Good evening, everyone and welcome. My name is Randy Robinson and I'll be your host for this OPSEU telephone town hall. Our topic this evening is the government of Ontario's contract offer for OPSEU members in the Ontario public service. This contract offer or tentative agreement, which is really two tentative agreements, one for the unified category and one for the corrections bargaining unit will be voted on by OPSEU members next week on June 20th, 21st and 22nd. Now is your opportunity to find out as much as you can about these tentative agreements before that vote. Joining me tonight are four panelists. One, Smokey Thomas, President of OPSEU. Ron Elliot, Chief Negotiator for the Union.

Mickey Riccardi, Acting OPSEU Co-Chair of the Central Employee Relations Committee of the OPS and Monte Vieselmeyer, OPSEU Co-Chair of the Ministry Employee Relations Committee for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Welcome, everyone. Before we hear from our guests, let me start by explaining how a telephone town hall works. Right now, there are thousands of OPSEU members in the OPS answering their phones and connecting to this discussion. In a way, this is like a traditional town hall where guests arrive and file in through the front door, except that in place of a front door, there are thousands of members whose phones are ringing throughout Ontario. Once a member answers their phone, they only need to stay on the line to join this discussion.

Very shortly, we'll hear presentations from Smokey, Ron, Mickey and Monte. They'll be speaking about different aspects of the extension offer put forward by your employer, the government of Ontario on June 2nd. More importantly, we want to give OPSEU members in the unified and correctional bargaining units whether on the phone or online an opportunity to ask questions about the offer, which as I said is really two offers. One for the unified bargaining unit and one for the correctional bargaining unit. We're going to try to get in as many questions and cover as many topics as possible. All of our panel members will be available to answer your questions. If you have a question, all you have to do is press Star 3 on your telephone keypad or for those joining us online, simply ask your questions by writing it in the chat box.

If you've not already seen the text of the offers for unified and correctional members, they are available on our website at www.opseu.org. I'm here to keep the conversation moving smoothly and to ensure we get to hear your opinions and have as much discussion as possible. Before we go to our first presentation, I'd like to invite Smokey Thomas, President of OPSEU to start us off. Smokey, the current OPSEU collective agreement in the OPS is set to expire at the end of 2017. Bargaining had been expected to start later this year. Can you tell us how OPSEU members in the OPS came to be looking at a contract offer even though there are still six months left in their contract?
Smokey Thomas: Yeah. Thanks, Randy. First, I'll start by thanking everybody for joining us on the call tonight. The tentative deals, the tentative agreements that are put before us have a number of positive changes, absolutely no concessions from OPSEU members. Real frankly, I'm very happy to recommend that the members' voting in favor with them. But at the end of the day, it's your choice and your vote and your contract. Here's what happened. My office got a call from the government a couple of weeks ago inviting us to a meeting to talk about OPS bargaining, which in and of itself is not unusual because it's used in meetings before bargaining starts. Pick hotels, food, meeting rooms, that kind of stuff to actually the logistics of bargaining if you will. That meeting happened on June the 2nd.

That's when the government presented the offer of a four-year contract extension for the unified bargaining unit and a four-year contract extension for the correctional bargaining unit. The government proposed that the new contract would actually kick in this coming July 1st, if it was indeed ratified by the membership. I called an emergency meeting of the executive board to discuss this. As this is certainly out of the ordinary, extraordinary perhaps and the board decided it would be proper to put those offers in front of the membership so OPSEU members could decide what to do. We called all the OPS local presence, your next highest ranking to the central bargaining conference last Saturday on June the 10th to lay out the offers.

As I said earlier, it's the members' collective agreement. It's the members decisions who they accept or reject. What we've done is this. This is the third of four tele town halls. There's one more tomorrow over the lunch break. Voting will be next week, June 20th, 21st and 22nd. We're still working out the details of the votes. Actually, I'll take that back. The details are worked out. They went up around three o'clock. If you're in Region 6 or 7, I'd encourage you to go back. There's a couple of minor changes in Region 6 and 7. Just reconfirm that if you'd already looked earlier. Just shortly after five o'clock tonight, we're all on the website. I checked. They're all there.

I think the main issue right now is just for the members to get informed about the offers, whichever contract you're in so you can make an informed choice next week. I would urge everybody to vote. No matter how you're voting, please go vote.

Randy Robinson: Well, thank you very much, Smokey. You're listening to an OPSEU telephone town hall about the contract extension offers that OPSEU members in the OPS will be voting on in a ratification vote next June 20th, 21st and 22nd. If you want to ask a question of any of our speakers, it's easy. All you have to do is press Star 3 on your telephone keypad and you will be placed in the queue. In addition to field in questions from members, we have the ability on this telephone town hall to do quick polls. Let's do a quick poll now to find out who is on the call. I'm going to ask a question then read out five choices. Press the number on your keypad that corresponds to your choice. Here's the question.
What bargaining category and what bargaining unit are you in? Press 1 if you're in the administrative category of the unified bargaining unit. Press 2 if you're in the institutional and healthcare category of the unified bargaining unit. Press 3 if you're in the office administrative category of the unified bargaining unit. Press 4 if you're in the operational and maintenance/technical category of the unified bargaining unit. Press 5 if you're in the correctional bargaining unit. Again, the question is, what is your job classification or category or unit? Press 1 if you're in the administrative category unified. Press 2 if you're in the institutional and healthcare category unified. Press 3 if you're in the office administrative category unified. Press 4 if you're in the operational maintenance/technical category unified. Lastly, press 5 if you're in the correctional bargaining unit. We'll start taking questions very soon but first, we're going to hear from Ron Elliot, Chief Negotiator for OPSEU to give members just a very quick sketch of what is in these offers. Ron?

Ron Elliot:

Thanks, Randy. I'll start with the unified bargaining unit. It's a four-year deal that runs through December 31st, 2021. There's a 1.5% increase that takes effect on July 1st, 2017 followed by a 1% increase on January 1st, 2019 and then 1% increase every six months after that for the rest of the collective agreement. That adds up to 7.5% over four years and all those raises are compounded. These are across the board increases. These are not lump sum payments. These are increases to the pay grid. On top of that, the freeze or movement through the salary grid will end effectively January 1st, 2018. As of that time, we'll go back to normal progression through the salary grid. In addition to the wage hikes, we've got some benefit enhancements.

First, the employer will make out of country medical coverage available. The premiums are to be paid by the employee but they're exceptionally reasonable at $6.11 a month for a single person, $9.63 a month for a family coverage. This is completely voluntary. You can go into it or not. It's up to you. The second, the employer will introduce mandatory catastrophic drug coverage. We're talking about extremely expensive drugs. The premiums are paid by the employee but again, they're the fraction of the normal cost. For a single person, the premium is 94 cents a month, $1.91 monthly for a family. First $10,000 in the catastrophic benefits is covered at 90%. After $10,000, they're reimbursed at 100%. In the past, we've had people who had to sell their cars, even their houses to pay for these drugs.

Well, with this deal, those days are over. Third, the current per half hour cap for psychologist's service will increase from 25 to $40 with the annual cap remaining at $1,400. Finally, a word about the Attendance Support Management Program or ASMP. Effective January 1st, 2018, it will no longer apply to the unified bargaining unit. There's one exception. Employees who are already at Level 3 or 4 on December 31st, 2017 will continue to have their attendance monitored until they move below Level 3. You can read the unified tentative agreement on OPSEU's website at opseu.org. The corrections tentative
agreement is also online and it's very similar. The term is the same. The wage increases are the same.

1.5% increase on July 1st, 2017, plus 1% every six months from January 1st, 2019 onward. These increases are across the board and compounded. Please note the correctional bargaining unit may continue to bargain an additional wage increase called the special wage adjustment backed up by interest arbitration if needed. Special wage adjustment will be the only outstanding matter in dispute between the parties that may be referred to interest arbitration in accordance with the interest arbitration provisions. Correctional managers will be eligible for the out of country medical coverage at the employee pay premiums of $6.11 a month for a single person and $9.63 a month for family coverage.

Similarly, mandatory catastrophic drug coverage will be paid by members at 94 cents a month for a single person and $1.91 a month for family. Just a word about correctional nurses. The government has talked about moving jurisdiction for correctional nurses from the ministry of community, safety and correctional services into the ministry of health and long term care. Correctional nurses opposed that move and we support them 100%. With this deal, regardless of any potential future change in the reporting ministry, correctional nurses will remain within the correctional bargaining unit. That is definitely a victory for our nurses. There are other improvements but I'll leave that up to other speakers to touch on.

Randy Robinson: Well, thank you very much, Ron. At this point, I'd like to report back on the results of the quick poll we just did. The question was what is your job category and/or bargaining unit I guess really. The answer, who's on the call? We have 23% of people on the call are in the administrative category of the unified bargaining unit. 5% are from institutional and healthcare in the unified bargaining unit. 32% are in the office administrative category of the unified bargaining unit. 19% are in the operational and maintenance/technical category of the unified bargaining unit. 21% of callers on the line at the time of our poll are from the correctional bargaining unit. We are going to go to questions now.

Before I do that, I want to remind you, if you want to ask a question, it's very simple. You just press Star 3 on your telephone keypad and you'll be placed in the queue. If you are watching this online, listening to this online, you can also just type your question into the chat box and that will get to us as well and I'll read it out over the air, I guess you could say. We're going to go to our first question right now. It is Joe in Ottawa. It regards ASMP and voting. Joe, welcome to the program.

Joe: Hi. I was just wondering how did we justify getting rid of ASMP and leave our most vulnerable members in it instead of just asking for everybody to be off. How do we get a [seat 00:13:23] if we're not going to go on this program on that?

Joe: Do we get to go vote during work hours?

Randy Robinson: Okay. Well, I'm going to ask Mickey Riccardi to respond to both of your questions on that score. Thank you very much.

Mickey Riccardi: Hi. It's Mickey. In regards to the ASMP, it's the employer policy. It is not in our collective agreement but we've been asking for the employer to get rid of that program for quite a while. We were hoping that we could have gotten rid of all the levels. However, when we proposed it to them, they indicated that Levels 3 and 4 would still remain. You could move out of Level 3 if you have the one-time voluntary option to move out of that, which would take you out of the program. We just felt that it was an opportune time for us to ask the employer to get rid of the program.

Ron Elliot: This is Ron. As far as voting during work is concerned, it's up to your local manager. The government of Ontario has told us they will be as accommodating as possible but still, you'd need to seek permission from your manager. The polls will be open before work, during lunch, after work. I think every OPSEU member will have ample time to vote. On the voting during work, please check with your manager. Thank you.

Randy Robinson: Okay. Thanks, Ron. I have a question from Doug who's typed in his question online. The question is this. Is the 1.5% on July 1st a lump sum or a new line on the salary grid? Ron?

Ron Elliot: It is actually a new line on the salary grid. We're very pleased with this. What it is, is really your 2018 raise, you get it six months early. In other words, it's front and loaded, which is the advantage to OPSEU and advantage to our members on both of these collective agreements. This is rare, almost unheard of. As Smokey was talking about earlier, but it goes on the grid. It's a real wage increase. Anybody that maybe is leaving in the next four or five years, this is going to help your pension a little bit.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much, Ron. We seem to be starting out the evening talking about lump sums. We have Jennifer in Ottawa with a question on the same topic. Go ahead, Jennifer, please.

Jennifer: Good evening, everyone. Thank you for taking my call. I will give a very brief background explaining my question. Then I will ask you if that's okay. Before we even discuss the new offer, I have a question about the last one, specifically the lump sum increase that was awarded in February of 2016. I, along with many other OPS members was on a pregnancy and parental job protective leave, which current employees are covered for under the employment standard act for half of the 2015 year in which the 1.4 increase was based on. My employer based my increase only on my actual earnings in the 2015 year, which was only
half of the year. I'm well aware that this is a violation of my rights under the employment standard act as well as the Ontario human rights code.

I have filed a grievance immediately after only receiving half of my increase. It was supposed to go to arbitration in December of 2016 but my meeting, along with 25 others that I know of in corrections, they're meeting was also adjourned without any say from us. It's been now nearly a year and a half since the final increase was given to all other OPS members and I, along with many others have received little to no information regarding this grievance. When I inquired with my grievance officer, it takes months for a generic reply. I contacted their manager four weeks ago and I still have to receive a reply. I had followed all of the steps. This is a clear black and white scenario. Yet no one has any information for me or any of the other members. I ask you, Smokey or anybody else with any knowledge.

Do you know of any further information on this matter or have any guidance for us as to why this is taking so long for something so simple. Additionally, how will we deal with this issue along with the other grievances in corrections and God knows how many other ministries that had the members on a leave of absence for 2015 and special case missions, how are we supposed to deal with this if we're not at the table bargaining? We're not getting any information. I understand this question is about the current offer but how are we supposed to proceed with new offers when old offers are not being upheld and our rights are being violated? Please somebody give me some information regarding this.

Randy Robinson: Well, thanks for that question, Jennifer. I think Monte Vieselmeyer is going to take that one on.

Monte V.: Thanks, Jennifer. Actually, I had a call with one of our corrections grievance officers earlier this evening about that specific piece. As you said, there was a date that the board and my understanding that there was an opportunity I guess to sit with the employer to try to come to an agreement. Apparently, that did not occur. My understanding speaking with that grievance officer, the rescheduling at the board and you're correct. It needs to be dealt with. Again, that's why he wants to make sure this date is brought forward. Unfortunately, sometimes as you know, grievances take some time. At some point in time, we will get the proper resolution and you will be taken care of. It just takes some time unfortunately. Thank you.

Randy Robinson: Okay. Thanks very much, Monte. We have a question from North Bay. It's a pay scale question and it appears to be coming from someone working in the courts. Go ahead, North Bay.

North Bay: Hi there. I'm just curious as to why the exec team felt the need that they could bargain this new contract without going through the actual bargaining process, allowing the union members to have a vote. I guess not addressing or including any of the demand sets that we have within this new contract.
It's Smokey here. This might be out of the ordinary. It's not unprecedented. The employer has the ability to bring an offer to any union anytime. The union would quite readily be obligated to take it to the members for a vote. The teachers unions, three of them already agreed to a two-year extension. We have workers in the education sector. When asked what the teachers are in, we've got five locals with a 26 or 2700 members in total. They voted a couple of months back on an extension offer that the government, the boards of eds made to them. For this, when the employer made the offer, we're duty bound to bring it to you for a vote. You can take it or leave it. At least you get a choice because some unions don't give their members a vote.

Here, you get a chance to either accept or to not accept it. If I recall correctly, your other question was around special cases, which Mickey knows the answer to that. They're still being dealt with from the last contract. Special cases from this round will go back to some Appendix 7 committee. They'll go back to Appendix 7 committee. In between a round of bargaining, you're central employer relations committee team deal with those things with the employer all the way between their contract. They don't let anything go. Again, before a vote, it's proper to bring it to you for a vote. I hope that explains it for you.

Thanks very much, Smokey. A very good explanation of the background to these tentative agreements. We have time for about 45 questions every night. We've learned over the last two nights. You will have lots of opportunity to ask a question. At this time though, I want to ask Mickey Riccardi a question. As you will recall, Mickey is the acting OPSEU Co-Chair of the Central Employee Relations Committee of the OPS. Mickey, what do you think members should retain about the unified tentative deal specifically?

Well, everything, Randy. In fact, it's extremely short. Just two and a half pages long. You can read it at the website at opseu.org. There's one thing I'd like to underscore with our unified members. That's the Attendance Support Management Program or ASMP, which Ron mentioned. Unified workers have suffered under the ASMP for years. In fact, the employer expanded it in 2015. It punished and humiliated workers. It cast a shadow of suspicion on workers who are off sick. Basically accusing them of lying and theft. It chained them into returning to their workplace even if they or their family members were still very ill. By coming back too soon, sometimes they just got worse and/or passed on the illness to their colleagues. We have consistently lobbied the government to dump this unworkable program for years. Now, we've succeeded.

If this tentative agreement is accepted, the program will be terminated. I'd like to take this opportunity to remind members that we negotiated a way two tier leave for medical reasons last December. Formally, unless you had a medical certificate, employees receive just 66 and two thirds of their regular salary for 124 days of short term sickness. Now, after the first six days, employees are paid at 75% of the regular salary for those 124 working days. These are two tremendous victories for the OPS workers.
Randy Robinson: Thank you very much, Mickey. We’re going to go to some more questions now. I have one that came in online from Min. The question is this. Are there any improvements for unclassified staff other than the pay raise? Ron?

Ron Elliot: Well, thanks for the question, Min. You will get the pay raise. You will have the right to the out of country medical coverage. You’ll have the right to the catastrophic drug coverage. Let me see what else would they have the right to. Monte’s reminding me. Thanks, Monte. The grid freeze comes off January 1st, 2018 so you'll start moving through the grid. I think you'll get just about everything in this tentative agreement, Min.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much, Ron. We'll go to the phone now with Krissy in Belleville. Her question is about special cases. Go ahead, Krissy.

Krissy: Hi there.

Randy Robinson: Hi.

Krissy: I just wanted to ask about special cases. If this agreement is ratified, can there be special cases put forward during this four-year term of this agreement? Are they only put forward during negotiations?

Mickey Riccardi: Yes. Actually, they should be put forward with demand setting. We're still going through the 2014 ones. The ones that were submitted in this round of bargaining will come to our Appendix 7 table as well. Once we exhaust that, I believe you could table your special case with your MERC. If you haven't, then table it with the MERC and if it doesn't get resolved there, then they'll move it up to CERC. Hopefully, that helps.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much, Mickey. We have Sean in Toronto asking about part time employees. Go ahead, Sean.

Sean: Hi, Smokey and team. My name is Sean. I work for Service Ontario. I've been there almost two years working from contract to contract to contract because part of that time, I spent part time. Right now, I just got a full time contract but I'm constantly reapplying for my job. What are you going to do to improve the situation for Service Ontario employees who are stuck working contract to contract to contract? That's my first question. My second question is our brothers and sisters in the LCBO are about to go on strike. Are we in any way trying to leverage this position right now to assist them in obtaining a settlement without a strike? Anyway, thank you.

Smokey Thomas: Okay. Sean, two very excellent questions. Part time precarious work is the spurge of the working people all across Ontario, Canada and the United States and indeed, around the world. Now, the premier's changing workplaces review. To her credit, she addresses that. She said that the government wants to address part time precarious work. They also want to address equal pay for
equal work. If they do pass this legislation, because it's not passed yet, we will parlay that into improvements everywhere. Now, the LCBO did win an equal pay for equal work for human rights complaints. OPSEU led the way on equal pay for equal work for part time versus full time. What they want is if you do the exact same job as a full timer but you're part time right now, you make less but over a period of a few years here, you'll go up to equal pay.

As for the part timers, I'd ask you to check the OPSEU website for a link to Liqileaks, LIQI leaks. It tells us the real story about liquor board bargaining. Yes. This deal right now is putting pressure on the employer at the LCBO because we're in the media. I've done probably 20 interviews, talk radio shows this week about the LCBO and this deal. We're using this at the LCBO table to say, "Listen." They walk up to the government workers. Made a good offer. Why are you doing this to us here? They're trying to parlay that. I'd ask anybody on the line, if you want to buy some stock before the strike deadline, please do it at the LCBO store and please express your support for the workers because in your time of need, those workers will come and support you, too.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much, Smokey. We have Dave in Owen Sound. Go ahead, Dave. What is your question?

Dave: Hi there and good evening, brothers and sisters. I feel for Sean because as an MNR forest firefighter, I worked 19 years of contract. I feel for the contract brothers and sisters. I'm currently with the ministry of the environment and climate change in Owen Sound. My question is, with this new agreement, will the TEI be extended?

Ron Elliot: Thanks for calling in. Yes, this TEI is extended because it didn't have an end date in the collective agreement. The government refers to this tentative agreement or extension agreement, they call it a roll over. In other words, everything rolls over except things that were dated in the collective agreement. TEI moved forward. That's why we know the movement on the grid starts. We've talked to the government about this. There's no dispute on any of these items. TEI will continue for four years, four and a half years from now.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much, Ron. We're going to take this telephone town hall north now to Philip in Geraldton. Go ahead, Philip. What is your question?

Philip: Hi there. My question was I won't be around for my local writing vote next week. Are there options to vote somewhere else where there should be a local union?

Ron Elliot: Hi. Thanks. Hey. I used to go to Geraldton all the time. I used to work for [Domtar 00:30:16] Woodlands just north of Jellicoe. Yes. If you're in another town at the time of voting, you can vote. You'd have probably your government ID and OPSEU card, pay stub. Just say who you are. They can check you on our
computer records. If you're in a different city where voting is going on that day, please feel free to vote.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much, Ron.

Smokey Thomas: It's Smokey here. Check the website for the locations. If you're going to be in another city, just scroll through find the city you're going to be in and then the locations will be on there somewhere in hotels, somewhere in union offices. Make sure you look for your location.

Randy Robinson: Just to add to that, on the OPSEU website, at www.opseu.org, you have all information you need about this vote. There's a large banner at the top of the front page that says, "OPS contract vote." If you click on that, it will take you directly to everything you need including copies of the tentative agreements that were put together on June 2nd. For those who've just joined us, my name is Randy Robinson. I'm your host for this town hall. I'm joined as well by Smokey Thomas, Ron Elliot, Mickey Riccardi and Monte Vieselmeyer. We're talking about details of the extension offers that the Ontario government has put forward for members of the unified and correctional bargaining units in the OPS.

If you have a question for any of the speakers, just press Star 3 on your phone now. For those joining us online, please ask your question by writing it in the chat box. Now, I'd like to introduce Monte Vieselmeyer who's already spoken a few times. Monte is the Co-Chair of the Ministry Employee Relations Committee for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Good evening, Monte and welcome.

Monte V.: Thanks, Randy.

Randy Robinson: Monte, what's your take on the roll over made to the correctional bargaining unit?

Monte V.: Well, thanks for that question, Randy. I'm going to state a few points. I've been going over that the last couple of nights. I think it's good for clarification for our members in the correctional bargaining unit. I've gotten some of these questions from the members that I've spoken to over the last few days. It's good to reiterate. As we all know, we signed a collective agreement. This past one in January of 2016. A long hard fought for our corrections only collective agreement and as you're aware, there's going to be two votes. There's going to be a vote for the OPS unified and then there's going to be a vote for the correctional bargaining unit. When we receive that quote only, there had to be changes to sec but which is the current employees bargaining act that need to occur for that to be officially changed.

That legislation was changed in December 8 of 2016. We are officially changing sec but that we now have our own bargaining unit. We also do not have the
right to strike. That is changed from the last time. We do have the ability to take any disputes to interest arbitration. Most often, which is about wages. In addition, in December of last year, we also had the opportunity as Mickey referenced where we got changes to short term sickness that went from 66% to 75%. Also in that agreement, we were trying to bring over 2,000 unified members that work within the institutions and the community offices. That the correctional college bringing them into the correctional bargaining unit. The employer agreed with us. We signed that agreement. We brought it back to the unified members in January who voted on it and then it was approved in the board.

As I stated, 2,000 members and approximately 900 of all those were correctional nurses that came over that are now part of the correctional bargaining unit officially as of January 1st, 2018 but are now taking part in this vote. One of the other aspects of that former unified groups, they still do have the ability if at some point in time they wanted to transfer into other OPS jobs that are similar. Whether you're in operation administration or a maintenance individual, you can still move over if the opportunity presents itself. One of the pieces that I've heard some questions about is that's in this new tentative offer is in regards to the psychologists piece that want some $25 to $40 per half hour visit. I was actually at a meeting earlier today for our occupational stress injuries.

We're obviously working to improve for our correctional bargaining unite members, the issues that we deal with because we do have a lot of things that we deal with. Whether be potentially PTSD, which is the worst case or the occupational stress injuries because of the work we do. One of the comparisons that we looked at was the OPP. Their coverage is actually $1,500 a year, which is $100 more than we have. Also, works out to $50 per half hour. We have now in this offer is $40. We're a little behind them but we're actually fairly close. One of the things that's just come out recently is that the Ottawa Police have unlimited psychologists link. We're trying to improve that. We're also trying to tie this into Bill 163, which talks about the preventative piece prior to PTSD.

This is an important piece for our members because of the many issues we deal with. Again in this agreement, there's 7.5% on the table for our members. The very important piece that we fought for so long to getting our own corrections collective agreement is that interest arbitration piece where we can take it to an arbitrator to make a decision. The previous arbitrator, Mr. Burkett gave us an award of 3%, which came into effect earlier this year. He also set the stage for future rounds saying that yes we do need to catch up for our members. That's going to go forward. Again, this is the basis for an agreement that matches many of the other agreements that are going out this time. We're hoping that members get out and vote. Thank you.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much, Monte. If you have a question for Monte, or for any of our panelists here, all you have to do is press Star 3 and you'll be placed in the queue. I have a question now coming from David in Hamilton. Go ahead, David.
David: Yes. Thanks for getting me on here. I guess my question is again about the ASMP. The employer has always had a program before the most recent program that went into effect about two years ago. They had a program before that, which was quite frankly, fairly similar. Not quite as abusive but it was there. The question again is, do we have an iron clad agreement here that they will not put any type of program into place? That's the question.

Mickey Riccardi: Hi. It's Mickey again. They're getting rid of the ASMP program but they still can have another program for us. What they're reverting back to is the ASP, which is the Attendance Support Program. It was a program that was in place prior to them changing it to the ASMP. It's an employer policy. They're not taking it completely away. We will still have an attendance program. It just won't be like the one we have, which is the Attendance Support Management Program. Hope that helps.

Randy Robinson: Okay. Thank you, Mickey. I have an online question from Tyler, which I'm going to read out. Why is corrections not being removed from the attendance management program? Monte?

Monte V.: Hi, Tyler. Thank you. It's a good question. Again, when we had that opportunity to meet with the employer, that was one of the things that I wanted also that we remove that. Going back to the previous question, this was something that the ASMP that we challenge when it first came out because it came out in corrections in the 2008-2009 bargaining round. Again, we challenged it. The employer's entitled to have a program, a management program. For corrections, they wanted to keep it in place. We already know that our members are more greatly affected. If you compare the numbers for corrections to the rest of the OPS, we're significantly probably 35% of our correctional members are in this program.

The employer stated that our sick time is 28 and a half days per year, which is based on eight-hour days. We all work 12-hour shifts but 28 and a half days. We already know they can't manage the program properly. We're seeing members that are in Levels 3 and 4 and they're trying to do a Level 1 meeting. I believe there's still an opportunity outside of bargaining to push the employer back because they can change the program any time they want. It doesn't have to be in conjunction with bargaining. It can be done outside of bargaining. Thank you for your question.

Randy Robinson: Okay. Thank you, Monte. I have Renee in Timmins asking about future strike votes. Now, what are you asking about future strike votes, Renee? Go ahead, please.

Renee: Hi. Thanks for taking my question. I am Renee. I'm calling from the Timmins courthouse. I was at the central bargaining conference. What was spoken about member apathy and a fear that a strike vote could not be generated. Even yesterday, Smokey said on the tele town hall that members had to weigh the options of a strike if this agreement was turned down both for unified and
corrections. I remember it was mentioned that our strike fund was well-funded. The local government is awful and it's been awful to all Ontarians and as activist, myself included, if we can't motivate members to give a strike vote, that's far as I know, that's our fault. Our members are motivated. They're fighting the employer by fighting this ASMP program.

They're being brave by filing grievances about this and many other issues in the employment. I would like to know what your avenues is that our members are truly so apathetic that they should take this unimpressive deal honestly. No offense to anyone that negotiated it but it doesn't keep up with inflation and ASMP is something that I remember to have been fighting for a long time. Why should we take this deal to avoid a strike considering that previously, unified gave OPSEU an 85% strike vote? OPSEU is rightly supporting strikes at the LCBO and other BPS units. Thank you.

Smokey Thomas: Hi. It's Smokey here. Thanks for those comments. Let me start with this. What I said was if the contract is turned down, we're going to the normal course of bargaining, which in this unit has led to strike votes. Of course, they're leading up to a potential strike. Now, we haven't had a strike since 2002 so I'm not supposing there would be a strike. What some of the discussion has been is and the feedback from the membership is so far overwhelmingly that they don't want to go on strike. They would have absolutely had to. I think we could get the strike vote. If need be, the team would have the ability to take them out on a strike. I would also remind people that corrections now has binding arbitration, not the right to strike. The ASMP program is not in the collective agreement.

It's a government program. As Monte pointed out, that can be fought and changed at any time in between bargaining. We have been fighting it. All those grievances are probably why they're changing their mind the fact that even managers don't like it because it's impossible to administer. The member apathy if it's on all of us, well, I would say this. Working people everywhere are tired. They're weary. Most people just want to be left alone. The activists base is active. Some locals are more active and more cranked up than others. I travel all over Ontario. Most members are again, the feedback is very, very positive. At least that they get the opportunity to perhaps have four and a half years of peace. The executive board has had very long conversations about engaging the workforce.

It's not only in OPSEU that has problems with as you put it, member apathy. Every union's in the same position pretty much. It's been my experience that when workers are pushed to the wall by employers, they will give you a vote and they will go on a strike. In this particular case, we're not pushed to the wall yet. If it is turned down, then we go to the normal course of bargaining. It's up to the membership. That's what makes us a democracy. Not every union would actually bring this for a vote but we are. It's a members union. The members get to vote. It's the members choice and majority will rule.
Randy Robinson: Okay. Thank you very much, Smokey. I have Loraine in Bradford asking about seasonal employees. Go ahead, Lauren.

Lauren: Hi. Thanks for taking my call. I'm just curious to know. We've had a lot of listening to do about this 1.5% effective July 1st. As a provincial school employee, I got laid off for the summer. I finished June 28th. How will that affect since we don't get called back to work until this September?

Ron Elliot: Hi, Loraine. It's Ron. Yeah. I know a number of people from London that have a lot to do with Local 104 Robarts School. Loraine, in that case, you wouldn't get the raise until you came back to work. It will be all ready for you when you come back on September 1st. While you're laid off as seasonal for the summer, you just wouldn't achieve the raise until September.

Randy Robinson: Smokey would like to add to that as well.

Smokey Thomas: Loraine, if I just might add one thing. Your group of workers is the classic example of when workers are under threat, they come together with the union. The demonstration schools join in with family groups all across this province. We fought off the employers attempts, the government's attempts to close the schools. The fight will go on probably for several more years. For the previous caller, this is an example where workers are under threat, they will rise up. They will do the things they need to do. Again, this time, this is an opportunity to have that choice where you don't want to go down that road or take the deal.

Randy Robinson: Okay. Thank you, Smokey. I have Christina in Hamilton asking a question about the wage freeze. Christina, what is your question, please?

Christina: Hi there. I'm actually just curious about the current collective agreement because of the wage freeze, I'm about $3 away from being at the top rate. I've been with my employer now six years. As of July, we do sign up with the agreement. Am I going to the top rate of the old agreement or do I just start moving the grid and will that take me another six or seven years to get to the big seven and a half increase?

Ron Elliot: Hi, Christina. The wage freeze is done, January 1st, 2017. If you're in unified, you receive the 1.4% wage increase. Many of the folks in corrections are members. You receive the 1.4% wage increase, January 1st, a 3% special adjustment you've won in arbitration. They won an arbitration. They'll receive a 1.5% July 1st, 2017 if this tentative agreement is ratified. You could say it this way, a 5.9 for many in corrections and 2.9 for unified. You'll start movement on the grid. Wherever you are, your salary rate, you'll get a 1.5% increase on what you're making now. Starting January 1st, 2018, you start movement through the grid. Whenever your anniversary date comes up, you'll get a bump up on pay.

Starting January 1st, 2019, the 1% startup every six months. You will get a raise. You'll be the one of the folks that'd get a raise in 2018 but sorry, there was the
grid freeze the government had that we fought. Again, you'll get the 1.5% and movement on the grid starts January 1st, 2018.

Randy Robinson: Okay. Thanks, Ron. You're listening to an OPSEU telephone town hall. For OPSEU members in the Ontario public service, we're talking about the tentative agreements that members are going to be voting on in both the unified bargaining unit and the corrections bargaining unit next week, on June 20th, 21st and 22nd. I just want to remind people that if you want to ask a question of any of our guests, all you have to do is press Star 3 on your telephone keypad or if you're watching this online and listening to this online, you just type your question into the chat box and I'll read it out. We're going to go to the next question, which is Marie in Toronto. Marie, your question has something to do with relationship between unified and corrections and the ASMP. I think it's probably best if you explain it. Go ahead please, Marie.

Marie: What I wanted to know was that if you're in the corrections bargaining unit as of January, hello?

Randy Robinson: Right. Yeah.

Marie: I have an important call coming in. Sorry.

Randy Robinson: Okay. Sorry about that. That was Marie. This is Terry in Owen Sound with a question about the offer itself. Terry, go ahead and ask your question.

Terry: First of all, thanks for taking my call. My question is why is the government coming up with an early offer? Considering that past history of the negotiations with the government's suspicious. What's this really costing us? Are you sure that this is a good deal?

Smokey Thomas: Good point. Good questions rather. Three teachers unions, the education sector, workers union, so QP web, OPSEU has members. They've already ratified, either voted on or one union I know of just had it imposed on them by their union. In our union, we ratified in that sector, QP ratified, a couple of teachers unions ratified. There's no doubt in my mind, the government's trying to at least not have very acrimonious rounds of bargaining in the run up to an election campaign. Is it a great deal? I happen to think it's a deal worthy of consideration. I happen to think it's a deal worthy of acceptance because there are no guarantees. The government is not obligated if this is turned down. This would not have to be their starting point. They could start anywhere they want.

As for their motivation, I think it's simple. They're just trying to reduce the number of fights that are ongoing in the election. I would say this on behalf of OPSEU. This will not buy them labor peace with us. This will buy them peace in this contract and they don't have to bargain but we will still fight through the we own a campaign. We'll vigorously fight privatizations, job cuts, some assets. We'll campaign to say public services like we say at the demonstration schools.

OPSEU 06/15/17

Page 15 of 25
We'll do all those things. That stuff will not stop. That stuff will not stop. Again, it's before you to think about and it's your future and your vote.

Randy Robinson: Thank you, Smokey. I have an online question from Isabel. The question is, isn't the ASMP changed due to new sick day legislation? Ron is going to take that one.

Ron Elliot: It could be part. It could be a little bit part of it but that legislation's a long ways from being passed. That's in the changes work place review. Minister Flynn and Minister Dr. Harshman has made an announcement. I think it was on June 8th about that. Whether that becomes law or not, I don't know but could it have helped drop the ASMP program? It may have. It may have but I think the government, they want a better relationship with OPSEU. It's really way it's gone for unified. I wish they wanted the same relationship with corrections and we could have achieved having it removed from the corrections bargaining category.

When you see the relationship is changing through the we own a campaign, all of our mental health divisions campaign, we've got the raise and the psychologists payment, these campaigns and the fights the executive board are sponsoring and what convention passes are making a difference. On the website tonight, I believe you'll see an updated dental program where Brother Thomas talks about the changes, where the CERC negotiated that. Mickey talked about fighting off, remember the last contract, the government wanted our members for the 104 days of sec to go to 66%. CERC won that back at 75%. There is a better spirit of cooperation. We see it at the CERC table. Thank you.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much, Ron. We have Kay in Mississauga. She's got a question about caps on benefits. Go ahead, Kay.

Kay: Hi. Thanks for taking my question. My question is we have a cap on our benefits like going for a massage or a physical therapy, which is at $25 per visit, which is in this day and age ridiculous because nobody charges you that much. Any decent massage you go for doesn't charge you less than $80. Is there any way of increasing this cap or getting rid of this cap? We have benefits up to 1200 or 1400 for the year. Why can we not use the way we want to use it?

Ron Elliot: Unfortunately, there's nothing we can do about it for four and a half years. The only change in the benefit this time was the $40 to the psychiatrist. The contracts are a roll over so the benefits in the contracts stay in the contract exactly as before except for the one going from $25 to $40 and of course, plus the out of country coverage and the catastrophic medical coverage.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much, Ron. I just want to remind people online that if you wanted to ask any question of any of our panelists, all you have to do is press Star 3 on your telephone keypad. One person who did not press Star 3 though is Mike who has typed in a question online, which you can also do. Mike's question is
this. What is the process for the one time withdrawal for the Attendance Management Program that Mickey mentioned?

Mickey Riccardi: Hi. It's Mickey. There's a onetime option. I think the best way to do it is if you send us your email, then we can give you more of the information. The email address is opseu.org.

Randy Robinson: The simplest thing for people to do if they have a question that's a little bit too complicated to be handled on this call because of the details of the question that relate to themselves is to leave a message at the end of this call. You have the opportunity to leave a voicemail. Somebody from staff will get back to you. Just please explain the details of your particular question. Monte would like to go into a little bit more detail right now.

Monte V.: I just want to expand on that because again, we started out with the ASMP on the corrections side earlier than the rest of the OPS. If you look through, there's four different levels within the program. You'd have to read through that aspect of the program. In there, there's a one time option where you can drop down two levels but that's only once at any point in time. We're saying that the people that remain in Level 3 or 4, if you're in Level 3, technically, you'd be able to drop out. You'd also want to look at your personal circumstances because if say, you're only a month or a couple of weeks away from the getting out anyways because of the dates or floating cap, it may not be worth it to you to use that.

Since they're dropping the ASMP, it makes sense for you to use it on your side and take advantage of that and get out of the program. It's in the thing that's probably on the government website to explain some more specifically but as Mickey said, you can also call into us and give us your specifics. Thank you.

Randy Robinson: Just to add one more way that you can contact us, you can also, if you're online right now, you can type your email address into the chat box and we'll be able to contact you that way. Please explain what your question is about as best you can, if you do that. We have a question from David in Toronto. It's going to be about corrections special cases, I believe. Go ahead, David.

David: Hi there. As of latest tonight, I talked to a couple of people from work. I'm in corrections. Some people still think two things. One is that they've been going on strike. I think Monte and maybe Smokey already answered this once but maybe can reiterate that. Special case can still go. Anyway, special case can still go forward and we do not have the right to strike. Can somebody clarify that again?

Monte V.: Hi, David. Thanks for the question. Yes, I spoke to it earlier but I will re-verify it. As of December 8, when it was changed legislatively in CECBA that we have our own corrections bargaining unit also removed our right to strike for the corrections bargaining unit and also replaced it with interest arbitration. You'll
see in this deal above the 7.5% is also for us the ability to go to interest arbitration. We've already elected corrections bargaining team, which if this is ratified will be looking at is interest arbitration.

They can sit down with the employer and try to negotiate but if not, they can take that to interest arbitration, which the arbitrator we did last time, Mr. Burkett gave us the 3% wage but also set the stage for us to make future catch up adjustments. Again specifically, yes. We do not have the right to strike. We do have interest arbitration. I can confirm that. Thank you.

Randy Robinson: Okay. Thanks, Monte. Smokey.

Smokey Thomas: Smokey here. That was one of the key demands in the last round of bargaining for the corrections unit and party or strike vote. We did a lot of mobilizing around that to get arbitration so we have it. I have heard other people call me and say, "Well, we can still go on strike." Monte's absolutely right. In corrections, you no longer have the right to strike. You go to arbitration if you don't negotiate a deal. That was one of your major demands for people who may need a reminder.

Randy Robinson: Okay. Thanks very much, Smokey. Our next caller is Susan in Toronto asking a question I think about what happens if members do not accept these offers. Go ahead, Susan.

Susan: Yes. My question is what if they don't accept the offer? Do they go back to bargaining table? Do you really think we'll get a better offer than this?

Smokey Thomas: Hi, Susan. That's a great question. Here's what would happen. If it's not ratified in corrections, they go to the bargaining table and then off to arbitration. They no longer have to negotiate essential services. In the unified group, we have not negotiated essential services in many years. The makeup of the Ontario public service, the OPS has changed dramatically over those years between downsizing and ministry shuffles, creation of new entities. We would have to engage in before we bargain essential services negotiations by law. It's required in the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act. As we have in the past, the parties could agree to bargain first and then if that breaks down, negotiate those agreements before you go on strike or walk out.

This time around, the sentiment is and the agreement is to update the essential services agreement. I have no idea how long that would take but it could take quite some time because what happens is, is every local precedent, most of them end up in Toronto fighting with the employer over a number of essential services. If they're not agreed, you'd have to go to arbitration. In the past, it's taken months and months. Five months, if I recall correctly to bargain that. You have to do that first before we go to bargain. Could you do better? Maybe. Could you get the same? Maybe. Could you get less? Maybe. I don't know. If I was a gambling person, I wouldn't take the bet on getting better.
You might get the same or you might get worse but I don't know that you'd do better. The employer I think has put their best foot forward. Certainly, trying to entice people to vote for it but what we have to do is ESA bargaining first, which is lengthy indeed. There's a team elected for that that would do that. Once that's done, you would start commence bargaining.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much, Smokey. A big issue in people's discussions about these two tentative agreements has been the relationship between the correctional bargaining unit and people in the unified bargaining unit who have moved in with the correctional bargaining unit or in the process of doing so. Elizabeth and Alison has a question that is right on that topic. Could you go ahead, please, Elizabeth?

Elizabeth: Hi. Yes. I wanted to know how this was going to affect the OAGS who have recently jumped ship from unified into corrections. Also, when we do go to vote next week, are we voting under corrections?

Ron Elliot: Hi, Elizabeth. This is Ron. Yes.

Elizabeth: Hi.

Ron Elliot: You'll be identified on our computer systems. You'll know where you work right now. Anybody entering corrections January 1st, 2018 will be voting on the corrections contract. If anybody needs help in that, we'll have staff at all the votes to direct where to vote, which table to vote at, which ballot box will be clearly named. Each local would have two or more ballot boxes. One identified as unified, one identified as corrections but you will vote, Elizabeth on the corrections tentative agreement.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much, Ron. We'll go now to Timmins with Rick and a question about final offer. What is your question, Rick?

Rick: Yeah. I just want to know whether or not this was the final offer from the employer because I believe that's the reason why it would actually trigger a vote.

Monte V.: Well, thanks, Rick. A final offer is normally done during bargaining. At some point, the employer or the union may make a final demand and say, "This is it." Quite often, in bargaining and most people that have been at the table know there's three or four or five final offers that happen. This wasn't a final offer. Why this one is going for a vote is because President Smokey Thomas and Vice-President Eddy Almeida took it to the executive board and then the executive board made two decisions. One is that the members would vote on both agreements. One is this join the bargaining teams, the presidents or highest ranking as Smokey said at the start of the call. It was the executive board that made the decision that the members have the right to vote on these tentative agreements.
Smokey Thomas: It's Smokey here. I just like to add to that. Can you imagine if you will, if the executive board order said, "No. We're not going to say anything and we won't take it to a vote," and the membership found out. You would quite rightly be extremely upset because the union has a moral obligation to bring anything to you to vote on. It's not a final offer. It's an offer. It's a tentative agreement for you to vote on. The board made the exact right decision to bring it to you for a vote.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much, Smokey. I have an online question from Paul. It says, can you explain what the catastrophic drug coverage is and how different it is from our current coverage?

Ron Elliot: Yes. Thank you, Paul for the question. Right now, your benefit coverage is 90%. You pay 10%. The employer pays 90%. I won't talk about the $3 dispensing fees in this discussion. If you had drugs costing $10,000 the employer would reimburse you, the insurance carrier would reimburse you for $9,000. With the catastrophic coverage, this is when it kicks in over $10,000. Let's say something happened that was terrible and you needed an expensive drug. The drug costs 12,000. Well here's how that would work out. You would pay 1,000 for the first 10,000. In other words, the carrier would pay 90%. The carrier would pay $9,000 but after $10,000, the carrier would pay 2,000. On a $12,000 drug, you would be reimbursed for $11,000.

You could do that with another example. Let's say you are a family member. The drug cost was $20,000. Well again, you would pay $1,000. The carrier would pay $19,000. We thought where we got into this was when we were bargaining the OPSEU pension trust post-retirement benefits. We think this is very important. What we're asking really is for our members each to chip in a little bit to have an insurance program for our most vulnerable members that actually could be any one of us.

Smokey Thomas: It's Smokey here. There are many chemotherapy drugs that are not covered by the benefit plan and anybody's benefit plan anywhere or by the government. Many rare disease medications and treatment medications would be an injectable or pills that are not covered. I do know people that have sold their cars, maxed out their credit cards, locals that have done all sorts of fund raising to help pay for these catastrophic drugs. While we used to think that this would only affect a very small number of people, we're starting to learn that it actually affects quite a few people. This really is life changing. You get to keep your life and also keep everything you've worked hard for. I think this is a tremendous improvement on this one.

Randy Robinson: Thank you, Smokey. Staying on the topic of benefits generally, we'll go to Belleville and hear from Susie. Go ahead, Susie.

Susie: Yes. It was interesting to hear about the catastrophic fund. I think that's a really good idea. I know many people who have suffered also personally because of their drug cost per chemo and stuff. My question is in the, I guess I don't know
whether you want to call it catastrophic but in the dental area, I have a situation where a family member of mine had to have all their teeth removed for health reasons. Unfortunately, because of the damage to his gums, he has been over a year cannot eat correctly with the teeth in.

The only option that they say that he needs in order for them to stay in because he keeps losing weight because he can't eat correctly is to have the post or implants. They're just so outrageous that I'd be just go on into major debt to even get that. Is there anything that I can do within the drug plan that we have that would actually help and assist?

Ron Elliot: Hi, Susie. Well, that's such a sad experience. No. Unfortunately, there are no changes to the dental in this tentative agreement. There was a change the other day. Our central employee relations committee did bargain with the government. That comes down to where you had to pay the cost of the dentist for let's say a routine cleaning. Then you'd have to wait for the carrier to send you a check for 85% of the bill. What the CERC negotiated now was if your dentist will accept it and many are, and you want to do it, you'll just pay the dentist the 15% and the carrier will reimburse the dentist directly. That doesn't take money out of your pocket but no. The dental plan does not change under this tentative agreement, Susie.

Smokey Thomas: Susie, could I ask you to leave a voicemail at the end of the call? Send me an email at wthomas@opseu.org. Mickey is going through the collective agreement here seriously looking. Send me something and we'll see if there's something we can do to help you out. Okay? Either leave a voicemail at the end or email me at wthomas@opseu.org.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much, Smokey. Just to remind you that anyone who asks a question that isn't covered on tonight's town hall can leave a voicemail or type your email address into the chat box online and we'll try to answer your questions and hear your comments that way. You're listening to a telephone town hall from OPSEU. It's for OPSEU members on the Ontario public service. We're talking about the tentative agreements that are going to be voted on next week, June 20th, 21st and 22nd. We're trying to give everybody a chance to have their questions asked and answered.

Tonight, we still have about 15 minutes left on the call. If you have a question, press Star 3 on your telephone keypad or type that question into the chat box and I will read it out over the program. Right now, we're going to go to Faye in Toronto who has a question about the wage increase and its relation to inflation. Go ahead, Faye.

Faye: Good night, everybody.

Randy Robinson: Hi.
Faye: I listened to Smokey and basically it's more over less like you're egging us to accept this deal because in your opinion, it seemingly is a good deal. In my mind, it is a good deal for those who are at the top of the pay scale already who's not going anywhere. For the new comers to this game who are starting off at the bottom and who have families and other responsibilities, and with inflation on the rise, how are we supposed to make ends meet with this?

Smokey Thomas: You make a god point. I guess the gamble would be will inflation be more or will inflation be less? Several economists, I can't remember the number. Around 2% Randy, somewhere in that part? About 2%. This is pretty close to 2%. It keeps you in pace with inflation. If inflation goes up, certainly you're going to fall a bit more behind. Even arbitrated agreements around the 1.5 to 2% range we've been able to bargain a couple of small units in private sector, nursing homes at 2% raise. Other unions are getting arbitrators in other unions are worried and the 1 and 1.5. it's all in the ballpark of what's available. Here's my experience. I can imagine that the government is going to be kind enough to give you over inflation.

Just to botch that point, what I'd like to read to you here is last night, I talked a bit about the roll in the dice with the conservatives if they happen to take power. There's a snap election in the fall or bargaining drags on well into the next year. Here's what aggressive conservative leader, Patrick Brown had to say about re-negotiating the two contracts. He said re-negotiating the two contracts many months before they were to expire is fishy. With an election looming on June the 7th, 2018 and parties already jockeying for position. That's political parties. It's no coincidence Brown maintained suggesting government could have bargained harder to get a better deal for tax payers.

This is once again about the government looking at their own interest. This is about the liberal party interest, not the greater interest of the province of Ontario. We know he's a fiscal conservative. Again, it's all about weigh your odds. Weigh your chances. That's why if I'm egging you a bit, yeah, I probably am because I know what the conservatives are like and they are fiscal conservatives. The government is deeply in debt. They've been looking for a way to reduce that debt and curb spending. One way to do that is in the pay packets of public sector workers.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much, Smokey. We're going out to St. Catharine’s where David has a question about out of country coverage in retirement. Go ahead, David. What is your question exactly?

David: Yes. Good evening, panel. I would also like to state and I do think this is a positive agreement if we get it. My opinion, I am fairly close to retirement and I would like to know if out of 20 medical coverage under catastrophic drug coverage carries on into retirement.

Smokey Thomas: Hi. It's Smokey. I'm going to repeat that for Ron. He just had to step out for a moment. Ron, the question is about catastrophic drug coverage in retirement.
Can you outline what's available because we have a member here who's very close to retiring.

Ron Elliot: Thanks, Smokey. It probably depends on which plan you're retiring under. Under Plan A and that was the existing one. Some folks call it the legacy plan. Catastrophic drug coverage is there under the optional upgrades for Plan B. There's emergency out of country coverage and the medical assistance. What you really need to do I think to answer this specific question, if you go to the OPSEU pension trust website, it's all laid out there exactly what you'll receive. If you're thinking about retiring, you probably should do that anyway. It is available. On one plan, there's a cost and on one plan, it's included. Again, Plan B is again a no cost postretirement benefit plan but the benefits are not as high as Plan A or the legacy plan. I hope that helps. Go to the OPSEU pension trust website and it's all laid out there.

Randy Robinson: Thanks a lot, Ron. We've had a lot of questions tonight about the Attendance Support and Management Program. Here's another one from Chantal in Toronto. Go ahead, Chantal with your question. Do we have Chantal on the line? We do not. We're going to move on to Sherry in Brampton asking about long term disability. Sherry, go ahead, please.

Sherry: Hi. Thank you for taking my call and question. I'm just wondering. I'm on long term disability. The wage increase like the long term is based on a percentage of our salary. I'm wondering this wage increase how it would apply for people on long term disability and whether we did it while we're still offer or that. Then I have a second question but that was already answered. That's basically my question.

Randy Robinson: Okay. Thanks, Sherry. Go ahead, Mickey answering that.

Mickey Riccardi: Hi, Sherry. Yes. It does apply to people on out tip. You will get the increases. The 1.5 if ratified, you will get it in July and then you'll get them again in the length of the contract, 2019. The 1% in January and then again 1% in July. In 2020, you'll get it again and also in 2021.

Randy Robinson: Okay. Thank you, Mickey. We have Kristen in Toronto asking once again about the ASMP but this time I think as it relates to part timers. Kristen, can you explain your question for the panelists, please?

Kristen: Yes, I can. One of my co-workers, she's relatively new. She has maybe two years. She works part time, so about 25 hours a week. Over the last year, she accumulated eight six days. Eight six days is not a lot. It's fine. Now, she's on Level 4 of the program. She cannot get off because they're telling her she needs to work 36 hours a week for one month to be reduced to the next level.

Randy Robinson: Mickey, would you like to try answering that one? It's a very-
Smokey Thomas: Hey. It's Smokey here. There are particular things that a person would have to have the policy and everything right in front of them. I'm not sure what local you're in but you could leave a voicemail on the members at the end of the call or you could contact a local steward. In your workplace, your local president or you could call in to OPSEU an ask to be referred on. There's several avenues in which to get the question answered. We wouldn't want to venture a guess without knowing all the details. I haven't a policy right in front of us. Sorry we can't answer but we will get you the answer if you leave a voicemail or email us or ask your local steward.

Randy Robinson: Okay. Thanks very much, Smokey. We'll go to Todd in Belleville. Go ahead, Todd.

Todd: I'm just wondering because in the last agreement we bargained, not much were raised but we got that 36-hour payments. When they're saying they're rolling everything over in this contract, I'm just wondering why that was not included because I'm getting resources that are saying that essentially, we would be agreeing to about $400 a year raise on top of if we still had the ASL payment based on these raises.

Monte V.: Thanks for your question. Again, to specify anything that has an end date is not rolled over. For that, there is an end date. When we had that, I don't know under the contract the last time, it was something that I guess we're trying to improve the contract for our members. That was something we got the employed agreed to for those final two years of the contract. They weren't willing to move forward with it and again, looking at it as that it lowers the amount of money, it wasn't an ongoing thing that was going to continue. Obviously, any additional time off for our members was something that we found is a benefit. Unfortunately, it's not being renewed because it did have an end date. Thank you.

Randy Robinson: Yeah. Thank you very much, Monte. We are getting in to the last few minutes of our call. It seems like we just started talking a minute or two ago but it is about three minutes to nine now. We have time for one last questions. It's a question from Jeff online. It says how long are the benefit premiums locked in for?

Ron Elliot: Hi, Jeff. It's Ron. The benefit premiums are not locked in at all. Here is why it's a level of comfort. They haven't changed in a number of years for folks that have had this. With this much younger bargaining unit going into it, it actually should decrease the cost overtime. What you're doing is if both these tentative agreements are agreed to, you're going to have 35,000 people much younger than the people that this was built for in the program. I'm fairly confident that the premiums will not increase.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much, Ron. Well, you've been listening to OPSEU telephone town hall to discuss the tentative agreements that were signed on June 2nd that OPSEU members are going to be voting on next week, June 20th, 21st and 22nd. We're going to wrap up now with some comments from President of OPSEU, Smokey Thomas. Go ahead, Smokey, please.
Smokey Thomas: First, we’d like to thank Monte, Mickey and Ron and Randy, you for moderating and the panelists. It takes a quite a team of staff to make these calls work. Thank you, everybody. Again, I'll just reiterate. I hope you find any information helpful so you can make your mind up whichever way you want to vote. I would encourage you to say to your colleagues there's another call tomorrow but encourage people to go vote. One thing I noticed in these three calls is some people are asking specific questions. I'd like to remind you that in your workplace, you'll have union stewards who you can approach. If they're not able to help you, you're always able to call a local office, union head office, we can help through those calls here and set you up in the right direction.

For anybody, if you ever have a question of any kind, that's what the union is here for. Head office is 1-800-268-7376. I can refer you to regional offices, your staff rep, you got stewards in the workplace. Really, don't let a question go unanswered or a concern go unaddressed. I just want to thank everybody for getting on the call. I hope you'll find the information helpful. Again, I just encourage everybody to vote.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much, Smokey. Thanks to everyone for their participation. Our guests tonight have been Smokey Thomas, Ron Elliot, Mickey Riccardi and Monte Vieselmeyer. Finally and just to reiterate what Smokey said, if you do not get a chance to ask a question or if you have a comment, you’ll have a chance to leave voice message when this call ends. Please just take one more minute to stay on the line and leave your message. Thanks again and have a great evening.