

*June 13, 2017*

## **OPSEU Telephone Town Hall for June 13, 2017: Transcript**

Randy: Hello everyone, my name is Randy Robinson, and I'll be your host for this telephone town hall tonight. Our topic this evening is the government of Ontario's contract offer for OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service.

Joining me tonight are three panelists. Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President of OPSEU; Ron Elliot, Chief Negotiator for the union; and Mickey Riccardi, Acting OPSEU Co-Chair of the Central Employer Relations Committee of the POS.

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 the 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. If, at any time during this discussion, you want to ask a question, just press \*3 on your telephone keypad.

Shortly, we'll hear presentations from Smokey, from Ron, and from Mickey, and who's just joined us is Monte Vieselmeyer, OPSEU Co-Chair of the Ministry Employee Relations Committee for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Before I get to that, though, they'll be speaking about different aspects and details of the extension offer put forward by your employer, the government of Ontario, on June 2nd. But, more importantly, we want to give our OPSEU members in the Unified and Correctional Bargaining Units, whether on the phone or online, an opportunity to ask questions about the offer, which 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. Again, if you have a question, all you have to do is press \*3 on your phone keypad, or for those joining us online, simply ask your question 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](http://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, and 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's still six months left in their current contract?

Smokey:

Thanks, Randy, absolutely.

Hi everybody, I'd just like to start by thanking everybody for either getting online, or joining the call tonight.

So, let me just say this: These tentative deals come with a number of positive changes, and absolutely no demands for concessions from OPSEU members, this time around. So I'm very happy to recommend that all members vote in favor of them, as is the entire executive board of OPSEU.

So, what happened was, my office got a call from the government a couple weeks ago, inviting us to a meeting to talk about OPS bargaining. The meeting took place on June 2nd, and that's when the employer 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 ratified by the membership. I called an emergency meeting of the executive board to discuss this, as it was pretty out of the ordinary. At the board, we decided we had no choice but to put these offers in front of the membership, so OPSEU members could decide what to do. Then we called all the OPS local presidents, or next highest ranking, to the Central Bargaining Conference, last Saturday, on June 10th, to lay out the offers.

Here's what I told the local presidents that were there: I told them there was no way we could not put it before the membership to either accept or reject. It's the member's collective agreement, so it's their decision.

So, what we've done is, we've set up ratification votes to be held June 20th, 21st, 22nd, around the province. We're still working out the details of the votes, but we'll have that settled, and you'll know where to vote, and that information will go up online.

I think the main issue, right now, is for the members to get informed about these offers, so they can make an informed decision next week.

Randy:

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 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 \*3 on your telephone keypad, and you will be placed in the queue.

In addition to fielding questions from members, we have the ability, on this telephone town hall, to do quick polls. We're going to do one and only one tonight. The quick poll is this: I'm going to ask a question and read out five choices. Press the number on your keypad that corresponds to your choice, and what we're trying to find out is: Who is on the call?

So, my first question is, what is your bargaining category, and unit?

So, I'm going to ask you to please press 1, if you're in the Administrative category, Unified Bargaining Unit. Press 2, if you're in the Institutional and Health Care category, Unified Bargaining Unit. Press 3, if you're in the Office Administrative category, Unified Bargaining Unit. Press 4, if you're in the Operational and Maintenance/Technical category of the Unified Bargaining Unit. And, press 5, if you're in the Correctional Bargaining Unit.

Again, the question is: What is your job category, and/or unit?

Press 1, if you're in the Administrative category, Unified. Press 2, if you're in the Institutional and Health Care category, Unified. Press 3, if you're in the Office Administrative category, Unified. Press 4, if you're in the Operational and Maintenance/Technical category of the Unified Bargaining Unit. 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 to December 31st, 2021. There's a 1.5% increase, that takes effect July 1st, 2017; followed by a 1% increase on January 1st, 2019, and a 1% increase every six months. That adds up to 7.5% over four years, not counting compounding. These are across the board increases.

On top of that, the freeze on the movement through the salary grid will end, effective January 1, 2018. As of that time, there will be normal progression through the salary grid.

In addition to wage hikes, we 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: \$6.11 a month, for a single person. \$9.63 a month, for family. These are voluntary. You can join or not join this program.

Second, the employer will introduce mandatory catastrophic drug coverage. We're talking about extremely expensive drugs that may not be covered by the regular plan. The premiums are paid by the employee, but again, they're a fraction of the normal cost. For a single, the premium is \$0.94 a month, and \$1.91 monthly for a family. The first \$10,000 in catastrophic drug benefits is covered at 90%; after \$10,000, they are reimbursed at 100%. In the past, we've had people who've had to sell their cars, even houses, to pay for these drugs. With this deal, those days are over.

Third, the current per-half-hour cap for psychologist service will increase from \$25 to \$40, with the annual cap remaining at \$1,400.

Finally, a word about the attendant support and management program, or ASMP. Effective January 1st, 2018, it will no longer apply to the Unified Bargaining Unit, with one exception: employees who are already at level three or four, December 31st, 2017, will continue to have their attendance monitored, until they move below level three.

You can read the Unified tentative agreement on OPSEU's website at [OPSEU.org](http://OPSEU.org).

The Correction's tentative agreement is very similar. The term is the same: January 1, 2018 to December 31st, 2021.

The wage increase is the same. A 1.5% increase effective July 1st, 2017, and then, exactly the same as the Unified. These increases are across the board and compounded.

Please note, that the Correctional Unit Bargaining Unit members may continue to bargain an additional wage, called a special wage adjustment, backed up by interest arbitration, if needed. The special wage adjustments will be the only outstanding matter in dispute between the parties that may be referred to arbitration, in accordance with the interest arbitration provisions.

Correctional members will be eligible for the out-of-country medical coverage, at the employee paid premiums of \$6.11 a month for a single person. \$9.63 a month for family coverage.

Similarly, mandatory catastrophic drug coverage will be paid by members at \$0.94 a month, for single, and \$1.91 for family coverage.

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. Correction Nurses oppose that move, and we support them 100%.

But, with this deal, regardless of any potential change in the reporting Ministry, Correctional Nurses will remain in the Correctional Bargaining Unit. So that is definitely a victory for our nurses.

There are, also, other improvements, but I'll leave that to other speakers to touch on.

Randy: Well, thanks so much for that, Ron.

Again, I'm Randy Robinson, I'm your host tonight for this telephone town hall to discuss the offers that OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service are going to be voting on next week.

Earlier on, we did a little telephone poll. At this point, I'd like to report back on the results of the quick poll we just did. We have 81% of people on the call are from the Unified Category, Unified Bargaining Unit. 19% from the Correctional Bargaining Unit.

Of that 81, 26% of them are from the Administrative category. 5% are in the Institutional and Health Care category. 31% are in the Office Administrative category. In the Operational Maintenance and Technical category, we've got 19%.

So 81% Unified, 19% Corrections.

Now, I believe we are able to move on to questions. The first question we are going to take is Bernadette, from St. Catharine's, and she has a question about the wage grid freeze. Go ahead, Bernadette.

Bernadette: Yes, good evening. My name's Bernadette, and I'm from Region 2, in the Administrative category. I was present at the meeting, on the weekend, when Smokey presented the information to the executive committee members, and highest ranking. I've heard Mr. Elliot this evening, as well, and all of the things he has said are in writing in this new agreement, which I have read, this extension agreement.

The only thing that is not in writing in the agreement is, in fact, the progression on the wage grid. I was just wondering, how is it that we are, as members, guaranteed that is accurate, and is going to happen, because that piece is not in writing, in the agreement.

Randy: I'm going to pass that question to Mickey Riccardi, from the Central Employee Relations Committee.

Mickey Riccardi: There is an end date. Hi, it's Mickey. There is an end date to that memorandum. It's in the collective agreement, and it expires, and we were given confirmation

by the employer that it does expire at the end of December 2017. So, that progression is back on starting January 2018.

Thanks.

Randy: Okay we have another question, this time, from Tabitha in Ottawa, asking about the ASMP program. Go ahead Tabitha.

Tabitha: Hi, it's Tabitha, from Ottawa, local 446, Unit Steward. My question is, if they're going to eliminate the ASMP program, what are they going to... what is the employer going to replace it with?

Mickey Riccardi: Hello, it's Mickey again. I don't know if you were around when we had the, I think it was called the Attendance Management Program, so they're reverting back to the old program we had. That's only for those that are not in three and four. The ones that are in three and four will continue to be there until such time that they move out of the program, and then the program will be gone for them.

Thanks.

Randy: Okay, thank you very much for that question, Tabitha.

We have Kristen, from London, asking about LTIP. Go ahead, Kristen.

Kristen: Oh, Hi. My name is Kris, and I am from London. I'm on long term disability, and I was wondering, beginning with our last, or current contract, people on long term income protection have to retire at their earliest, non penalized, pension date. I'm wondering if this will change with the government's current extension offer, and if not, how that will be handled. Thank you.

Mickey Riccardi: Hi, it's Mickey, again, and that, we did grieve that, and we're still waiting for the outcome of that grievance, but it hasn't taken effect.

Thanks.

Randy: Okay, Mickey just answered a few questions, and now I'm going to ask Mickey to give us little bit more detail about the offers that the employers put forward. Mickey, what do you think members should retain about the Unified tentative deal? What jumps out at you when you look at that?

Mickey Riccardi: Well, everything, Randy. In fact, it's extremely short, just two and a half pages long. You can read it on this site at OPSEU.org.

But there's one thing I would like to underscore with our Unified members. That's the attendance 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 were off sick, basically accusing them of lying and theft. It shamed them into returning to their workplace even if they, or their family member were still very sick. By coming back too soon, sometimes they just got worse, and/or passed the illness on to their colleagues. We have consistently lobbied the government to dump this unworkable, unpalatable program, for years, and now, we've succeeded.

In the tentative agreement, if the the tentative agreement is accepted, the program will be terminated, and I'd like to take this opportunity to remind members that we negotiated away two tier leave for medical reasons, last December.

Formally, unless you had a medical certificate, employees just received just 66 and 2/3 of their regular salary for 124 days of short term sickness. However, now, after the first six days, employees are paid at 75% of their regular salary, for those 124 working days.

So, these are two tremendous victories for the OPSEU workers.

Thanks, Randy.

Randy: Thanks, very much, Mickey. We're getting a lot of questions, and I want to remind people that, if you want to ask a question, all you have to do is press \*3 on your telephone keypad, and you will be placed in the queue.

Let's get to some more questions. This one is from Carrie, in Oshawa, and I believe the question is, "Can people on long term disability vote?" Is that your question, Carrie?

Carrie: Yes, it is.

Randy: Okay, who would like to take that one? Mickey?

Mickey Riccardi: Okay. Hi, it's Mickey, again. Yes, people on long term care can vote.

Randy: Okay, well, simple, straightforward answer.

The next question I have is from Dana in Thorold. Dana, you've got a question about the 80 factor. Who would like to take that?

Go ahead, Dana.

Dana: Hi there. Yes, I'm from local 252, Corrections in Thorold. I was curious if there was any mention of the Factor 80, or 80, and I wondered if that was in any one

of the... I heard that was high on the list of demands for bargaining, and I wondered if it was mentioned, at all, in this contract. I didn't see it, but...

Randy: Thank you for that question. I'm going to pass it, now, over to Monte Vieselmeyer, from the Corrections MERC.

Monte Vieselmeyer: Thanks for the question, Dana.

No, in this particular agreement that was brought forward, it wasn't addressed. And that had been an ongoing issue for our Correction Bargaining members, looking at a reduced pension aspect. We have looked at that in the past, because any time you reduce the pension factor, there's an increased cost to our members. And again, trying to look at what that would look like to our members, but at some point in time, in the future, it's definitely one of the things we want to discuss further.

Thanks, Dana.

Randy: Thank you very much, Monte.

The next question is from Tahir in Massasauga, and the question is about out-of-country medical coverage. And I think Ron Elliot would like to take that call.

Go ahead, Tahir.

Tahir: Hi, this is Tahir from Local 546, in Massasauga. My question is about the medical outside coverage, outside the country. Currently, if I'm out of the country, I'm claiming medical things, and they are being paid by Manulife, and Great-West Life. Is it something different, what we are talking about in this?

Ron Elliot: Yes, Tahir, thank you, it's Ron speaking.

This is for emergency, medical emergency, or unexpected illness, and it's covered at 100% to a maximum lifetime of \$1 million, without a deductible. I hope that answers your question.

Randy: Okay, thank you, very much Ron, and thank you Tahir.

Again, for those who just joined us, my name is Randy Robinson, and I'm your host for this telephone town hall. I'm joined 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 \*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 formally introduce Monte Vieselmeyer. Monte, as many of you will know, 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 Vieselmeyer: Thanks, Randy. Happy to be here.

Randy: Okay, well Monte, what's your take on the rollover agreement made to the Correctional Bargaining Unit?

Monte Vieselmeyer: Before I give some thoughts on that, I just want to go back, because I've had the opportunity to speak with some members over the last couple days, and I just want to make sure that, especially our Correctional Bargaining members that are out there, that they have an understanding of some of our points that need to be addressed.

Again, we signed an agreement last year, January of 2016. At that point in time, there was... the expectation was we went to a Correctional, Corrections only, collective agreement. Just so everyone completely understands, it had to be a required change in the CECBA legislation, for that to occur. That did occur on December 8, 2016 where the legislation was changed in CECBA, giving us our own Corrections Bargaining Unit, and that also removed the right to strike.

I just want to make sure that members are clear, that right to strike is no longer there.

Also, as of December 15, 2016, an agreement was signed to include the former Unified members that are in the institutions and community offices, are now included in the Corrections Bargaining Unit. There's approximately 2000 members, that work within the institution offices in MCSCS and MCYS, and approximately 900 of those members are Correctional Nurses. They will officially join our Bargaining Unit as of January 1, 2018.

Again, they are included in this bargaining round, and will be included as Corrections Bargaining Unit. So, I want to be very clear, that the Corrections Bargaining only aspect is now in place, and we're moving forward with that. The vote that will be taking place will be specific, that there will be the OPS voting, and there will also be the Corrections unit voting. Both of those, basically, whether they're ratified or not will come down to each of those units for the members to decide.

Now, again, as has been explained, we were invited to a meeting to have discussions in regards to this agreement that came forward. And going back through the history of what has occurred at the bargaining table, where we had an extremely long round of bargaining, last time, our members voted and turned down that pretty good agreement. Again, it was brought forward. It was

included at the time that we had interest arbitration, and at that time the arbitrator, Mr. Burkett, awarded us a 3% wage increase, on top of our other increases.

Again, this was an important piece to our members, and that's what we fought so long for, was to have a return to interest arbitration, and be able to take our wages to the arbitrator, to have further discussion in regards to wage adjustments.

So, on top of the 7.5% that is spread out over this four year contract, we also have the ability, and will be able, to negotiate that special wage adjustment. The Correctional Bargaining team that was elected, that will be one of their mandates, in conjunction with doing the final editing, and separating the Corrections Bargaining Unit agreement apart from the rest of the OPS agreement.

Again, we've been fighting with this government for a long time, and we've been dealing with the crisis in Corrections for an extremely long time, also, but we've been making traction with the government. They've been coming around in dealing with many of the issues we've brought forward. That has been an important aspect whether we've had lobby days, or we've met with the employer, and they're now starting to see them importance of what we've been stating all along. Whether it the hiring of additional officers, we're also trying to further address the issues within the community part.

One of the aspects that's different between this agreement, is that the ASMP is still included, for our Correctional Bargaining Unit members. The employer stated that, on average, we take 28.5 days of sick time. Again, they base that on an eight hour day as opposed to the 12 hour day the majority of us work. Again, the employer is not... hasn't been able to manage that, and I think that at some point in time, they're going to have to go to a similar model that they're doing for the OPS.

At this time, again, this was a deal that was brought forward to us, and it was important that we had to bring this to the members, because the members should be voting on this and it'll be up to you, the members of the Correctional Bargaining Unit, to decide whether they want to accept this, or they do not want to accept it.

Thank you.

Randy:

Thank you very much, Monte.

We're going to go now to the phones. Again, if you want to ask a question of any of our panelists, all you have to do is press \*3, on your telephone keypad, and you will be put into the queue.

Right now we have a question from Paula, asking about the Transition Exit Initiative, and Paula, go ahead, what is your question?

Paula: Hello, it's Paula from local 270, and my question is: will the transition exit initiative be rolled over into the new contract?

Randy: I'm going to say Ron Elliot is going to answer that.

Ron Elliot: Hello, Paula, and the answer is quick. Yes it will.

Thanks for the question, sister.

Randy: Okay, thank you very much for that, Ron.

Next question is from Leslie in Milton, in the Corrections Bargaining Unit. Leslie, what is your question?

Leslie: Okay, it's, I'm not in the Corrections Bargaining Unit, I thought I was. I'm local 234 in Milton. I'm in administration, Unified, and we voted 97% to go into the Correctional only Unit. Now, to find out that is not in the plan, and I'm wondering why, and also, why do the nurses get to do it, but we can't, and we voted for it, at, like, 97%.

Monte Vieselmeyer: Hi Leslie, it's Monte, I don't know if you heard when I was speaking before, but, as of December 15, 2016, the agreement is that everyone that works within the institutions, and/or community offices, is now a part of the Corrections Bargaining Unit, as of January 1, 2018, and also, you do have the ability to vote on the Corrections bargaining portion of the agreement. So, yes, you are included.

Thanks, Leslie.

Randy: Okay, thanks, very much for that question, Leslie, and thanks Monte, for the answer.

We have a question from Kyle, who's sent it in online, and here is the question: What does the catastrophic drug plan entail? Is this something we currently don't have? From my understanding, we will be paying the insurance premium for such coverage, with no aide from the employer? Just to confirm.

Ron Elliot: Thank you, Kyle, this is Ron.

Here's what the catastrophic drug coverage does for you. Under your current plan, and I won't talk about the \$3 fees and things like that, you're covered for 90% of the drugs, right now. What the catastrophic drug coverage does for you, is anything over \$10,000 is 100% covered by this plan. It's meant for our most vulnerable members, something happens to a family member, something

happens to one of us, we're all chipping in a tiny bit of money to make sure you're covered.

So, I'll give you a couple of examples. Since it's covered 90% under the current plan, to \$10,000, so if the cost was \$10,000, your insurance coverage would be 9,000. If the cost was \$20,000, your cost would be \$9,000. If the cost was \$50,000, your cost would be \$9,000. That's what it does for us, is it preserves the members way of life, the standard of living. That's what this catastrophic drug coverage is, and we asked for it.

I hope that helps.

Randy: Thanks, very much, Ron.

I just want to remind people on the line, that if you want to ask a question, all you have to do is press \*3, and you will be put in the queue to ask a question.

Just a reminder what this call is. My name is Randy Robinson, I'm your host of this telephone town hall. Our topic this evening is the government of Ontario's contract offer for OPSEU members in the Ontario Public service.

We have Dena on the line from Ajax, and her question has to do with calculating the increase. Go ahead, Dena.

Dena: Hi, I'm calling from Ajax. My question is, you mentioned over four years, our wages will go up 7.5%, not compounded, and that the normal progression in the salary grid would commence January 1, 2018. So, using a fictitious salary, can you give us an example of how that can be calculated?

Randy: Monte, go ahead.

Monte Vieselmeyer: I'll jump in. Basically, if you take, depending on your pay rate, and you take that pay rate, as for July 1st, you'd multiply it times 1.5%, and, basically, you'd add that to your pay rate. Specifically, if it's in the Corrections category. The top CO who's now making \$34.09 an hour, would go up to \$34.60 an hour. Basically, you would continue through that pay grade. You add it, and you add additional 1% for each, so it just depends on your particular pay grid, or hourly grid, and you just calculate it that way.

At some point in time, I'm sure, those numbers can be put out there, so that the membership knows.

Thank you.

Randy: Thank you very much, Monte.

Our next question is coming from Phillip, in Concord, and it's a question about raises. Go ahead, Phillip.

Phillip: Hi, I got hired two years ago, and when I got hired, I was supposed to get a raise within six months, but, within six months, that's when the old agreement came in. So, since then I have not gotten a raise, so my raise has been frozen since then. So, my question is would this new deal, would I be prorated, so I can jump up to where I was supposed to be, or not?

Mickey Riccardi: Hi, it's Mickey. No, you won't be prorated, where you left off is the step, you would move up to the next step, come January 2018. So, it won't be prorated. But you will progress through the grid in January 2018.

Randy: Okay, thank you very much.

I have Ignacio, in Ottawa, with a question that's also about the wage grid.

Ignacio, go ahead, what's your question, please?

Ignacio: I believe my question is very similar to the last one. My question was, will progression through the salary grid be retroactive, and will it take into account the accrued time, since the freeze first took place?

Mickey Riccardi: No, it's not... It's Mickey, again. It's not retroactive, like I said to the last caller. You will start progression, but it won't start until 2018, and you would move up to the next level at that time.

Randy: Okay, thank you, very much, Mickey.

I have a question from online. It's from Paul, and it says, "Assuming this offer is rejected, on a scale of 1-10, how confident are you that we can negotiate some of our requested improvements in addition to these monetary improvements?"

I'm going to hand that over to Smokey.

Smokey: I don't have a crystal ball, so that's a very difficult question to answer. There really is no way of answering what the employers' reaction would be. I'm not the employer, so if it's rejected, it's not a given that the employer would put this offer back on the table. They may, or they may not. Or, they could decide, "Well, what the heck, let's just go through the normal, really grind them through the mill, round of bargaining."

But, again, I don't really know how the employer would react, or where we would start out again.

Randy: No facts about the future.

I'm going to remind people to press \*3 to ask a question, and now we're going to go to Andrew in Toronto, talking about steps on the wage grid.

Andrew, what is your question?

Andrew: Hi there. Yes, it's about the wage grid. Kind of similar to Phillip's question. So, I've been with the OPS for three years. Unfortunately, that means my salary has been frozen the whole time, so I haven't progressed. I was just wondering if you could clarify what the progression will be, how many steps are there, and basically, how does that work?

Mickey Riccardi: Okay, well it depends on... each classification has... some classifications have seven steps, some have three, some have five. So, unfortunately, without knowing what your classification is, it would be hard for me to say what step you would be at.

What it would be is... I'm sorry, if you want, you can reference the collective agreement. It has them in there.

Let's say you're at step two of the grid, right now. Come January 2018, depending on your merit date, which means you could have a merit date of February, you could have it November. If it's November, then at that time, you would move to step three of the grid. You would still get your increase of... well, in 2018, that's moved up, but you would move to the next step of that grid.

Hope that helps.

Randy: Okay thanks very much, Mickey.

We have Christopher from Toronto, asking a question about voting remotely. Go ahead, Christopher. What, exactly, is your question?

Phillip: For any member who will be working away from their offices, will they be able to vote in remote locations?

Randy: Ron Elliot is going to take that question. Go ahead, Ron.

Ron Elliot: Yes, thank you.

I take it you may be in a different town, or city, away from your home position. Maybe you are in a local in Toronto, and you happen to be working for the government, or on vacation in Kingston that day. You would be able to vote in Kingston, and it would be good if you had government ID, a pay stub, your local number, and things like that. You will be able to vote in another location.

Randy: Okay, that's excellent thanks very much, Ron.

I have a question from Sharron, online, and Sharron's question is: "If you are in the Attendance Management Program, can you use your one time drop in levels to go back to level two, if you are in level three, on December 31st?"

Mickey Riccardi: Hi, it's Mickey, and what we encourage you to do is, if you are in level three on December 31, you should use your one time option to get you out, and you won't go to level two, you will move out of the program, as long as you are in Unified. So, that means, if you use that one time option, you would be out of the program as of January 2018.

Monte Vieselmeyer: I just want to jump in here – it's Monte – in regards to our Unified, or former Unified, that are now going to be included in the Corrections Bargaining Unit. So, up until the end of this year, again, you would be similar to the rest of the Unified. But, technically, as of January 1, 2018, now, you would be coming into the Corrections Bargaining Unit. So, you would, basically, exit the program, if you're in level one or two, and three or four would be managed.

And then, you would come right back into the program, as of January 1st. So, again, part of the discussion is, if you are one of those members, this may be an opportunity for you to look at how you, maybe, use some sick time between now and the end of the contract, if it is ratified.

Thank you.

Randy: Okay thanks very much for that. I have a question from Christine in South Porcupine. It's about, what I think it's about, is a provincial election. Go ahead Christine.

Christine : Hi there, thank you very much. I was just wondering, we all know there's a provincial election coming up, and I'm just wondering, if we do vote yes, for this proposed agreement, if the government does change, will this have an effect on this agreement? Or will this agreement stay put for the terms that we voted on?

Smokey: It's Smokey here. That's a great question. If it's ratified, it's a four year deal. If the Liberals lose the election, and the Tories, or the NDP win, well, let's say the Tories, they would have to impose changes, but we've already won that, at the Supreme Court, when the government imposed collective bargaining on the education sector. We won that fight. So, this would give you four years of assurances that our government couldn't come in and arbitrarily change your contract. So, I think, that's one of the things you might want to think about. So, it would stay in place for four years, and no government can change it, because we won that fight when we did a constitutional challenge.

Randy: Okay, thanks very much, Smokey. I have Peter in Cobourg, asking a question about ACL for the Corrections category. Go ahead, Peter, please. What's your question?

Peter: My question is directed to Smokey. Apparently, there's no concessions in this deal, but it's my understanding that the ACL leave, which for a CO is a \$1500 hit, is off the table, now, and no longer in the contract. Is that correct?

Randy: Ron's going to answer that fine detail.

Ron Elliot: Thank you, yes. The appendix in the Correction's collection of the agreement on this, it does expire December 31, 2017. This deal doesn't change it, doesn't alter it. That appendix expires December 31, 2017.

I hope that helps.

Randy: Okay, thanks very much.

I have an online question from Sharron. I'll just read it out. It says, "Several groups at our local had done a lot of work to put forward special cases with regard to services. We are falling significantly behind our peers in other OPS workplaces. Will any of these special cases be reviewed, or brought forward?"

Mickey Riccardi: Hi, it's Mickey.

The special cases that were submitted for this round will be brought forward to the, what we call, appendix seven committee, which is part of CERC. So, we will be tabling them there, and presenting them to the employer.

Thanks.

Randy: Thank you, Mickey. I have a question from Barbara in Toronto about retiree benefits. Go ahead, Barbara. What is your question?

Barbara: My question was this question. Are the benefits for the retired would be the same as for the working people?

Ron Elliot: Thank you for that question. It's Ron.

The benefits changed, if we're talking about the post-retirement benefits. There are two plans. The one, some people call the "A" plan, some people call it the "Legacy" plan, and folks that had certain conditions, keep on that plan.

We also were successful at negotiating what we call Plan "B," and that's a zero cost option, for the members, if they wish to go to that plan. Again, under certain circumstances. But you could write into OPSEU, or phone into OPSEU and get your circumstances – we could answer it for you, if you wish. So, you can call 1800-268-7376, and they'll put you to our pension and benefits folks, and we can do a specific analysis of where you might land.



Randy: Thank you, very much, Ron. We have Susanne, in Ottawa, asking a question about Probation Officer days. Go ahead Susanne.

Susanne: ...

Randy: Are you there Susanne?

Susanne: ...

Randy: I think... or Susan. I guess not. We're going to move on to another question, in that case. I have Bianca, a question online. "Is it possible to get a list of articles in the current collective agreement that have an expiry tied to them?"

Ron?

Ron Elliot: Yes, there is.... You could look at your collective agreement and go through it, or we could have our negotiations department go through the agreement. I don't see why we can't do that. So we will do that, and publish it.

Thank you.

Randy: Okay, so a list of articles in the current collective agreement to have an expiry tied to them.

Our next question comes from Scott, in Sarnia, which relates to medical coverage to the US. Go ahead, Scott.

Scott: Yes, hi. Medical coverage that's being offered for travel to the US, I know for a lot of other coverages you can purchase, they cover you a maximum of 10 days, and then you have to come back to the country, or you have to purchase extra to stay longer.

I had a questions with regards... Is that the case with this, or can you stay over for three weeks, or four weeks at a time, and not have to come back? Then, the other thing is, is there a way we can get a copy of what the actual medical coverage is, published, or online, for us to read?

Mickey Riccardi: Okay, I'll address the coverage piece, and the coverage – the out-of-country is 90-day coverage, and if you come back for a day or two, then you get an additional 90 days of the coverage.

As far as getting additional information, we'll look into it, and hopefully we'll be able to post it, once we have than information.

Thanks.

Ron Elliot: Yeah, we'll – this is Ron – we'll make sure we do this.

In the interim, what you could do, is go to the OPSEU Pension Trust website, and there's... It's on that website, and describes it. It's the actual same coverage as we negotiated for the post retirement benefits, under plan "B." So, it's exactly the same, and I can tell you, after we negotiated that provision, a number of friends of mine that've retired from the OPS phoned and said "Wow, what a good deal that is."

So, now, the members can have it, too. And again, out-of-country coverage is totally optional. You'll decide whether you go into it or not. Whether it meets your needs. In the interim, try the OPSEU Pension Trust website.

Thank you.

Randy: Thank you, very much, Ron.

Just a reminder, you're listening to a telephone town hall from the Ontario Public Service Employees Union about our contract offers for OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service.

I'm Randy Robinson, and I'm your host tonight, and with me I have Smokey Thomas, president of OPSEU; Ron Elliot, Chief Negotiator; Mickey Riccardi, from the Central Employee Relations Committee; and Monte Vieselmeyer from the Corrections Employee Relations Committee.

So, we have four guests tonight. If you have a question for any of those guests, all you have to do is press \*3 on your telephone keypad, and you will have your question put into the queue. If you are listening to this, and looking online, you just have to type your question into the chat section, and we'll get your question that way, as well.

I now have Juliana, in Toronto, with a question about ASMP. Go ahead Juliana.

Juliana: Hi. My question was, if this new contract is ratified, and the AMP is eliminated, for those who enter any level, like one or two, they would've had a formal meeting with the manager and a letter put into their file. Would that letter remain in the file?

Hello?

Randy: Mickey?

Juliana: Hi.

Mickey Riccardi: I know that... It's Mickey, sorry. So it does get... We, I guess we'd have to look at if those letters get removed. I don't see why they shouldn't be removed. We talked to the employer about that, because there's no need for them, if you're... if the program is gone and you're in level one and two.

Thanks.

Randy: Thanks very much, Mickey.

Our next question comes from North Bay. We have Cort on the line, and it's a question about the bargaining process. Go ahead, Cort. What is your question?

Cort: ...

Randy: I... Are you there? North Bay? Cort? No?

Cort: Yeah. Yes, sorry.

Randy: Oh! Go ahead, please.

Cort: I was just wondering if you could speak to the original offer that was tabled prior to the 9 hour negotiations to reach this new agreement.

Ron Elliot: Yeah, it's Ron.

What the government started off with was not very good, and we, basically, countered, they countered, we countered, they countered, etc. until it was done. What the government wanted to do was like some other rollover contracts. They wanted to give a lump sum, and we weren't, any of us, interested in a lump sum payment, because it doesn't go on your pension. It doesn't help you enhance your wages in future years. We wanted the money to go on the grid.

So, it was to and fro, and we probably went to and fro for nine or 10 hours.

Randy: Okay, thanks very much, Ron.

Our next question is also from North Bay, Evelyn, with a question about LTIP. Go ahead, Evelyn.

Evelyn: Hi. My question is, if a member is on LTIP, effective January 1st, will that member be entitled to purchase the catastrophic drug plan, as well, as the out-of-country coverage? Second question is, if that member purchases the family plan, and eventually passes away, will the family member, the remaining family member, continue to... will that member be able to continue with the coverage?

Smokey: Hi, it's Smokey here.

There are two very specific questions that we're not quite sure of the answer to. So, if you could email, and I think at the end of the call there's a thing to stay on, so if you could stay on to the end of the call, email those two questions in, we'll

look at those two very specific issues, and get back to you. We're not just 100% sure on that, we'd have to do a little research on that for you. Okay?

Randy: Thanks very much for that question.

If you do have a question, and your question has not been asked yet, please press \*3 on your telephone keypad, and your question will be put in the queue.

I have Joanne, from Thunder Bay, asking a question about the pay grid. Go ahead, Joanne.

Joanne: I'm sorry, this might be getting repetitive, I was on with the operator while it was being discussed. So my question is, I started a new job, and I'm at the bottom of the pay grid, and I was on the wage freeze for three years. I'm just wondering, when this contract resumes, where am I on the pay grid? Still on the bottom?

Mickey Riccardi: Okay, so in January 2018, depending on when your merit date is, you would still be in your bottom grid, until your merit date in 2018. So, if your merit date is November, then come November, you will go to the next step on that grid. So, I hope that helps.

Randy: Thank you, very much, we're looking at another question from Beverly, in Chatham. It has to do with time limits. Go ahead, Beverly.

Beverly: ...

Randy: What's your question, Beverly in Chatham?

Beverly: Elliot had mentioned before you go on to this, where you pay the premiums, there's a \$10,000 limit. Is there a time limit that that \$10,000 covers, or is it for your lifetime?

Ron Elliot: It... What it is, is it goes by the calendar year, so if... Again, if you had \$10,000 worth of drugs that were covered by our plan, right now, the plan covers 9,000 of the first 10,000.

On the catastrophic drug coverage, if the drug cost 15,000, your cost would still be 1,000. If the cost of the catastrophic drug was 30,000, your cost would still be \$1,000.

So, it would go by the calendar year, as does our current drug benefit program.

Randy: Okay, thanks very much, Ron.

We have a question from Pete in Lindsay, asking about special cases. Go ahead Pete.

Pete: It's Pete Rankin with 368, up in Lindsay.

I just joined in with Corrections as a former Unified Maintenance Support Staff. Would our special case move forward at this Corrections consideration for wage at the arbitrator, or would it just stay suspended with this new offer? Just want former Unified people to know.

Thank you.

Monte Vieselmeyer: Hi, it's Monte.

At this time, based on this, the employer only wanted to address the Corrections Bargaining Unit, as it stands today. So, any of the members that joined from the former Unified group would still have the ability to take it to appendix seven committee, to address there. But at this time, it would not be included under the special wage adjustment with the interest arbitration.

Thank you.

Randy: Thank you, very much, Monte. We have Leah, in Toronto, with a question about the wage increase timing. Go ahead Leah, please. What is your question?

Leah: So, I understand if the vote is successful, the first wage increase would take effect July 1st. I'm wondering how soon would that be reflected in your pay, or will it take a while to process?

Ron Elliot: Hi, it's Ron.

These things, normally, take six to eight weeks, so, I would hope... I would certainly hope by September 1st, you would get your 1.5%. We didn't put a time in the tentative agreement, but usually, the government processes this.

One thing, if it's not accepted, I can tell you, you wouldn't get any wage increase in July, because the normal... The contract starts up in January 1, 2018. But, if the government took six to eight weeks to pay you, you would get it retroactive. So, you're covered that way.

Randy: Okay, thanks very much, Ron. We have another question from North Bay. It's Lisa on the line with a question about the timing, I believe, of this offer from the government. Go ahead, Lisa. What is your question, please?

Lisa: Hi, Lisa, local president of OPSEU 635. I guess my question would be, why now? Why would the government come forward now? We're about six months away from the end of our current contract, so it kind of raises an eyebrow, and a bit of suspicion to what we're missing here. Do you have any opinion on that?

Smokey: Yeah, it's Smokey, here.

Oh, I do. I don't think we're missing anything. They'd like to get us off the street and not be bargaining into 2018. And the large part, the "We Own It" campaign, has been hugely successful. There's over 34,000 people have signed onto the "We Own It" campaign, signed the pledge, and the employer doesn't like that.

Now, in the education sector... So, the teacher's unions have all agreed to two year extensions – some without a ratification vote, some with no ratification vote. And our members in the education sector, we also have members in the education sector in five different locals, they voted on the government's offer of a two year extension, and they ratified it.

So, I think the government would dearly love to have labour peace going into an election. Whether some people suspect, maybe, a snap election this fall, to a year from now. Either way, the government's motivation is really rather secondary here. I just think this is an offer the members need to vote on.

I did get asked by a couple radio talk shows, does this mean would OPSEU support the Liberals in the next election, or would OPSEU leave the Liberals alone, and the answer is an emphatic "Hell no."

We will not leave them alone, and I did say, on one call in show, I said "I suspect they'd have to do a lot more than this to win back the hearts and minds of the workers." So, there's no downside to us, in terms of campaigning. They will not get any relief. I will never support the Liberals, publicly or privately.

So, I think it really is, they are looking for some kind of labour peace, and while they might get labour peace this way, they won't get peace on the campaign front, though. I can guarantee you that.

Randy:

Thank you very much for that answer, Smokey.

You are listening to an OPSEU telephone town hall for OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service. We're discussing the contract offers from the government of Ontario that were put forward on June 2nd.

I'm Randy Robinson, your host. With me tonight I have 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 of the Ministry of Community Safety and Community Services. Takes a long time to say that!

If you would like to ask a question of any of our guests, please, press \*3, and your question will be put in the queue.

Right now, I have a question from Maureen, in Toronto, having to do with post-retirement services. Go ahead, Maureen. What is your question?

Maureen: I don't have a question, it's no question. Basically, I wrote to the Union President, Smokey, and three other Toronto Region executives of the Union committee, and also spoke with one of the Toronto Region Executive Members regarding this.

I want the union to negotiate the post-retirement insurance benefit, for the Union members who are hired between January 1, 2007, to February 18, 2014, when Katherine Wynne changed the policy, and the cutting back the 10 years service credit. Some of us will have to work for 20 years to have 20 year service credit. It is very unreasonable, because when we took the offer, when this [inaudible 00:57:45] over the people who hired between January 27, 2007, to February 2014, we took the offer by having the contract stating that, if we have 10 years service credits, we are entitled to the post-retirement insurance benefits.

Randy: Okay, thank you very much-

Maureen: The grandfather's plan. Right now, it's plan "B." So, this has to be in the negotiation this year. If it was not in last year.

Randy: I'm going to ask Ron Elliot to address that question. I believe it relates to post-retirement benefits.

Ron Elliot: Let me take you back several years ago.

The government of Ontario unilaterally announced the end of post-retirement benefits. They unilaterally announced, without any consultation with OPSEU, without any consultation with Smokey, or Eddy, or First Vice-President/Treasurer.

They just did this, and Smokey said "No you can't do that, that's unfair, it's wrong." Our members rebelled. Our members file thousands of grievances, which eventually forced the government to the table to talk to us.

So, we talked at the OPSEU Pension Trust. We used them as a venue. Finally, we got to the minister's office, and said how unjust this was. So, we eventually, negotiated an agreement for no cost benefits for our members.

But, at the end of this segment, there's going to be an email address, and please send your individual question in, because I didn't quite get all of your question. I know about the OPSEU Pension Trust post retirement benefits, and we'll get your question answered.

They regularly come in, but your board members get a lot of emails, and they might just missed that one. So, if you could sent just a specific question in, we'll answer it.

Thank you.

Randy: Thank you, very much, Ron. I have a question from Ingrid, in London. Ingrid, what is your question? Go ahead, please.

Ingrid: Hi there, how are you?

Randy: Not too bad, how are you?

Ingrid: Good, thanks. I'm calling from London, Local 102. Ron, you and I've met many times. Question: Do you see any claw backs, anything we need to be concerned about as members, before we vote on this?

On the surface, from what I've seen, it look like a very fair deal, but I just want your take on it.

Ron Elliot: Well, thank you, and it's nice to talk to you.

Well, my name is signed on it. Smokey asked me to go to the table with the others, so I'm promoting it, I am recommending both the tentative agreements and the extension agreements. There's absolutely no concessions, and there are enhancements.

When we bargained a July 1st raise, moving it from January 1, 2018, to July 1, 2017, that was a sign, that was a sign the government wants to get along with us, finally.

Mickey and her CERC team, last Wednesday, negotiated an enhancement to our dental plan, that will be explained soon, where you won't have to put the money out to the dentist. The dentist will go forth, and the insurance company will pay the dentist directly. So, we are moving, we are getting the positive response from the government.

Yes, I'm recommending this. There's absolutely no concessions, and I might've mis-said something earlier. This is 7.5% compounded for both Unified, and the Corrections Tentative agreement. The numbers are compounded. No, they're not great big numbers, so the compounding is not that great, so it works out to a little less than 8% over four years.

Thank you.

Randy: Okay, thank you, very much, Ron. I have a question from Stephen, in Sudbury, a fixed term employee. What is your question, Stephen?

Stephen: Hi there. I am a fixed term employee. I pay full premiums for health, dental, and prescription drugs. I'm just wondering, does this employee out-of-country coverage and catastrophic drug, is that applicable to me, as well, or no?



Ron Elliot: Hi, yes it is. So, again, the out-of-country medical, you have the option to going in, or not going in, and catastrophic drugs, you will be in.

Randy: Thanks very much, Ron. We have Paulette, in Toronto, about compounding, which Ron may just have answered, but go ahead, Paulette. Let us know your question.

Paulette: Yes, he did. It's Paulette from local 551. He did answer that question, but when I read this cursory, it seemed like a sweet deal. I'm just wondering about, somebody, another Probation Officer, which is what I am, Probation and Parole Officer, asked about our PO days and the ACL days. According to this, everything remains the same, is that correct?

Randy: Go ahead, Monte.

Monte Vieselmeyer: Hi, the ACL days, there's an end date in the collective agreement, so those won't continue forward, because it ends as of December 31, 2017. The PPO days, I believe, continue. I think that was an ongoing-I don't think there was any end date to that. So, I think you're fine there, that continues forward.

Ron Elliot: Thanks Monte, it's Ron. I believe it's eight days. A few years ago, it was bargained up from six to eight days, and those days remain. They don't change. This is a rollover to the collective agreement, there are no concessions.

Randy: Okay, thanks, everyone. Our next question comes from Evangelista, in Brampton, and I think it's a technical question about what documentation is required to vote. Evangelista, go ahead.

Evangelista: Yes, this is my first time voting, and I just want to know what documentation do I need to bring to vote. My second question to that was, when we do vote, are there certain provision we can accept and/or reject?

Ron Elliot: We'll, let me tell you... This is Ron. Let me explain how the voting goes. So, you... The voting locations, the staff are working extremely hard putting this together, in a record time. Voting locations all over Ontario.

So, when you go to cast your ballot, we'll tell you where it's going to be. If you don't have an OPSEU union card, but you have an employee ID, let's say you work for the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Corrections, you had an ID, that proves you're an OPSEU member, or you could have a pay stub. Don't worry about that. If you've signed a union card, you're going to be on our list. Everybody's going to be registered electronically.

At the voting booth, it'll be very quick. You'll get your ballot. There'll be voting screens where that you can go behind to mark your ballot in secrecy, and then it'll go in the Unified box, to it'll go in the Corrections box. All the ballots are

going to be counted in one spot per Region, one city per Region, and we'll know the results Thursday night.

So, the ballot's going to say, "Do you accept this tentative agreement, or do you reject this tentative agreement?" And the same question will be for both Unified and Corrections, but the ballots will be identified, and you will see a lot of ballot boxes for a lot of our locals, because of a lot of our composite locals have Unified and Corrections members in it.

Randy: Okay, thanks very much, Ron, and thank you Evangelista, for that question.

You're listening to an OPSEU telephone town hall. I'm Randy Robinson, I'm the host. With me tonight, at OPSEU Head Office, I have Smokey Thomas, President of OPSEU; Ron Elliot, Chief Negotiator for the Union; Mickey Riccardi from our Central Employee Relations Committee, sometimes know as the CERC; and Monte Vieselmeyer, from the Corrections MERC.

If you want to ask a question, press \*3 on your telephone keypad, and you will be put in the lineup to have your question answered on air.

We have about 20 minutes left. We have burned through, I would say, over 30 question tonight, but we still have time for quite a few more. So, please, feel free to ask a question. Again, press \*3.

I'd like to go now to Mary, in Sudbury, who has a question about the wage increase. Go ahead, Mary.

Mary: Hi everyone. I know what a great job you're all doing. My question is, none of these increases will be lump sums, they will all be increases in our hourly wage?

Ron Elliot: It's Ron.

Absolutely, it's all across the board. It all goes on the grid. It's all pensionable. Even if these... This is going to help you if you want to retire a few years from now. This is going to change your pension. You just think about the move up, six months early, of the raise, this effects it.

So, there's no lump sums. This is not a deal like you saw in other areas across the province. Lump sums, unfortunately, in some of our contracts, we do take them now and again, because the transfer payment agency, they-in maybe the broader public service, they're being starved by the government of Ontario. But these are all across the board, general wage increases.

Mary: Now would you say this was Miss Wynne's way of getting us to accept this tentative agreement, in a sense, since there's nothing in 2018, and this 1.5 has been moved to July of this year. Is this... I think all of you sound like you agree

with this agreement, I feel like you're looking for all of us to vote, yes, to accept it.

Smokey: Hi it's Smokey here.

The, yeah, it is a bonus to have the 1.5 July 1st six months early, there's no doubt about that. Again, I'm not going to presuppose the Premier's rationale, or thought processes. We sort of figure she wants us off the streets, and they tried to make it sweet enough so that it would get ratified. But, again, it really is up to the members to decide if it's okay for you, not okay for you, and vote yes, or no.

But, I don't know, I guess we could write the Premier and ask her someday as part of a campaign.

Randy: Thank you very much, Smokey.

We have a question from Kris, online. It says, "Please explain the steps in the pay grid. Do we get one step in January 2018? Where can I see the new steps?"

The short answer to the question, "Where can I see the new steps?" is go to the OPSEU website. You'll see a big banner on the front page that says "OPS Contract Vote." Go into that page, and you'll see an article, right below the top that has a summary of the contract offer, with all the steps, and it's also linked to the extension documents that the government put forward on June 2nd.

So, that's one answer to the question, but as to "Do we get one step in January 2018?" I'm going to let Ron Elliot answer that.

Ron Elliot: And the answer is, the wage grid starts up again, January 1, 2018. So it depends on when your anniversary date is. If you would normally progress on the grid January 2nd, your anniversary date, you've got one year in, or whatever, then yearly steps, you would move up January 2nd. If your date was progression on December 31, you would move that day. If it's August 1st, you would move at that day. It depends when you got hired, and your steps per year.

I think there's still some grids that have six month increments. So, you can always check the contract to see the numbers.

Randy: Thanks very much, Ron. We have a question from Mike in Niagara, having to do with the year 2021, which seems far away, but is coming up soon. What is your question, Mike?

Mike: I'm sorry, it's already been answered, thanks a lot.

Randy: Okay. Thank you.

The next question, then, we're going to move on to Lidia, in Toronto, who has a question about advanced voting. Go ahead, Lidia, what, exactly, is your question?

Lidia: I was wondering if measures have been taken for those of us who will not be in Ontario during the vote, to ensure that we can vote in advance.

Ron Elliot: No, I'm sorry. This is coming together so fast, we just don't have the ability to do it.

I'll tell you why we're rushing so fast to get the vote. You see, in the extension agreement, or the tentative agreement, it says the raise will come July 1st, or after, if it's ratified after. So, in other words, if we took time to put this together, and give the staff more time, and the members more time, and it wasn't ratified until July 15th, then we'd only get retro, we'd get the 1.5 on July 15th.

There is no proxy voting in OPSEU. We will not be having advance polls.

Randy: Thanks a lot, Ron. Our next question is from Christine, in North Bay. I think that's our fourth question from North Bay tonight. The question is about frozen wages. What's your question, Christine?

Christine: Well, my original question has been answered a couple times. I don't want to beat the subject to death, but I've heard similar people calling in the similar situation, who are new employees, the last three years, and have had their wages frozen since then.

So, I guess my next question, follow up question, to the one that's been answered, because, of course, I was hired in December, so that means I wouldn't get an increase in my grid until December of 2018. So, how does this compare to what you would've been fighting for on behalf of new employees to the OPS, that've been affected by this wage freeze, for this long?

Ron Elliot: Well, actually, I don't think it changes anything.

The grid freeze was for two years. You were caught in a one year... you were caught in a one year's zero. I think what you mean is, on the three year. So, it comes off. Movement of the grid stops.

I don't think we could've gone back, and bargained backwards for those two years, saying "I know you, government, bad government, you froze the grid for two years."

No one wanted to agree with that. No one ever wanted to agree with that. But, eventually it was agreed to. So I don't think we can change the past, just like we don't change the enhancements we've won over the years. We wouldn't want the government to come back and say to us, "concessions in this round of

bargaining." And the government said "no concessions" and we eventually came up with these two tentative agreements. So the grid comes off, and we move forward, and so, hopefully it never, ever happens again.

Randy: Thank you very much, Ron.

Our next question is in Region Two, Roxanne is in Burlington, asking about the cost of living. Go ahead Roxanne.

Roxanne: Hi. I actually have two questions. My first one is, is there any cost of living index above the 7.5%? My other one is, for those that are on top of the grid, does this mean that after July, the next increase will be 2019?

Ron Elliot: Hi, yes it... Let me start with the next increase. Yes, after July 1, 2017, it'll be January 1, 2019, and then from then on, every six months until the expiration of this collective agreement you'll receive 1% across the board, compounded wage increase.

Now on COLA, no one knows what it is. Unfortunately, we lost COLA, in, I believe it was 1995, or 1996. We, actually, this collective agreement had the best COLA clause in Canada, and that was negotiated under the Bob Rae years. COLA wasn't discussed at this, and we haven't had COLA since the early to mid 1990s.

Smokey: It's Smokey here, Mike Harris, actually stripped that out, and we took a six week strike to beat off a whole bunch of concessions. So, Mike Harris was the person who took that away.

Randy: Thanks very much, Smokey.

We have a question from Adriano, in Bolton, and it's, I'm not, quite, clear on what the question is, so I'm going to ask Adriano to just come right out and say it. Go ahead, please.

Adriano: Sure, I can make it clear. So my question is, the contract does appear to be decent for staff that have been on, I believe, short term, but those who've been around for the last three contracts... I was at the town hall for Steve Orsini's recent town hall, and it showed that the OPS have definitely received the lowest wage increases over the last eight years. And he was quite apologetic about it.

My question is pretty basic. The question is for Ron, our Chief, I'm sorry I don't remember your title.

Randy: Negotiator.

Adriano: Chief Negotiator, Ron, do you think this contract is fair to the other unions, or other levels of government and what they've receive in the last four years?

Ron Elliot: Well, what I can talk about is the education sector deal. This is a little bit better than the education sector deal, and Smokey was talking about our teachers and the education workers earlier.

Where this agreement is all front end loaded, in other words... We've mentioned it a number of times, because we're proud of it, the July 1, 2017 wage increase. The teachers and education workers, oddly enough, their last wage increase comes the last day of the collective agreement.

What scares me about that, not that I'm putting down the deal, at all, that's up to those members, but what scares me about that is you're going into bargaining, and the employer looks you in the eye, across the bargaining table, and says "Well, you got a 1% raise yesterday." So I would like them to know our last raise came in July of 2021, and we got forth.

I think when you look at, when you look at the OPP, roughly an 8.5 arbitrated decision, over four years, and the Corrections special enhancement of 3%, the corrections will have a 5.9% wage increase in 2017. If the Unified want to count their wage increase they received on January 1, actually the Unified, in 2017, will receive 2.9%. So, yeah I think it does hold up.

And what Smokey and the executive board's challenged to me is, get up the wages, and increase the contracts. So, we're bargaining now. We're about to hit the meat with the LCBO, and we'll see what we can bargain them for a wage increase, but it's our job to keep increasing the numbers.

Randy: Thanks very much, Ron. We have about eight or nine minutes left in our call. We still have some questions left. I have Karen, in London, asking about surplussing. Go ahead, Karen.

Karen: Yes, hi. I was surplused, and thank God, I found another job, in the OPS. Now, my question is, with regard to displacements, at the time that I was surplused, I had the option of choosing 40km of my home base, or all of Ontario. Can we have the option of 40km of the home base, 125km of the home base, and the open to all of Ontario?

Randy: Here we go with Mickey answering this question.

Mickey Riccardi: Hi, just so you know, that didn't change, in this round. It stays the same. So, there's no change there.

Randy: Okay, thanks very much. We're going to move on to Eric, in Kingston, asking about the ASMP and merit dates. Go ahead Eric.

Eric: Hi. I have two questions.

So the first one, with the merit, being: two employees hired during wage freeze, one in November of the first year. One in February of the second year. When the merits restart again, although the second employee, hired in February, has less seniority, will they still get a step before the person who was hired in the previous year?

And the ASMP. I thought I heard that the Health Minister is proposing to increase the amount of time off people get sick, and ban things like attendance monitoring, so is this really a win?

Mickey Riccardi: Hi, it's Mickey.

In regards to the merit increases, that would happen anyway. Not just because of the freeze, because it depends on... You can have someone who was hired after you, and would get a merit increase in the same year you did, but before you, because their merit date was before you, so it wouldn't be any different.

As far as the ASMP, the employer... I know there was some announcements, but I've been at the table, at the CERC table, and one of the things I talked to the employer about is the horrible ASMP program, and how degrading it is, and I know they had no intentions of getting rid of it.

We brought issue, after issue, of problems with the attendance management program, and only thing they could say to us was, "We need an attendance management program."

So, would they have gotten rid of it? I'm not sure. I know that having this, doing this tentative agreement, was an incentive for us to get something outside of the collective agreement and I think it was the attendance management program was a good one for us, because we have a lot of members who are on that program, who are legitimately sick, and have to come into work because they're afraid of that program.

Hope that helps.

Smokey: And I think – Smokey here – part of your question was around... in reference to the changing workplaces review. That legislation is not actually being passed. It goes to hearing over the summer, and is subject to change. So, it's not clear how all aspects of what the government is proposing will roll out in union versus non-union workplaces. That's, I guess, a wait and see, and see what happens. And we will apply to have input into that legislation over the summer.

Randy: Thank you, Smokey.

We are getting very close to 9 PM, when we are scheduled to wrap up. So, at this time, I'd like to come right back to Smokey, and ask for any final comments

you want to have to the members on this OPSEU telephone town hall for members in the Ontario Public Service.

Smokey:

Well first, I'd like to thank everybody for getting on the call, and again, just to say it's your choice, it's your life, your contract. I hope you got some information to help you make your mind up.

So, there's been some questions. How will the affect our relationship with the Liberals. Well, I'd like to think that it would improve it, but we have many, many other fights with Liberals going on to preserve public services. As we talked about, we're in a countdown to a strike at the LCBO. We've got all kinds of bargaining going on, but it's very, very tough bargaining, very tough bargaining.

Did the Premier offer this up to buy our silence? I don't know, maybe.

Will it buy our silence? No absolutely not.

So, she may live to regret this. I don't know.

The other two parties have not offered comment, so... The other two political parties, we'll wait and see what they have to say.

So, again, though, it's brought to you in good faith. The union, we're doing our moral, and legal obligations, and our moral obligation. The government made an offer, and again, it's before you to think about.

Again, I hope you got your questions answered tonight. I did mis-speak earlier. Stay on the end of the call, it's not an email, leave a voicemail. I said it wrong, I'm getting the thumbs up from across the table, I've made that mistake before.

So, Randy, back to you, and again, thank you everybody, and thank all the... everybody, Monte, Mickey, and Ron, for being on the call, and all the staff that put this together, and back to you Randy.

Randy:

Thanks very much, Smokey. In fact, you have been listening to an OPSEU telephone town hall for OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service, with Smokey Thomas; OPSEU Chief Negotiator Ron Elliot; Mickey Riccardi, from our Central Employee Relations Committee; and Monte Vieselmeyer from the Correction Employee Relations Committee.

Just to repeat what Smokey said, if you did not get a chance to ask your question, or if you have a comment of any kind, you have a chance to leave a voice message. Please take just one more minute to stay on the line and leave your personal message.

Thanks, again and have a great evening.