministry of Education, to ensure that all those elements—the constitutional elements, the charter requirements through the Supreme Court in terms of having a process that allows for good-faith bargaining—are very much part and parcel of this bill.

I very much encourage all members of this House to vote in support of this particular bill.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Rob Leone:** I listened with intent to the Minister of Labour and to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, I believe, who provided some comments on Bill 122. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that if anyone can probably explain the nuances of this bill, being a labour piece of legislation, it would be the Minister of Labour. So I expected him to elaborate on some of the details of this.

He touched upon it, I guess, in the second half of his discussion. But in the first half, I noticed that he didn't really talk about the piece of legislation at all. He talked about full-day kindergarten; he talked about the school system in Ottawa. He talked about many other things that I'm sure the minister agrees are very important to his constituents and to him as a member. But I think the funny part of that, in doing that, is that in talking about the "gains" that the minister was talking about—I mean, all those gains happened before this piece of legislation was formed. So if the justification is to see these gains succeed, I'm not really sure how that fits in nicely or squares nicely with this piece of legislation.

What it does point to is the fact that the minister, much like myself, wants to talk about these things. He wants to talk about full-day kindergarten. He wants to talk about the plight of his schools in Ottawa. He wants to talk about how we can make improvements to our system. So do I, Mr. Speaker. Yet we've had two pieces of legislation, since I've been appointed critic for education, that actually do nothing but talk about process, rather than talk about the kinds of reforms and the kinds of things we can do to improve our education system.

That is, in a nutshell, where I see this is going to go. If I can just see how the comments and questions from the Liberals are going to proceed on this—they're going to talk about their gains, they're going to talk a little bit about the bill, but the two never square up. We really want to improve our schools, and this bill isn't really going to do any of that.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** Questions and comments?

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we've stood down our lead and you will be hearing that lead from our education critic, the member from Toronto–Danforth, shortly—I'm sure next week at some point.

Just some general comments about Bill 122: Obviously, as a caucus, we're looking at this, we're talking to stakeholders, we're looking at possible amendments, ways of making it stronger in terms of support. But the elephant in the room, Mr. Speaker, is truly the state of education in this province. It's pretty bleak, quite frankly.

On the post-secondary side, I know we're 10th out of 10 in terms of our investment per capita in our students. We have the highest post-secondary debt. We have the highest tuition fees in the country. That should be something that should shame us daily.

Certainly Bill 115 was more than an embarrassment; it was a direct attack on collective bargaining. That is, of course, what this attempts to rectify.

Also, the chronic underfunding of our schools: Anybody who walks into any school in their riding will see that our schools are—certainly in mine—chronically underfunded. I'm constantly bearing letters from my parents to this administration, begging and pleading for the very basic money they need to keep their schools afloat, and of course they don't get it. That's why parents are raising in excess of \$500 million a year in fundraising just for the basics for their students.

That's the central problem here. That's the core problem of our educational system. It's something that this government really has not addressed now going into their 11th year here at Queen's Park. A government that wanted to see itself as the education government has failed miserably on this file, and Bill 122, whatever its strengths or weaknesses, is absolutely not going to deliver in a way that should be delivered on the educational file.

We'll have more to say on this and the state of our system in the future.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** Questions and comments?

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** I'm pleased to respond to the comments from the member from Mississauga–Streetsville and the Minister of Labour.

The Minister of Labour mentioned schools in Ottawa—and the minister of francophone affairs said, "I really want to talk about the francophone schools in Ottawa and throughout the province," because we notice that there are some of the representatives from the francophone school system. What she wanted to convey was how proud she is of the wonderful job that the francophone schools both in her riding and throughout the province are doing, and their astoundingly good results on the provincial test results which they have achieved over the last several years. That was from the minister of francophone affairs.

I wanted to comment, in a way, on something that the member from London West said in her maiden speech—because, like me, she has a background as a school board trustee. She talked about her experience with negotiations, and she talked about the fact that bargaining is a matter of give and take; that when bargaining is working properly there's compromise, and the compromise leads to solutions.

I'd like to thank the Minister of Labour and his people for being part of exactly that sort of process which led to the creation of Bill 122—because there was a check-in with the various education partners, both on the management side and the union side, facilitated by the officials from the Ministry of Labour. We worked very closely with different people with different points of view, and I think it's fair to say the unions don't see everything they wanted to see; the school boards don't see everything they wanted to see. Quite frankly, the government has made some compromises too. But it is a compromise.

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**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Rod Jackson:** It is interesting to listen to some of the feedback here on Bill 122.

I'd like to also welcome and thank the member from London West for her inaugural speech this morning. I know how interesting that can be for a member who is new here. She did a great job. Although she's not here right now to hear, I'm sure she'll hear—

**Interjection:** Send her the Hansard.

**Mr. Rod Jackson:** Send her the Hansard, yes.

Bill 122, as we know, is a very complicated, technical bill. I happen to come from a labour relations background and understand—I've sat at the negotiation table many times talking to and negotiating with unions in many different circumstances, some of them better than others, and the one thing I do know is that it is extremely difficult to legislate good negotiations. It is a flowing concept that takes a different life every time you do it. Depending on who the group is that you're dealing with, depending on the issues of the day, depending on the people who are being represented by the unions—so many different factors factor in.

My concern with Bill 122 is, trying to do too much and trying to fix too much, and then what are we going to end up with in the future? It might work really well this time. But is it going to work the next time, when we have different problems and different pressures on our economy and we have different pressures on our school systems and we have different pressures on our politics, we have different parties in power? There are so many different factors here that I think could render this bill and this effort kind of moot, so my concerns surround that. We can't really imprint into time a bill that's going to guide us for the rest of our days. We need to have more flexibility. We need to certainly not have a bill as technical as this—having negotiators at the table hamstrung trying to figure out which direction they're going to go.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** The Minister of Labour, you have two minutes.

**Hon. Yasir Naqvi:** I want to thank the members from Cambridge, Parkdale–High Park, Barrie and the Minister of Education for their comments, and they were all good comments in terms of what I was saying. I just want to make two specific comments, Speaker, in response. Number

one is that the education system is very much premised on people. It's a system that is delivered by people for the benefit of people, i.e. young children. That is why it is extremely important that we have good labour relations in our whole education system—because if we have good labour relations, if we have good working conditions in our schools, you know we will be able to accomplish the goals we have set out in terms of higher student achievement, in narrowing the gap, in making sure that our children are getting the best education possible. If we don't have good working conditions, if we don't have solid labour relations, the aspirations towards those goals become that much more difficult. That is why this bill is very, very important: to make sure that we've got a solid foundation within our school system in terms of labour relations so that we can continue on the path of building one of the best education systems in the world, as we have done over the last 10 years with the incredible investments that we have made in our educational system, in partnership with the education workers.

The second point, to the member from Barrie—I think he raises a very good point: You want to have a system in place that can withstand various other factors that may come over time. We feel very strongly that we have provided for that foundation; that what this bill does is it puts a very rigorous process in place that will allow for good-faith bargaining to take place no matter what the political climate or economic situation may be. That's a very important thing: that you want to have strong principles in place for collective bargaining so that external factors become irrelevant and it allows for a place, an avenue, to engage in that good-faith bargaining and be able to then result in settlements, in agreements that will provide for a better education for our children.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** I just want to remind members of the Legislature—and it's a gentle reminder—that we should not be making references to people who are not in their seat.

Secondly, on the questions and comments, we should restrict our comments to the previous speaker, not speakers who have gone by. Thank you very much.

Further debate? The member from Barrie.

**Mr. Rod Jackson:** Thank you, Speaker. I actually do apologize for making that reference. It was inadvertent and meant in a—

**Mr. Rob Leone:** It was complimentary.

**Mr. Rod Jackson:** —in compliments rather than the negative.

I already mentioned briefly, in my last two minutes, my concerns with this bill and the fact that I am worried that it has flexibility when we go forward.

As I said before, I've had the opportunity to be involved in many negotiations with large unions and some large companies, seeing these things go many different ways, and it is really interesting. Part of the dynamic of a labour negotiation system is the fact that they have the ability to move in different directions, and, in many cases, with little guidance from anyone else other than people at the table.

My concern is, with a bill as technical as this—and in many cases trying to understand it—it adds more difficulty to a system that needs less. When we add a tier of negotiation here, it really

does concern me a little bit that more isn't going to be better, in this case. I always find, especially when you add a tier into a negotiation, you have more people and more confusion about direction, about who's going where.

I know that every school board in Ontario, and indeed every school board in Canada, has much different pressures on it than on the others. For example, the Toronto District School Board is going to have a much different scale of capacity and certainly much different interests than, say, a school board in far northern Ontario, and they're going to need a much different set of standards and ideas and dialogue at the table. Those are often best addressed at the local level. Those local people know what their local needs are.

I'm not saying this can't work, but I'm also saying that we need to be very careful that we don't try to steer the ship from this building. That can do more damage than good, in many cases. But at the same time, sometimes there needs to be a little bit of guidance, I think, to make sure that we keep things going.

We've found, certainly, that the roles of different parties in collective bargaining in the education sector, and the voluntary framework that we've had, have run into some problems, and that's why we've come down this road to this bill and some of the issues over Bill 115 and politicizing, in many ways, the negotiation process. I think we've seen how that can really damage relationships between those that are negotiating on both sides. It is something that needs to be clarified.

For me, clarity means keeping it simple. All of us have learned from our high school teachers the KISS rule: Keep it simple, stupid. It's something that we all need to live by, really. The simpler we keep it, the better it is, in many cases. I worry that this complicates something that doesn't really need to be as complicated as it is.

We also believe that when you have a piece of legislation like this that is recognizing some of the difficulties that have happened in the past, it is very advantageous, if we have something like a sunset clause involved in this legislation, that we'll actually be able to look back at it and say, "We were able to put some legislation in this year that helped us with the problems we had this year to address some problems from the past. But do you know what? In the future, we're going to see this going a different way."

If a sunset clause was included in this legislation, I think it would highly benefit not only all the people who are at the negotiating table on both sides; I think the kids of this province are going to benefit from that too, because we know that their needs change on a very regular basis.

I know the Minister of Labour was mentioning that this is something that will benefit all the people at the table and that we've got to remember what the focus is on here. Something that struck me as interesting is: Right away, I thought, "Of course, he's going to say 'the kids.'" It wasn't the first thing out of his mouth, which I found a little bit disturbing. What we really are doing this for, what we really want to achieve with any bill to do with education, is the welfare of our children, the welfare of their education.

I have two young kids; one is 12 and one is 10. They're both in our school system. They have fantastic teachers who do a great job. I was able to speak with their teachers, actually, the day before yesterday. They do an amazing job, and they're very happy with it.

I've also become very aware of a local family who have some severe issues with the education system, because their child has some special needs. It's interesting to me because this young man is actually a friend of my son's. I had no idea he had any sort of special needs, and he does. I fear for this child, because there's nothing in place in this integrated system that we have for children with many different special needs—and there are many different types of them—to accommodate him. He's at the point now where he has had these special needs—when they were diagnosed for a couple of months last year, after he'd been admitted to Sick Children's Hospital down here in Toronto to take care of them. When he went back to school, he was given an education assistant to help him throughout his day, to maintain his health, and when he was in that position, he did well in school, he was doing well socially; all these sorts of different things he was doing really well in. Well, at the end of the year, they told him he wasn't going to have access to his education assistant when he came back to school in September.

So here we have a child that we know can have the tools to succeed if we actually focus on that, if we focus on giving him the tools he needs to bring his potential out to be the next MPP, to be the next doctor or lawyer or tradesperson in our community. Right now, this child's parents are worried that he's going to get lost, slip through the cracks and end up back at SickKids fighting for his life.

This is something that, it seems to me, is very simple, but it's not being addressed by either the school board or the ministry, and it's one example of many that I know that are out there. We talk about the victory of integrating our kids into our education system, and there are some success stories, but in many cases we're failing them. We're failing them because we don't have the right resources on the front lines of our education system to be able to give them the results that they need to have, and it's a shame. It's not a reflection on the staff who are there; in fact, I believe the staff who are working with these kids, the EAs and the teachers—and if the government was listening, they might get something out of this—actually need more resources. We need to focus on their training, we need to focus on how many of them there are, and even the money.

The distribution of the money that's going into the education system is appalling. In fact, in Barrie alone, in the Simcoe county district school system, spending increased year over year for the past several years, with a decreased enrolment. So we're spending more money, less kids going to the school, and yet science programs are being cut at local high schools, schools shut down and a Taj Mahal—if you've ever visited the Simcoe County District School Board and been to that building, it's nicer than this one. It is absolutely beautiful. It's a Taj Mahal school board office. Instead of putting a new HVAC system into a school in the heart of downtown Barrie, they replaced the one in the almost brand new school board building. It is quite amazing that the priorities there didn't match up—and at the same time we're cutting science classes, cutting music classes. Schools are being shut down in Barrie, in the heart of our downtown, which is the heartbeat and the lifeblood of any city, and then we focus on the backend stuff.

This whole bill is focusing on labour relations with teachers, which I think needs to be focused on—we need to talk about this stuff—but not to the detriment of dealing with the front-line issues that our kids deal with.

In fact, my wife is president of the parent-teacher council of our school, and the amount of work that parents do to keep those schools open, the amount of money they raise for athletic equipment and for landscaping and for signs is amazing. The amount of effort that the parents put into this is great, and thank God we have parents who are willing to put forth their effort and time, away from their jobs in many cases, and sacrifice what they do to get the job done.

It would be really great if this government would focus on those sorts of front-line things too and keep those science classes open and keep some of those great schools in the cores of our cities open so that we can attract more people to live in the places that we need them to live in in our cities, which is in the middle of them, not on the outskirts of them, especially in a city like Barrie.

It's something we need to really focus on in the big picture—and make sure that we focus on children with special needs. We spent years, since the 1970s, integrating these kids into our system so they could live integrated, productive lives in our communities, and they're not. They've been integrated, but they're not being given the right potential and the right tools to be able to succeed—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.