

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2013

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 26, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We'll start off with questions regarding Mr. Harris's comments. So questions and comments? The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was here when the member from Kitchener was speaking. I do commend him for making eminently good sense on Bill 122.

I recognize the importance of streamlining provincially the negotiation process, but really, at the end of the day, Bill 122, with all due respect, I believe it should be the kiss-and-make-up bill, or suck-up-and-make-up bill, because this really is an apology for the previous actions of this government, the Kathleen Wynne government, of bullying—in fact, I use the term “bullying”—the teachers of Ontario and the boards of Ontario and forcing the contract in Bill 13, without any negotiation with locally elected boards.

It's shameful, the transaction of overriding the authority of the school boards. I know my boards in my riding of Durham and others were very, very upset with the government. So this bill is the kiss-and-make-up bill. That's really what it is. It provides, I believe, about four tables for negotiations: the elementary; the secondary—that's OSSTF—board; OECTA, the English Catholic teachers; and the franco boards as well. But who's missing from this? Who's missing from this are the administrators in education today. The parents aren't being consulted and the students themselves aren't being consulted.

I think there's more work to be done on this bill. It's mostly a governance issue. I think the member from our caucus, the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, made eminently good sense in his 10 minutes of remarks, and I hope to have 10 minutes to speak on this later. Perhaps I'd be given as much as an hour, because this bill has a lot more history to it that needs to be put on the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Well, thank you, and good afternoon, Speaker. On this bill, Bill 122, I just want to acknowledge a couple of things. One is we've had 12 and a half hours of debate on this bill.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's a lot of hours.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It is a lot of hours. And we've had over 50 different members—or maybe some of them are repetitive; I don't know. But we've had 50 members speak to this bill. So my sense is that it's time that we pass this and get it to committee. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I was in the House when the member made his comments with regards to Bill 122, and his version of events and the version of history as to how Bill 115 played out in this House. It is really interesting, because the PC caucus has actually moved unanimous consent of adjournment of this piece of legislation, which they, in turn, then voted against; and the Liberals, who've actually just stood up and commented on the length of time that debate has occurred in this House—12 and a half hours, 50 members—they in turn voted to continue the debate and sided with the PC caucus. So we have only games here.

The games themes would continue through last September 2012, when Bill 115 was introduced and when this government imposed contracts on the education sector. It was unprecedented. We had never seen this level of heavy-handed, so-called collective bargaining in the history of the province, except—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mike Harris, actually, would not have gone this far.

So what we have here today in this House is the opportunity for a piece of legislation to come through; we have the opportunity for the legislation to do clear paths and clear responsibilities for school boards to be at the table, as they should—they have a legitimate role at that table—for the ministry to understand their role in bargaining, which clearly they forgot about last September, and for the respective unions in the education sector to know what their roles and responsibilities are at that table.

So this piece of legislation, despite some of the major gaps that we intend to address when it does get to committee, if the government would get to it committee—which they could do right now. Someone on that side of the House could stand up right now and send it to committee. Let's get to work, for the love of humanity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: The bill in front of us today, Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013—we're in the second reading. The first reading was just the introduction of the bill, and at second reading now, we've spent over 12 hours—12 and a half hours—on debate, and over 50 members of this Legislature have spoken to this bill. As the standing orders go, after a certain percentage of time the bill is usually sent to a committee, a standing committee of the Legislature. We want to send it there, but it seems to be continuous that members from the opposition want to continue to speak on this bill. I think it's time to send it to committee, get a full discussion there—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There seems to be a lot of cross chatter, and I believe heckling is not acceptable. So I don't want to hear any more.

Continue.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point, again, is to say that there will be a full discussion at committee. We can hear witnesses come forward and we can amend the bill, change the bill. There's a full opportunity at committee to do that. That's been done on several occasions with several bills.

As I point out again here, in this Legislature, for over 12 and a half hours we have spoken about this bill. It's time to send it to committee. I'll vote in favour of sending it to committee. Let's move on with it and get it there.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo wasn't listening—last warning.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker, for that opportunity. I'll bring the viewers who are watching at home back to the message, or bill at hand, and that's Bill 122. I know we've heard a lot of different comments from the third party and, of course, the government.

This actually was the first opportunity that I've had to stand up on behalf of my constituents—some 100,000 people in Kitchener–Conestoga—to speak to this bill.

As I mentioned during last fall, I had several students in from the local high schools who were really concerned about the ongoings of cancelling the extracurricular activities. Unfortunately, this bill is basically formalizing the government's role in negotiations. Really, this bill is simply about setting up a negotiation process; it's not really about improving education.

We did ask the government to clear the deck previously so we could actually talk about the economy, and this is unfortunately another bill that does not do this.

One of the priorities that we've talked about in Bill 122 was amending regulation 274, and that was defining a teacher's duties to reflect what they actually do in a day—and wage restraint wasn't covered in this bill.

As I mentioned in my previous 10 minutes, we really should be ensuring that we've got the best teachers in the classroom, and when we come to hiring those teachers, it shouldn't be based on seniority. It should be based on who's best to teach. In fact, we heard about the young teacher in

Toronto who was the teacher of the year but unfortunately is now unable to find employment in the classroom.

We need to ensure that our kids have the best teachers in the classroom. I know that we've got many, many of those. In fact, in our local school of J.W. Gerth—I go in there every day and I see a lot of smiles on those kids' faces, and we need to ensure that they're getting the best, highest quality of education, but I'm not too sure if Bill 122 does this.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to address my last two minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I move unanimous consent that the order of the House dated November 4, 2013, referring Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act, 2013, to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged, and that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and that the committee meet for one day of public hearings and one day of clause-by-clause as scheduled by the subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Did the member submit one to the table so I can read it? I'll just read it.

The member has asked for unanimous consent. Is it the pleasure of the House that it carries? I heard a no. Not carried.

Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It gives me pleasure to stand up in the House today to speak to Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. This bill would provide greater clarity around the roles of the different parties involved in collective bargaining in the education sector. I was certainly pleased to see that the role of government at the bargaining table was formalized.

I have some difficulties with this bill, and I'd like to go through them right now. My children are all through school. My three boys are out on their own, but they have children of their own, and I wonder if we should be talking not only about this bill but certainly about test scores since 2003. Despite the fact that this government spends more than \$8.5 billion on education, we have 250,000 less students in our system. This is troubling. As my grandchildren get older—they're all in public school now—this certainly worries me, because the amount of money that we're spending on education doesn't seem to be working. In fact, 91% of professors at the University of Western Ontario felt that their students who came into university were not sufficiently prepared for their university education.

Something else that I'd like to address—and I think this should be addressed when we're talking about education—is the troubling fact that principals, because of regulation 274, are not allowed to pick the best teachers for the job. It's strictly based on seniority, and that's troubling. When my sons were in public school a number of years ago, there were difficulties that we had at school, but we were always able to go to the teachers and work them out, and this was a great part of it.

In fact, with one of my children, he was moved around to other teachers that he could get along with or learn from better, because he did have a bit of a learning disability. I worry about that in this present system, with this regulation. I have a letter in front of me here that was sent to the minister from two principals in my riding, complaining about this very thing.

I think those types of things have to be addressed sooner than later, as it will relieve some of the tension involved in our school system, especially with the management part of the schools, which certainly are our principals and vice-principals.

Something else that I'd like to say about the bill is that we have no objection to this getting to committee, where some of these things might be able to be addressed, and we're certainly willing to co-operate with the government on this, and as I said, we need to either modify or repeal regulation 274.

We want to work with the government, this is what we want to do on this bill, because education is certainly too important a subject to all of us in this House, which leads me to ask a question when we talk about co-operation. I learned just recently that the Minister of Education is coming into my riding on Friday to announce something on health. I wasn't notified. Now, if this is the type of co-operation that we can expect from this government, then how are we supposed to debate with this government and trust them?

Actually, I don't even know what the announcement is. She's the Minister of Education, but she's going to be in a hospital. I would think it's about health, but why is the Minister of Education going to announce a health thing?

Mr. John Yakabuski: They're a little bit mixed up over there.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I think so. Could it be about rural affairs? I am the critic of rural affairs. I don't know whether she knows that much about horses, so I don't know whether it's about horses.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It depends what end of the horse you're talking about, Randy.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It could be. Or could it be about the independent school bus drivers whom this government seems to love driving out of business? I don't know, but if that's the type of co-operation that this government wants to give the opposition parties in this House, I have some real issues about that.

I would hope that the Minister of Education would at least have the decency to give me a phone call. I think she knows my email address. She could tell me what's going on in the community of Mount Forest.

Interjection: I didn't hear from her when she came to my riding.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I must commend the Minister of Rural Affairs. When he comes into my riding, he tells me when he's coming, and I appreciate that. But for some reason, the Minister of Education has a problem with that.

We need to address this issue of co-operation between the parties a little bit more stringently. Mr. Speaker, I think we owe it to the people of Ontario to roll up our sleeves and talk about the kinds of laws and policies that will enable job growth in this province. There is no plan on that side of the House for job growth. We've seen too many factories leaving this province, as we've seen with Heinz recently, as we've seen in Hamilton with the steel plant and as we've seen with other things that have happened just recently in this province—some 30,000 jobs under this Premier's watch, and that's just unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I would move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Perth–Wellington has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1658 to 1728.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats, please.

Mr. Pettapiece has moved adjournment of the House.

Those in favour, please rise and remain standing. Everybody.

Those opposed, please rise.

Obviously the motion fails.

Further debate.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Wait a minute. Oh, we're going to have a count.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 0; the nays are 37.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The motion fails.

Mr. Pettapiece.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker, for your leadership on this motion. I appreciate that.

I was talking about the way that we do want this bill to get to committee, and we can amend things when we get it there. But I want to get back to what—the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario wrote me a letter. It's all about management rights. This gets back to the amount of money we're spending on education, and yet our test scores are going down.

It says in their letter to me that they have seen an erosion of their capacity to effectively lead our schools. Teacher instructional time has been decreased by 11%, and yet there are less students in our classrooms. Time spent supervising students has decreased by 20% and class size has decreased. Now unions are telling them what can and cannot be discussed at staff meetings.

This is not right, sir. We need to get some authority back with our principals, that they can run their schools as they see fit. And for them to be told what they can and cannot discuss at staff meetings—that's ridiculous. That is just absolutely ridiculous.

I think I would like to see this government come forward with a jobs plan in conjunction with the education system. We have seen that they don't have a jobs plan. It would help address our prevailing problems we face in our education system, and I'm sure that everybody could agree to that.

I mentioned that my grandchildren are in the public school system right now. I worry about what they are going to face when they get to be older, with what's going on with the system right now.

I think that we need to work with our management system in these schools in order to let them do what they do best, and that's teach.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to recap. I appreciate some of the points that the member has brought forward, although for the majority of his 10 minutes, he was not actually speaking to the legislation that's before us.

So what just happened, for those who are watching at home, which includes my mother and my children and maybe your mom, is that the Conservatives called for unanimous consent for the adjournment of the debate on Bill 122, because we have to date, right now, in this House, over 13 hours of debate on Bill 122. Over 50 MPPs have spoken to this piece of legislation.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: That's our right.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is your right. Then you should not call for unanimous consent for adjournment of that debate, and then not stand up and support your own motion.

And the Liberals—let's be very clear what the Liberals just did in this House. They stood up in this House, prior to this motion, and called all of us out for extending the debate on Bill 122. They said, "Bring it to committee. Vote on this legislation." And then the majority of them came into this House and voted to extend the debate on Bill 122.

So these kinds of games—this is what happens. This is what you are doing. You are contributing to the cynicism in politics by doing these games.

Bill 122 has the support of the NDP. Any one of you on that side of the House could stand up and call for this legislation to go to committee, and you know what? We would support it. You can do it right now. You could do it. You could bring peace and stability and undo the damage of Bill 115 and regulation 274. You could do it right now, but you are not doing your jobs. No, you are not. Instead, you are standing up in this House and criticizing democracy. And yet—and yet—you will go out to the education sector, and you'll say, "We care about you. We want a fair and transparent accountability around collective bargaining," and yet you are playing these games. Shame on the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Brampton West.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's obvious that the opposition is stalling this bill by asking for adjournment of the House and adjournment of the debate. It's quite a ridiculous situation that we have here in the House this afternoon. What's worse is, when we do come back to vote, the opposition members don't even vote. They're making a total mockery out of the system that we have here in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, we don't have a lot of time left before we break for the Christmas holidays, and we have a very, very busy agenda. This bill has been debated for more than 12 hours, and over 50 people have spoken on this bill. I think it's time that we pass this bill and get it to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would point out to my colleague from Brampton that it is within the standing orders that every member of this Legislature has the right to speak to every piece of legislation. That's how democracy works. In the PC Party, we're exercising that right. If members of the government choose not to speak to a particular bill, that's entirely up to them. If the government decides that they want to put in a closure motion on this bill, that's entirely up to them as well.

I think what needs to be pointed out, because they're talking about process and everything else here, is that we agreed to a programming motion that would clear the decks in this Legislature.

Much of that legislation has gone through. And Mr. Dhillon talks about how we're going to be recessing—sorry; the member from Brampton—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): West.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —Brampton West. We're going to be recessing shortly for the winter break, the Christmas recess.

What people across the province of Ontario want to know is, and I say this to the member from Brampton West: When is your government going to bring forth a jobs plan for Ontario? Every day we hear more and more stories about job losses across the province of Ontario, where jobs are going away to the States or to Mexico or to somewhere else. What we need is some action on jobs.

But what are you bringing in? You're bringing in smoking regulations on patios. These are not things that are of paramount importance to the people of Ontario. They might be altruistic pursuits, but what people in Ontario want to know is, are you going to do something so that my family and I have an opportunity to make a living in Ontario? That's what we want to hear from the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's right, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that.

I just wanted to make a couple of comments and follow-up to the member from Brampton West as well. We've talked about this, and we've said it and we're going to keep repeating it: It's now well over 50 speakers; I don't know how many we're up to now. It's got to be over 12 hours—13 hours? It's got to be 13 hours now that we've been debating this bill. I recognize every member of the House has the right to speak to this bill, but not every member of the House has to speak to this bill.

I think everything that could possibly be said about the bill has been said. In fact, most of the members in the opposition, when they do take the opportunity to speak to it, spend maybe 30 seconds of their speaking time on the bill and the rest of the time they're talking about other things—and things that aren't even in keeping with the facts.

I mean, we in this province—the member opposite said something about jobs plans; we've never not had a job plan in this province. In fact, we've had a very aggressive job plan that's created over half a million jobs since the recession. In fact, just today I said in question period that 3,721—I think; I don't know if that's the exact number, but it's pretty close—young people are working today over the last two months since we brought in our youth jobs strategy. That's thousands of young people who are getting work experience, so when they say this stuff about job plans and things—

Mr. Vic Dhillon: They're wrong.

Hon. Brad Duguid: They're absolutely dead wrong. We've been working very hard to create jobs in this province.

Let me get back to it: It's time to move on with this bill. It's time for the opposition to stop making points over and over again. It's time for us to move this forward.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew is extremely loud.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order from the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to mention to the House that I think there was an error mentioned by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. She may want to correct the record about her statements from the member from Perth–Wellington. He did not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): With all due respect to the member, it would be up to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo if she felt she said—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Just offering my thoughtful advice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You may sit down now. It would have been up to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo if she felt she wanted to correct the record. We don't need any help from you, thank you.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I move unanimous consent that the order of the House dated November 4, 2013, referring Bill 105—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Huron–Bruce knows you can't do that. We're in questions and answers. We can't do that.

Response, from the member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. I do appreciate your indulgence in this matter. I do enjoy it when you are in the chair, and I thought I'd just put that on the record. I would also like to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Brampton West, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for their comments on my short talk this afternoon.

I did adjourn the House. I think we all know that. I didn't adjourn the debate. That's what the member to my left was talking about.

I would like to address a few of the thoughts that came my way with the members previous to me. Our children are getting a lot of experience in the workplace. Unfortunately, most of them are getting it out west; they're not getting it in Ontario. We need to address that. We need to have an education system that addresses that.

Our party has put those plans out in our white papers on education. You should read them. They have some really good ideas in them. Perhaps we can help our young people, because the way it's going right now, we're not helping them. Their test scores are down, which has been proven from different education authorities. Professors at the University of Western Ontario say that their students aren't prepared for university when they get there. I think that we need to do a better job as legislators on what we're doing and how we're affecting our young people in this province. This province can be great again, and education is certainly going to be a part of that greatness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I got my timing right. I move unanimous consent that the order of the House dated November 4, 2013, referring Bill 105, an Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act, 2013, to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged and that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and that the committee meet for one day of public hearings and one day of clause-by-clause, as scheduled by the subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Nice. Can I have a copy of that, please?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: You sure can.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Do we have unanimous consent for this? I heard a no. That one is defeated.

Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I stand today wishing I could be talking about jobs and the economy, but instead the government has shied away from the difficult reality that their failed policies have generated. So instead, here we are talking today about legislation that has been introduced to define a negotiation process. We not even talking about improving education.

I am joining this debate because it addresses an important issue that we do need to get off the table. In the aftermath of Bill 115, as we all know, the education collaborative bargaining process was in total disarray. The importance of having a clear collective bargaining process when it comes to education is obvious. Bill 122 outlines what should be considered at the central bargaining table and what should be considered locally.

Also, this bill finally legislates a formal role for the crown in the process, and this is definitely a step forward.

So although the Liberal government is trying to save face by cleaning up the mess they made, they are starting to make some progress.

It's important to remember, however, that the framework is totally untested in practice at this point. All the formal stakeholders in the process are proceeding very cautiously. Nobody opposes it, but nobody really supports it either. So the keyword here, definitely, is caution.

One of the biggest unknowns regarding how the process will play out is obviously the interplay between the central and local levels and how government will participate. We simply don't know how well it will work yet. That is why it is so important that a sunset clause be added to this legislation so that it is reviewed after the next round of bargaining. It is a step forward to have a framework, but I'm sure there will be changes that need to be made once it's tested in the real world.

To a large extent, Mr. Speaker, the really important thing to notice here is not what's in this legislation but what isn't in the legislation. It changes the framework, but it doesn't change any substance. The most glaring omission is the failure to address regulation 274, which continues to wreak havoc on the hiring process for teachers across the province. Regulation 274 is single-handedly preventing thousands of eager, fresh young teachers from getting the valuable early career experience that they need. In simple terms, regulation 274 ranks teachers on occasional-teacher lists solely in terms of seniority; then it forces schools to give first dibs on permanent positions to the highest-ranked teachers. As a result, many exceptional young teachers—my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga mentioned earlier that the best teacher in Ontario is out of work, simply because of seniority. Instead, young teachers like that gentleman are spending years on the occasional-teacher list instead of being in the classroom full time, where the kids really need them.

I want to emphasize that merit must be a consideration for hiring teachers. We all know that just because someone has been around the longest doesn't mean they're necessarily the best person for a job. Teacher hiring practices need to recognize this reality.

According to the Globe and Mail, in September, Premier Wynne admitted that regulation 274 may have been an over-correction. Really? Furthermore, according to the same article, the education minister stated that the current government is studying the legislation, looking for ways to tweak it to fix this problem.

Speaker, regulation 274 is not an over-correction that needs to be tweaked. It is bad policy that needs to be completely rethought.

The youngest in my family is currently in teachers' college, and she is just finishing up her first practice-teaching session. You know what? I am so, so proud of her, because when we hook up on the weekends, and I get a review of her week, I can tell with everything in me that she has hit her stride. She started university at Brock. She changed her program after second year, and she went into biology and mathematics. She went to Brock to play varsity fastball. She found her groove there. Now she has found her groove, and she's so excited about being in the classroom and making a difference. In some ways, she's paying it forward. She had amazing mentors and

teachers and coaches as she went through high school, and it's her chance to give back a little bit, as well, and encourage people to be excited about mathematics and biology.

Imagine a young lady who can go in and coach any sport and also teach math and biology. According to some of my teaching friends, she would be a gem and be on the top of somebody's hiring list. But because of regulation 274, guess what? She is going to have to consider wading through all kinds of boards of education, fingers crossed, hoping she might get a call to supply.

Or worse yet, she may consider—while it would be an amazing experience, a lifetime experience—going abroad, or throughout Canada there are teaching opportunities as well. Do you know what's really sad about that, Mr. Speaker? She's pursuing her career that I know with everything in me that she absolutely loves and that she'll be wonderful at—but pursuing that career elsewhere because she can't get a job in her own province. It doesn't matter. It doesn't count. She will not have any seniority. She can go away for one year or two years—but come back to Ontario? Why bother? The experience that she has gained elsewhere means nothing. This is unacceptable, as we look forward and try to figure out a way to engage young people and keep them in our province.

It's interesting. From time to time, you hear the government say, "Unemployment levels have gone down." The Minister of Finance is very good at saying that. But, Speaker, I would suggest to you, unemployment rates have gone down because all the unemployed, all the young people, have left our province. It's a travesty, and Bill 122, as I said, does nothing to address the true issue at hand.

Well, you know what? We have to think about the hard work and the passion that brings people to the career of teaching. Regulation 274 is preventing these young people from taking their careers to the next level, and it's happening to thousands and thousands of people. It's a shame that this government doesn't get it and place a priority on our young people. They are our future. Instead, they would rather burden them with the debt that they've amassed over the last decade. What a thing. It just doesn't make any sense.

As I mentioned earlier, formal stakeholders in education bargaining processes are behaving cautiously because this bill creates uncertainty. They're not sure how it's going to play out. But potentially, the most important education stakeholder group doesn't have a formal position on this legislation, because they are not engaged. I'm talking, of course, about the parents of the school-age children across the province, and, in turn, the students themselves. They've been completely blocked out of this process.

Parents and students are the ones that every collective bargaining session impacts the most, and they are consistently caught in the middle of every contract negotiation—unacceptable. And it is the parents and the taxpayers who always have to pay up in the end. Parents and students are the ones who suffer the impact of work-to-rule action, for example, but they are consistently excluded from the bargaining table. Their voices are consistently ignored.

Every parent across this province wants the best education for their child. They want the best teachers, the best curriculum and the most enriching extracurricular activities for their children.

The education collective bargaining process has a profound effect on every aspect of the educational life of every child in Ontario, both inside and outside of the classroom. It's a glaring omission that parents in this province don't have a voice in this issue.

As we've mentioned many times before, there are many relevant issues that this bill does not address. Another important one is the looming crisis regarding education quality in the province. The education system in Ontario was once the envy of all other provinces in this nation and countries across the world. Our education system was first-class. A decade of mismanagement by the Liberal government, however, has left this once great system as a shell of its former self.

For example, the Education Quality and Accountability Office, the organization that administers standardized tests across this province, has noted some concerning trends in recent years. While reading and writing skills have generally remained steady, and even increased slightly, math skills are becoming a serious problem. But, as I said before, someone in my family who wants to teach math, who actually majored in math, won't have a chance. She's going to have to go abroad; she's going to have to go outside of Ontario to do what she can to help students.

According to the National Post, the EQAO's data over the past five years has shown a steady decline in math performance. Only 57% of grade 6 students, for example, achieved the provincial standard in math. This is down from 63% in 2009.

It's clear that parents are seeing a huge problem here. Our party, the PC Party of Ontario, recognizes the issues here. We need to do better for our students.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't think we have enough time for questions and comments.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.