

June 14, 2017

OPSEU Telephone Town Hall for June 14, 2017: Transcript

Randy Robinson: 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. Joining me tonight are four panelists: Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President of OPSEU; Ron Elliot, chief negotiator for the union; Mickey Riccardi, acting OPSEU chair of the Central Employee Relations Committee of the OPS, which we just call the CERC, and Monte Vieselmeyer, OPSEU co-chair of the Ministry Employee Relations Committee for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, commonly known as the Corrections MERC.

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.

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 2. But more importantly, we want to give OPSEU members in the Unified and Correctional bargaining unit, 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. If you have a question, all you have to do is press *3 on your telephone key pad, or, for those of you joining us online, simply ask your question by writing it in the chat box.

If you have 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 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 contract?

Smokey: Yes, thanks Randy, and absolutely. But first, I'd like to thank everybody for joining us tonight, and I'd like to start by saying that these tentative deals come with a number of positive changes and absolutely no demands for concessions from OPSEU members, so I'm quite happy to recommend that all members vote

in favour of them. So here's what happened. A couple of weeks ago, my office got a call asking ... Inviting us to a meeting to talk about OPS bargaining. I didn't actually go to that meeting, Mickey and Monte and two senior staff went to that meeting. The meeting took place on June 2, and that's when the employer presented the offer before your contract extension for the Unified bargaining unit and a similar four year contract for the Correctional bargaining unit. The government purposed that the new contract would actually kick in this coming July 1, if indeed it is ratified by the membership. I called an emergency executive board meeting to discuss this, as it's certainly out of the ordinary, and at the board we decided that the only thing we could do would be to put these offers in front of the membership so that the 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, June 10, to lay out the offers. So, having said that, it's been decided that these would go to the membership for a vote, and it's up to the members to accept or reject as its their – your – collective agreement. So, what we've done is this, we had a tele-town hall last night, tonight, tomorrow night, Friday over the lunch time, and the ratification votes will be province-wide next June 20,21,22, and we're still working out the details of those votes but I know they'll be up on the website as soon as they're completed. Though, I think the main issue right now is for you, the membership, to get informed about these offers so you can make an informed decision next week.

Randy Robinson:

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 20, 21, and 22. If you want to ask a question of any of our speakers, it's easy. All you have to do it press *3 on your telephone key pad 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. So let's do a quick poll now to find out who is in, on the call. I'm going to ask a question and then read out five choices. Press the number on your key pad that corresponds to your choice.

So 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 health care 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, and press 5 if you're in the Correctional bargaining unit.

Again, the question is, what is your job category and bargaining 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 and

maintenance/technical category, Unified, and 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 at 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 31, 2021. There's a 1.5% wage increase that takes effect July 1, 2017, followed by a 1% increase January 1, 2019, and a 1% increase every six months after that for the rest of the contract. So, that adds up to 7.5% over four years and it is 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 on the movement through the salary grid will end effective January 1, 2018. At 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 are exceptional reasonably at \$6.07 a month for a single person and \$9.63 a month for a family member, and these are voluntary payments. Secondly, 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 a fraction of the normal cost. For a single person, the premium is just \$0.94 a month, it is a \$1.91 monthly for a family. The first \$10,000 in catastrophic benefits is covered at 90%. After \$10,000, they're reimbursed at 100%. In the past we've had people that have had to sell their cars, even their 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 \$1400. Finally a word about the Attendant Support and Management Program, of ASMP. Effective January 1, 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 31, 2017 will continue to have their attendance monitored until they move below Level 3. You can read the Unified agreement on OPSEU's website at OPSEU.org.

The Corrections extension agreement is also online and is very similar. The term is the same, the wage increase is the same, at 1.5% increase on July 1, 2017, plus a 1% increase every six months from January 1, 2019 onward. These increases are across the board and compounded. Please note, the Correctional Bargaining unit members may also bargain an additional wage called a Special Wage Adjustment, backed up by interest arbitration if needed. The 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 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, or \$9.63 for family coverage. Similarly, mandatory catastrophic drug will be paid by members at \$0.94 a month for a single person and \$1.91 a month for family.

So, 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 oppose that move, and we support them 100%. But with this deal, regardless of any future change in the reporting ministry, Correctional nurses will remain within the Correctional Bargaining unit. So 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: Thanks so much for that Ron, that summary. 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 bargaining unit? The answer in the poll was, 26% of people on the call are in the Administrative Category in the Unified bargaining unit, 7% are in Institutional and Healthcare, also in the Unified bargaining unit, 37% are in the Office Administrative Category in the Unified bargaining unit, and 21% are in the Operational and Maintenance and Technical category of the Unified bargaining unit. 9% are in the Correctional bargaining unit. So we have 91% Unified members on the line and 9% in Corrections. Thanks very much to everyone who participated. Now we're going to go to our first question. Ron made reference to the Attendant Support and Management program, better known as ASMP. We have Ryan on the line from Guelph with a question on that very topic. Go ahead Ryan.

Ryan: Hi, yes. I got a question. Mickey stated yesterday on the call how the ASMP program shares – shames – workers back to work even exposing more health problems, to other workers, to illness. Why did the Corrections component not argue for this for the Corrections side with the deplorable conditions that they put up with? That's my question.

Monte: Thank you for your question, it's Monte speaking. We did and the employer didn't want to remove that for our members. Their statement was that we on average take 28.5 sick days a year, and again that's on an eight hour day as opposed to the 12 hour days that we work. We know the employer can't manage this program as it is right now. We're seeing members that are in level 3 and 4 and employers just trying to do a level 1 meeting and they're so far behind. Our members have adapted to bundling and using to the best of their ability but outside of bargaining, that doesn't stop us from still trying to push the employer back off the ASMP because the employer can change that anytime outside of bargaining. Thank you.

Randy Robinson: And thank you Monte. We have a question from, online, from Julie, who submitted this question. How is it that bargaining started when the bargaining team wasn't yet in place? And I think that's a question for Smokey Thomas, president of OPSEU.

Smokey: Hi Julie, thanks for that question. Well at the start of the call, the government invited OPSEU to a meeting. So your CERC chair and your MERC chair and two senior staff went to the meeting at which time they presented an offer after some back and forth, for people at the meeting, contacted me, said geez, this is good enough to take to the membership for vote, so that's what we're doing. And so how we got here is the teachers unions and educational sector workers, now, we have some education workers, about 26, 2700 in five different locations across the province. A couple of months ago, they were approached, as were the teachers unions, and offered, asked to consider two year extension agreements, offers were put to them. So in our education sector, we put it to our members for a ratification vote, they ratified it, a two year extension. Teachers unions, at least one didn't go to a ratification vote, they just accepted it and imposed it on their members. And I don't know, the other two I think had votes.

So, it's not out of the ordinary. I was a bit surprised that they offered it in the OPS but I wasn't totally shocked. So that's how we got there, the government put forward an offer, which any employer can put forward an offer to the union, so, once an offer was made, of course, it's our responsibility to let the members decide whether they wish to accept or reject that offer.

Randy Robinson: Okay, thank you very much Smokey. We have a question from Spencer in Toronto. Looks like its regarding the freeze on movement through the grid. Go ahead Spencer, please.

Spencer: Yeah, sorry. It'll be just two quick questions. One, this extension agreement, does it extend the duration of the current collective agreement for four more years?

Mickey: Yes.

Randy Robinson: Yeah, go ahead Mickey.

Spencer: Okay, perfect. And the follow up question is this. Given appendix 8, it's stating that employees hired or appointed into a position in the OPSEU bargaining unit during the term of the collective agreement will have their salary fixed for the duration of the entire collective agreement. So, why do you keep telling us that we're going to move up in the grid, and this will keep us frozen for four more years?

Mickey: No, this will not. That appendix is not being ... That is not being renewed. So, because it's not being renewed, the progression freeze has been lifted and you will get your merit increases in 2018.

Randy: Thank you very much Mickey. I'd like now, that Mickey has spoken, I'd like to introduce her to do a brief presentation. Mickey Riccardi is the acting OPSEU co-chair of the Central Employee Relations Committee of the OPS. Mickey, what do you think members should take away when they read about this Unified tentative deal?

Mickey: Well, everything Randy. In fact, it's extremely short, just two and a half pages long and you can read it on the website at OPSEU.org. But there's one thing I'd like to underscore with our Unified members and 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 were off sick, basically accusing them of lying and theft. It shamed them into returning in... to the work place even if they or their family members were still very ill. By coming back too soon, sometimes they just got worse, or they would pass 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. If the tentative deal is accepted, the program will be terminated and I'd like to take this opportunity to remind members that we negotiated away the two tier leave for medical reasons last December. Formally, unless you had a medical certificate, employees received just 66 and 2/3 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. So, these are two tremendous victories for the OPS.

Spencer: Thanks very much Mickey. We're going to go to some more questions. We have Jane in Bradford. Jane, go ahead. What's your question?

Jane: Sorry, excuse me. Okay mine ... I have a three part question. The first one is, officers, Correctional officers who are now on LTIP, how can we vote? I'd like to know what routes or routes we have to vote and the second part of that is are LTIP officers going to receive an increase in salary from our benefits provider? Which is Manulife. And the third part is, how do we receive a hard copy of the new collective agreement when it comes out?

Spencer: I'm going to pass that one over to Ron Elliot, chief negotiator for OPSEU.

Jane: Okay, thank you.

Ron Elliot: Thank you Jane.

Jane: Hi.

Ron Elliot: Yes, you have every right and we encourage you to vote. You're a member and you have the right to vote. So all the voting locations and times should be on the website, I'm hoping by tomorrow evening. So, you have ... So, if you just go to OPSEU.org, you'll see the OPS and follow that, and that will take you to bargaining and talking about these tentative agreements and it will tell you where to vote. Also, you could call your regional office, or you could call the OPSEU head office and tell them where you are, and they will tell you you're voting location Jane. And OPSEU's phone number is 1-800-268-7376. Members on LTIP will receive this raise as part of the collective agreement and you're third part of your question, I forgot.

Randy Robinson: Go ahead with the third part Jane.

Ron Elliot: Oh, the copy of the collective agreement. Thank you, I'm just reminded here. As Mickey said, both of these tentative agreements are each 2 1/2 pages long and they're both posted on our website at OPSEU.org.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much for the answer Ron. For those who've just joined us, my name is Randy Robinson. I'm your host for this OPSEU telephone town hall. I'm joined by Smokey Thomas, Ron Elliot, Mickey Riccardi, and Monte Vieselmeyer. We're talking about the 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 just ask your question by writing it in the chat box. And now I'd like to formally introduce Monte Vieselmeyer. 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: Thanks Randy.

Randy Robinson: Monte, what's your take on this rollover collective agreement made to the Correctional bargaining unit, the offer?

Monte: I'm going to expand on that answer because I think there's some information our members that may be listening in ... I just want to verify because I had an opportunity to speak with our members over the last few days and some of those points have come forward so I just want to clarify those. As you all know, we signed an agreement back in January of 2016. That agreement was to give us our COR-only agreement and also take away our right to strike. And that required changes in the CECBA legislation and some of our members aren't aware, but that legislative change did go through on December 8 of 2016 so the change is specific that we have our COR-only bargaining unit and the right to strike has been taken away. And including into that is we also have the ability to go to interest arbitration, which was a big piece that we had fought for, and that was critical for us. In addition, December 15th, we signed an additional agreement, and Mickey spoke to how the change from 66 2/3 to 75% occurred

but also in that was included that the former Unified that were in the OPS that work within the institutions and also the community offices, and at the Correctional college, would come in to the Correctional bargaining unit.

There was a vote taken for those members in January and they passed it ... It was significantly high, like 95% or higher. And the board voted on it. So we had 2,000 members come over into our Correctional bargaining unit earlier this year, and they now have the ability to be a part of this new collective agreement. Technically, they don't come in it until January 1 of 2018. One of the things that's still available for those former Unified members is the ability still to transfer, say, if you work in Office and Administration, Maintenance, or otherwise, you can still transfer over into other positions similar into the OPS. One of the things you heard mentioned is that we still have ... The 900 nurses that we have of those Unified, it's included in here that if there's any changes to come through the government, that they will remain in the Correctional bargaining unit, and that's been a big thing because we just had a nurses lobby day at Queen's Park just a couple weeks ago.

Another important piece for this is that there's two votes. There's a vote for the Correctional Bargaining unit and a vote for the OPS Unified. The outcomes of those votes will effect whether or not this tentative agreement is ratified. So, if the OPS Unified ratify it, then they will have a new collective agreement. If the COR bargaining unit ratifies it, then we'll have a new tentative agreement. But we also have the interest arbitration piece, which was the piece that we fought for so long, and the arbitrator, Mr. Burkett, in 2016, set the stage. He only gave us 3% at that time, but he set the stage that we need to catch up significantly, and we've been following the various other justice partners that are similar to us, whether it be federal Corrections or the OPP, we have ground to make up and this would be great opportunity for us. So right now, we have 7.5% that is on the table for our members, and that interest arbitration piece also waiting there. Thank you.

Randy Robinson:

Thanks very much for that Monte. Well, we've had presentations from all four of our speakers, and the rest of our program, which runs until 9 o'clock, is going to focus entirely on questions. You are listening to an OPSEU telephone town hall for OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service. We're talking about the government of Ontario's contract offer for OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service, which was put forward on June 2. Online we have John, with a question that I'm not quite sure what it is. But John, please tell us.

Oh sorry, it's online, not on the line, as in on the telephone line. John's question, maybe it is simple, it says, "This sounds too good to be true. What's the catch?"

Smokey?

Smokey:

Well there is no catch. I've been on lots of talk radio shows about this, there's lots of interest. So, people have asked me why I think the government would do

it. Bottom line is, I don't think it really matters what the government's motivation is. There's a lot of speculation and probably truth to this, I think really. Perhaps the government does want to get all the unions off the street, does want labour peace going into the next election. And if that's the case, that's fine, but I would say this to the members on the phone and indeed all the members of the union, this government won't get peace from us on the whole host of issues that we face. Whether it goes from the crisis in the corrections to the crisis in mental health, or crisis in children's aid societies, you know, cutting the services, privatization of services. We've got the "We Own It" campaign. So, we won't let up on the government at all, the other 100s of issues that we challenge them on every day. So, while it sounds too good to be true, it is true, and it's a bona fide offer and so, regardless of the government's motivation, we won't let up doing the things that we do and again, you've got a shot here at voting on something and encouraging everybody to vote.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much Smokey and thank you John for that online question. We now have on the line Jeff from Picton, with a question about special cases. Go ahead Jeff.

Jeff: Hi guys, thanks for taking my call. There was some special cases that were heard by the employer through the CERC Committee presented by employees back in the fiscal 2016/2017 during, before negotiations and before this nice deal. If this contract is ratified, will these special cases still be revisited by the employee after the contract if ratified or will they be considered dealt with by the employer and the CERC Committee? In particular, I'm referring to the case that the Conservation Officers put forth for a wage adjustment.

Mickey: Hi, yes, it's Mickey. We still will be working on the special cases even if this gets ratified. We need to finish up the 2014 special cases, so we still will be working with them.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much Mickey. We have Marlene on the line from Coldwater. Go ahead Marlene.

Marlene: So, I, sorry I just wanted to make a comment but I appreciate this offer, I don't think that we could negotiate a better offer and, some people may look at it as a back door deal but every union's getting it, and I was pleased to hear that we were getting the same treatment.

Randy Robinson: Okay, well, thank you very much for that comment Marlene, but I think that Smokey would like to also add to that comment.

Smokey: Hello, just thanks for that Marlene. That is the overwhelming sentiment at least from Unified.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much Smokey. A question from online from Jessica. The question is, "with the removal of the ASMP, what has been negotiated to replace the system?"

Mickey?: Mickey?

Mickey: Hi Jessica. We don't negotiate ASMP, employer policy. And the policy that they would revert back to would be the ASP, which is the Attendance Support Program. That was the program that was in place before ASMP. Thanks.

Randy Robinson: Thank you Mickey. We have Sevi, in Ottawa, asking a question about the 2018 wage increase. Go ahead Sevi.

Sevi: Hi, hi Smokey. I know my question may be stupid, but I'm very grateful with the raise, but I was wondering why are we skipping 2018? Like, we're getting a raise every 6 months but 2018 is completely skipped. Why is that?

Smokey: Well first off, there's no such thing as a stupid question. Your question's actually very good. So, the government ... The 1.5% should have quite rightly come January 1, 2018, but I suspect, you know to add some inducement into accepting the contract, they're actually putting it in six months early. So it's actually a bonus rather than a deterrent. So that 1.5 for 2018 given 6 months early actually brings it ... Compounded all up, brings it up to almost a 2% raise for the year. So, again, it's 2018's raise coming six months early.

Randy Robinson: Very well explained, okay, thank you Smokey. We have a question online from Sean: "Are student employees permitted to vote on this tentative agreement?"

Ron Elliot: Hi Sean, it's Ron. Absolutely. If you're a member of the union, if you're paying dues, you have every right to vote and we encourage it. Thank you.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much Ron. Stephen is from Sudbury, a question about fixed term employees. Go ahead Stephen.

Stephen: Hi there. I'm a fixed term employee so I think we go through the merit increases by working 1904 hours. So I'm just wondering, are we starting off January 1, 2018, starting at zero or are we starting it off from where we left off back in 2014? So, if I say left at 1000 hours, before this freeze, am I starting off at 1000 hours again or am I starting from 0?

Monte: Thank you for your question. You would start where you left off. As you said, if you had 1000 hours then you would have a 1000 then start from that point because the freeze was only in place for that two years so whatever you came into it ... Your hours still accumulated for those two years for say, if you're in the Correctional bargaining unit, for rollover purposes and other seniority purposes, as a fixed term, but again, it would start from wherever that left off prior. Thanks for the question. Bye.

Randy Robinson: Thanks Monte. We have a question from Laurie in Toronto. Go ahead Laurie, what is your question?

Hello Laurie?

Laurie: Hi.

Randy Robinson: Yeah, go ahead please.

Laurie: I wanted to find out, in our current contract we have the TEI and I'm wondering if it's being carried over, is the TEI going to be carried over as well?

Mickey: Hi it's Mickey and yes, the TEI would be carried over.

Randy Robinson: Okay, thanks very much Mickey. We have Mary in Thunder Bay asking about out-of-country insurance coverage. Go ahead Mary.

Mary is off the line. But online, is Jason. It's a question put in through the chat box that says, "Does avoiding negotiations save OPSEU a lot of money?"

Smokey: Yes, it's Smokey here. You have to define "a lot." The treasurer of the union will take a dollar saved anywhere he can. It would save the union money if it ratified in the sense that we wouldn't have our bargaining team in Toronto for months on end and hotel rooms, meeting rooms, that sort of thing. But that would be incidental to this agreement, although there is some saving occurred to the union.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much Smokey. We have Lucia in Brampton, talking about the top of the wage grid. Go ahead Lucia.

Lucia: Hi. Yeah, I have two questions. One is that I see that the people in the OPSEU for the regular work that they do, they get a 3% increase. Where are people in the [inaudible 00:33:31], we don't get anything. We are working away, and we are not appreciated, we are not recognized, and we don't get anything. So, can anything be done about it because and also people who go, I've seen like in other bargaining units. Like especially, when they do a little bit extra work, 5% increase is given to them with the deputy minister's approval. Whereas, take for instance in my case, I'm just a scheduler, but I am, because I have been in the same position for 12 years, I have not gotten any like the 3% like others get, I don't get that, even though I am doing more than my work, because I'm just a scheduler-

Randy Robinson: I'm going to give Ron Elliot a chance to respond to that, thanks Lucia.

Ron Elliot: Yes, thank you very much. The, I guess what you're really doing is comparing different collective agreements with different unions. When a [inaudible 00:34:42] went to their bonus system, what OPSEU did was put it on our grid.

We raised the raises for everyone in OPSEU, every one of our categories, and I know this comes across once in a while when a [inaudible 00:34:55] members receive a bonus, but more traditional trade unions want that on the grid where you get it every year. You get that pay every two weeks. And to us, that is the way to go. So, you could say, if you get, if a [inaudible 00:35:14] member gets a 5% bonus, they might get a little more, but they can also get a 0, they can get a 1, and I know the average is 3. But we put that money on our grid many, many years ago. So, you are getting it, you just don't see the hoopla about it.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much Ron. Just to remind people on the line, you are listening to an OPSEU telephone town hall. Our topic this evening is the government of Ontario's contract offer for OPSEU members in the Ontario public service. I'm Randy Robinson, and I'm your host for the town hall. I just want to remind people if you would like to ask a question of any of our four panelists, all you have to do is press *3 on your telephone key pad and you will be placed into the queue. We are now going to take another question, this time from Ron in Timmins, asking about corrections raises. Go ahead Ron.

Ron 2: Hi. I'm just wondering if you can clarify the Correctional division receives special wage provisions on top of the across the board increase. Why would this not apply to all people that work in the Correctional institutions?

Monte: Thanks Ron for your question. Again, the new Unified or former Unified, they're becoming Correctional bargaining unit, come in as of January 1, 2018 and have the opportunity to vote on this agreement. The employer, that was one of the things that we hashed back and forth and they did not want to move on that, and wanted to leave it solely with the Correctional bargaining unit as it stands today, which is with COs, PPOs and other job classifications. They just didn't want to move on that so, that's where it stands. Thank you.

Randy Robinson: Thanks Monte. We have Mike in Toronto asking about the minimum wage. Go ahead Mike.

Mike: Hello?

Randy Robinson: Mike yes, go ahead. What is your question please?

Mike: Hi. I just kind of wanted to make a comment. In my opinion this is a little, little to offer. Thousands of people were laid off not that long ago. There are huge numbers of hiring of contract staff who are saving the government a ton of money. I just think the Attendance Management Program should have never been implemented. It's now being used as a bargaining chip that the government is now using as leverage. And they're offering what I think is a, hardly a modest wage increase. Management was given major raises. Why is it that the low to middle class are drooling over a 7% wage increase, which I think barely compares to like exponentially the increases in housing costs. I think this really isn't a good deal being offered and I think that the government's just

concerned that we may cause quite a bit of commotion and if there's an election called, I think they're really just trying to quiet us. And what is 7.5%? How does this relate to the minimum wage increases that are being offered by the government, the proposal to increase minimum wages now. I was just wondering if I could get some feedback on that.

Randy Robinson: You're going to get some feedback from Ron Elliot right now. Here we go.

Ron Elliot: Yeah, thanks Mike. That's a great question. Let me give you for examples of what it does for our members. For an office and admin 8, they're going from \$50,048 a year, to \$53,924. Correctional Officer 2 goes from \$71,151 to \$76,661. For a PO2, Probation Officer 2, goes from \$78,913 to \$85,024. To the investigators inspectors groups, I'll use the Ministry of Labor Health and Safety Inspectors, go from \$85,953 to \$92,609. I hope that helps.

Smokey: It's Smokey here. If I could comment on the minimum wage. That's designed to take people, essentially lift them out of poverty, although I would, I think we should also talk about living wage after the minimum wage is raised, but there, it's not passed yet, that legislation's not passed, so it's not a given that it will be that. There's certainly going to be a lot of those hearings over the summer and I do know that the business community is and lots of right wing groups are certainly lobbying against it so what ends up going to the legislature in the fall at the end of the day may be different than the \$14 an hour, we have no way of really knowing. The government seems committed, but again, they have to go through the hearing process, and hear from all parties.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much Smokey and thank you Mike for that question. We have a question online from Toronto, I don't have a name but the question is, this individual is part of the Unified Category, saying, "there's a lot of talk about outsourcing in the public service these days. Did we get language to protect jobs?"

Mickey would like to answer that.

Mickey: Hi, it's Mickey, and we did get language in the last round, quality of public service, and that language will still be in effect this round.

Randy Robinson: Okay, thank you Mickey. In Windsor, we have Randy. And he's got a question about the Correctional bargaining team. Go ahead, Randy.

Randy: Thanks for taking my call. This question is twofold. To the novice unionist out there. This is continually being referred to as an offer. This is a signed tentative agreement, which is a difference between an offer and a TA. Why is OPSEU continually calling this an offer as opposed to a tentative agreement and the second portion, why are there no members of the Correctional bargaining team, sitting with you guys on this call? Thank you.

Ron Elliot: Hey Randy, good to hear from you, it's Ron. The, on the Correctional bargaining team, as you know, you're on it, you were just elected to it. We have both Monte here who, you know, is the co-chair of the ministry, and Monte was at the meeting with us that Smokey referred to. I commonly refer to this as two tentative agreements, Randy, it's not secret. If you look at the top of the agreements, I think they're called extension agreements. People call them offers, they're just words we use, we're not trying to hide anything. My signature's on the agreements, and I'm recommending both of them. They are tentative agreements, they are extension agreements, so. And the reason we're here tonight, well, Mickey's the chair of the CERC, I'm the chief negotiator, Smokey's the president of the union, and Monte was with us at the table and he is the co-chair of the corrections MERC.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much, Ron. Moving on to the next question. We have Elizabeth in Toronto. A question about inflation, go ahead Elizabeth, what is your question?

Elizabeth: Thank you for taking my call. The comment about this is too good to be true, that is valid provided inflation stays around 2%. Given that the states are increased their interest rate three times in the last six months, we've got Donald Trump and we've got Brexit. There is the most unstable economic future ahead of us, and for those of you who can recall the '80s, we had inflation rates in the teens. I would much prefer this agreement was only two years or we had a cost of living allowance, some sort of protection, so if inflation say went beyond 4%, our wages would automatically increase and not be stuck at 1% every six months, which could be grossly under inflation in a year.

Smokey: Thank you for your comments. There's certainly validity to your point of view. However, the offer before us is for a four year extension, and some people, though, take a different point of view, that it does offer four years of stability and one of those reasons that I've had members say to me is that well, if Patrick Brown wins the next election, at least we're insulated from his attack on the collective agreement and rollbacks because we've already won a Charter challenge in the education sector when they are [inaudible 00:44:23] in post contract provisions and what you'd call rollbacks. So, we won that, so the government, no government can do that again in Ontario, so there's certainly a lot of viewpoints on this but it does insulate us from the prospect of a Tory majority and also if inflation stays around 2%, it's pretty good. And, but if it goes above, well, nobody has that crystal ball, but it does protect us from the Tory government.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much Smokey. We have Sylvanna on the line from Toronto. Sylvanna, what is your question?

Sylvanna: Well I think you've partly answered it but, just to clarify. If corrections does not ratify, the deal is off, correct? And two, so the 2017 increase in July is actually for the whole year of 2018?

Randy Robinson: Go ahead Ron.

Ron Elliot: Thank you Sylvanna for the question. Yeah, these tentative agreements are completely separate. So, there's one for the Correctional bargaining unit and one for the Unified. Let's say Unified accepts it, and Corrections rejects it, then the Unified will have a new collective agreement and Corrections will start bargaining later this year. And Monte touched on that earlier, so the collective agreements are totally independent, and there's two ratifications, even though ratification will happen in the same place, they'll be separate balance boxes for the Corrections ballots and for the Unified ballots. The, we're quite proud of the fact that there's a July 1, 1.5% raise, I mean, in normal bargaining, as the cycle progressed, we would have been arguing and saying we need a wage increase January 1, 2018. And that's what Smokey touched on earlier. We were able to front load this contract so you'll get a wage increase if your collective agreement is ratified July 1, 2017. That's why we're voting the ratification votes in June to ensure that our members, if ratified, they will get the maximum benefit.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much Ron. We have James in Hamilton asking about the Corrections-only agreement. Go ahead James.

James: Hello everyone and thank you for your time tonight. Monte, it seems like only a few months ago we were bargaining the last collective agreement. I just want to ask the following question: If I vote yes for this tentative agreement, does it guarantee a COR-only, a Corrections only, collective agreement, that which we have thought for so many years? Thank you, everyone.

Monte: Thanks for the question, Jim. Yes, it is guaranteed and as I said earlier, that has been guaranteed through the legislated changes that occurred on December 8, 2016. So yes, guaranteed, and again, the major portion for the Correctional bargaining unit was that interest arbitration giving us an opportunity to bring our case in front of an arbitrator, especially in regards to catching up our wages and so the wages that were stated earlier, what would be the top end at the end of this collected agreement specifically on the 7.5%, anything that would, an arbitrator may award, would be an addition on top of that. And I think we have a good case to go forward. Thank you.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much Monte. I just want to remind people that we are doing an OPSEU telephone town hall right now, that's what you're listening to. My name is Randy Robinson, I'm your host for this evening and the topic this evening is the government of Ontario's, I won't call it a contract offer, *tentative agreement*, for OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service. I just want to remind people that if you want to ask a question, all you have to do it press *3 on your telephone key pad or you can ask a question online by typing into the chat box. Someone online who has already pressed *3 is Marianne in Lindsay and she has a question about the grid progression. Hello Marianne, good evening.

Marianne: Hello. How are you?

Randy Robinson: Not too bad.

Marianne: That's good. Thank you for taking my question. I would like to know, I think you've already answered my question though with some of the other questions. We will be going back in, if you're still on the grid and not at top rate, are we not going back in where we should have been? The government saved for two years on our wages, and we should be going back, otherwise there's a section of people who are being penalized because of where we were when the contract negotiations went on. It will take seven years to get up the grid, and for some people it's going to take nine now because they are adding these two years in. So I'm wondering why we're not going to start back where we should be.

Ron Elliot: Well let me try and answer that, because the government was evil bunch of, Smokey won't let me say the names, in the last round of bargaining and they, we took some concessions. And that was sad. But we did. And we can't recoup those concessions. We will try over a number of years on wage increases to make up for that, but yeah, people did suffer under this Liberal government, just as they have over other times, just as the public suffered through factories closing, through thousands and thousands and thousands of people losing their jobs in hard times, including some OPSEU members. But unfortunately that's in the past. On a go forward basis, we think these tentative agreements are good, they're fair, and the government's comes around, but we can't change what [inaudible 00:50:41] forced our members a couple of years ago. And I think Monte would like to add a comment to this.

Monte: Thanks, Ron. Further, in addition to that, in specific for the Corrections bargaining unit, that was one of the pieces that we brought in front of the arbitrator and the arbitrator ruled against us, and again, it was patently unfair to our members, especially how they've been treating all the way along those newer members. Again, if you read that arbitrary decision, he goes into significant length explaining why the employer is justified in that, and I don't think the employer would, even if this deal was turned down, they even re-bargain that piece because we've already had the arbitrator rule on it. Thank you for your question.

Randy Robinson: Thank you Monte. We have a question from Brent in Toronto regarding the red circling. Go ahead Brent.

Brent: Hello, can you hear me?

Randy Robinson: I can hear you perfectly.

Brent: Yeah. In some of these red circles where, there ... My understanding is that when you're red circled, when you go into another position, your wages stay the same until you catch up to their position, and then you keep rising and I think

that happened to me. So I'm wondering with this, do I still get the wage increases for the next four years?

Ron Elliot: Brent, it's Ron. Can you tell me, I need a little bit more information though. Where we've had some members red circled in particular, we could think of, Mickey and I were talking before the meeting, was we had some Office Administration 11s were red circled, moved into an 8...

Brent: Yeah.

Ron Elliot: Are you one of those folks, Brent?

Brent: No. I was a Financial Officer 1 and I was red circled to Office Administration like 10 or something, so my salary was never at the top of the grid ... I don't ... I know that, I think my salary kept going up cause I wasn't at the, because I caught up to ... I think my salary wasn't at the, eventually caught up with the, I think it caught up with the Office Administration 10.

Ron Elliot: You know what I'm going to suggest Brent? I'm wondering if you, at the end of this call, there's a phone number Randy?

Randy Robinson: Yeah, you'll be able-

Ron Elliot: At the end of this call, you can leave a phone message and we'll have staff get back to you Brent, and look at your individual case. How's that?

Randy Robinson: Sounds like that's a good idea. Thank you very much Brent. We have a question from online, from John: "Can the employer reinstate the ASMP for the Unified bargaining category, bargaining unit, once the contract expires?" Who would like to take that one?

Ron Elliot: Hi, it's Ron. Could it happen? Likely. I'm telling you, here's what I think about the program. I think it was driving managers crazy trying to run it. It was, as Mickey described it, it was horrifying to some of our members that were threatened, that had to come to work when they were ill, but I also think, for a lot of managers in the Unified bargaining unit, it was a major pain in the ass trying to deal with this program. So, could the employer come up with a program that's similar in four years? I suppose they probably could, but what I'm telling you John is I'm hoping they've learned their lesson from this with the Unified.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much Ron. I just want to remind everyone I'm Randy Robinson, I'm your host for this OPSEU telephone town hall. We're talking about the tentative agreement that OPSEU members will be voting on, the two tentative agreements that OPSEU members will be voting on next week, that's June 20, 21, 22 and just another reminder that if you'd like to ask a question, all you have to do it press *3 on your telephone key pad and you'll be placed in the queue. And we're going to get in as many questions as we can before we finish around

9 o'clock tonight. We have Rob in Hamilton asking a question about years of service. Go ahead Rob.

Rob: Hi, it's the same question that Marianne had answered for me, so I'll go a different route. I'm just wondering if we turn this agreement down, what are the odds that we'll get something better through negotiation?

Smokey: Hi it's Smokey here. I don't know what the bookmakers in Vegas have put the odds at, but I really don't know. I guess you'd have to ask yourself this question, if it's turned down, and it goes into regular bargaining, would you be willing to give your team a strike vote and perhaps a strike to pursue your demands. So, for everybody on the call and everybody in the bargaining unit, I would say, weigh the pros and cons very, very carefully, and decide, you know, and be well aware, if you turn it down, the employer's not obligated to retable this offer at the bargaining table and whether they would or would not, I'm not sure, so, if I had a crystal ball, would make the decision for everybody very easy, but I don't have one, so I guess you have to determine how much of a gambler you are.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much, Smokey. We have an online question from Lynn that says, we have a sister out of the province and she's wondering if she can vote by proxy. I think Ron is going to answer that one.

Ron Elliot: Yes, thank you for the question. No, proxy voting not allowed by the OPSEU constitution. There's absolutely no proxy voting in OPSEU. So, how we would have to change that would be at a Convention, where the members decide the change that rule.

Randy Robinson: Okay, thank you very much Ron. I have a question from Chantal in Nipigon. And it's about catastrophic coverage. Go ahead Chantal.

Chantal: Hi there. I'm just hoping to gain a better understand of what the proposed catastrophic benefits would provide for members beyond expensive medication coverage, if any?

Ron Elliot: Thank you Chantal. Well, what it does provide, so we're each going to chip in a little bit of money, this is mandatory coverage, so monthly premium for a single is \$0.94, for family it's a \$1.91. And this is to protect possibly our most vulnerable members or a family member that needs a catastrophic drug. So the payment on it, our current plan, if you pay, it pays 90% to \$10,000 with the catastrophic combined. So if you take 90% of \$10,000, and I'm not going to talk about the \$3 dispensing fees. So the first \$10,000 would be covered at \$9,000, in other words, the cost to you, or your family would be \$9,000. If the cost of the drug was \$12,000, you'd get \$9,000 from the first ten, you pay \$1,000, and the catastrophic drug coverage covers the next fully \$2,000. So a \$12,000 catastrophic drug would cost you \$1,000. And we can use any combination of examples you would like. If the catastrophic drug cost \$25,000, again, you would pay \$1,000. So you, only the first, and people have started talking. I work

at the OPSEU head office, and I heard today, where people are talking about, they know people on catastrophic drugs, so it might not be as rare as even I thought. And Smokey's going to add onto this.

Smokey:

Yeah, if I could just add, so, for people who may not be aware, and if you have cancer, a lot of chemo drugs are horrendously expensive and they're not covered by OHIP, in some instances, and I jump to chemotherapy, and it's optional to the patient but you know, the evidence shows your success rate of surviving cancer and living a long and happy life increases dramatically, but some of these drugs are \$2500 a needle, \$5000 a needle, after every round of chemo. And if you're on weekly rounds, or bi-weekly rounds, that's a tremendous amount of money. I have actually attended fundraisers and locals raising money for people who have children or themselves or loved ones fighting cancer and/or other very rare diseases.

There are some drugs out there that, you know, one pill could be \$1,000 and you need a pill a week, or a pill a day for some time, so, people have actually, and I've been involved in the union for a long time and on the board for a long time. I've attended many fundraisers and chipped in to help raise money who, they've sold the car, they've maxed out the line of credit and this is just to keep a child or a loved one alive. So as Ron said, this is a tremendous, tremendous improvement in the lives of, and I think probably far more people than we know, but it's also a very, if you think of a group conscience or a group, group of people coming together, and what we want for ourselves we want for everybody, I think this is a tremendous improvement and a very small price to pay for us all, to perhaps, maybe one day save our own life or certainly help out our brothers and sisters and their children.

Randy Robinson:

Thank you very much Smokey. We are going through a lot of questions tonight on this OPSEU telephone town hall and we have more. We have about 30 minutes left on this call. I'm going to go to Ellie now in Toronto. Go ahead Ellie, what is your question?

Ellie:

Hello?

Randy Robinson:

Hi Ellie.

Ellie:

Thank you so much for taking my question. I have two questions. One is, from the Correctional side, the CTO and ACL seems to be taken in this new proposal for the agreement. What's happening with that, considering that they're not giving us enough percentage to even cover what they're taking away from us? And then second part, in regards to the special wage adjustment, the language about it, because it says, we may pursue it, why's it "may" as opposed to some other language? And then what is the technical part of what exactly do we need to do to pursue it?

Monte: It's Monte, thank you for your question. First, again, yes the ACL had an end date on it and that was a thing we're able to add onto our collective agreement at the end last time and at that time, people weren't overly fond of it but it has been given some benefit to our members, but it has not been renewed and also the CTO has been impacted because there was a letter specifically taking it to the end of this contract. Which is a thing that's been important to our members. There may be an opportunity to continue to bargain that outside of bargaining because I think with the increased staffing, that may be something that the employer will look at.

Randy Robinson: And the second part of the question Ellie was what, sorry?

Ellie: Special wage-

Monte: And the special wage adjustment. Where it says may, because it's using that term in the sense that it's a dispute between the [inaudible 01:03:00] which is saying that we can only take the wages to the interest arbitrator, we can't take anything the last time we took to the arbitrator. We also took the piece about the progression freeze and so on so they may be in the term that you can only take the special wage adjustment. So it's not saying that you will, it's not that type of term, just saying it's only that piece that can go forward. Thank you.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much Monte. Our next question is coming from Pam in Hamilton. Pam, go ahead, what is your question?

Pam: Hi there, thank you very much for taking my call. I just wanted to sort of make a couple of points. First of all, just to get some clarity on the Unified members who have been added to the Corrections bargaining unit, if it was in fact [inaudible 01:04:00] or went to legislation in the middle of December in 2016, and they are officially members of the COR-only, but that won't be enacted until January 2018, will they receive the 7.5% pay increase that the rest of the members are getting?

Randy Robinson: I think Ron would like to answer that.

Ron Elliot: The members going to Corrections will vote in the Correction category in your locals. So, wherever we're holding, as I said, probably we'll have them up tomorrow night, all the voting locations for June 20, 21, 22, the days of the vote. So, if you're moving into Corrections, our computer systems at OPSEU already have you identified who all those folks are and when you register for the vote in the regions, the staff will know where you should vote. So if the Corrections category accepts this tentative agreement, you will get the 7.5% wage increase plus many members will get a special wage adjustment if they bargain it or if the arbitrator awards it. If the Corrections category turns down this tentative agreement, then the Corrections bargaining team will go forth and bargain a collective agreement.

Randy Robinson: Thank very much Ron. We have another Ron, this time on the line, he's in Bradford. Ron, go ahead. What's your question please?

Ron in Bradford, are you there?

I think not. We're going to move on to another question. This time we have Sam in Beamsville and it's about Correctional Officers' pensions. Sam, are you on the line?

Sam is not on the line either. Let's go with Dan in Hamilton. Question about the wage grid, Dan.

Dan: Hi, I just had a question and I know we touched on it briefly but looking at the tentative agreement it's basically says that all other conditions and terms of the collective agreement would remain status quo for the term and there's nothing in there that talks about unlocking the wage grid at all. So with nothing in writing, how do we trust this is actually not going to be frozen? How do we trust the employer on that?

Mickey: Okay, under appendix UN8 there's an end date to that letter or appendix and we were told that that letter will not be renewed because there is an end date. So it doesn't automatically roll over. Hope that answers your question.

Randy Robinson: Okay, thanks very much Mickey. You're listening to an OPSEU telephone town hall to discuss the tentative agreement that OPSEU members in the Unified and Corrections Bargaining unit are voting on next week, that's June 20, 21, 22. I'm Randy Robinson and I'm your host for the evening. If you have a question for any of our panelists, and I'll remind you who they are, Ron Elliot, chief negotiator, Smokey Thomas, president of OPSEU, Mickey Riccardi, chair of the Central Employee Relations Committee for OPSEU, and Monte Vieselmeyer, chair of the Corrections MERC, Ministry Employee Relations Committee, I can't get used to saying that, it takes a long time, but if you have a question to ask, *3 is all you have to press on your telephone key pad and we still have lots of time for more questions.

Now we're going to Sharon in Toronto. She has a question about the ASMP, specifically people on level 3 and 4, I think. Sharon, you want to explain your question a little?

Sharon: Yes, if the ASMP program is being dropped, then why are people in level 3 and 4 still in the program, it seems like they're being penalized because they're at that level?

Mickey: Okay, there are people in level 3 and 4, so the recommendation is that, especially for the people in level 3, that there's a voluntary option and we're telling people in level 3 if they haven't used it, to use it as of December 31, so that would take them right out of the program. And so, once the individual's in

level 4, they too can move out of the program, but they have to come out of the program and go into level 3 before that happens. So, unfortunately, we still have the threes and fours we have to worry about at this time, but we hope that they move out of the program, and then once that happens, then they're no longer in the program as of 2018.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much Mickey. I have a question also from Toronto from Tariq, asking about any claw back of gains if the liberals are re-elected. What's your question Tariq?

Tarek: I'm mindful of what happened in Quebec before the first referendum, when the government offered a very generous contract to the public sector, and then after they lost, they unilaterally rescinded it. Now, I don't think the Liberals would go quite that far but this just, as somebody said earlier, this sounds a bit too good to be true and I smell a bit of a rat. What do you think that chances are that they might try to use some excuse to take some of this back after they're re-elected?

Smokey: Hi, it's Smokey here. That's a good question. I don't smell a rat I smell a Liberal. That's a bit facetious, but what would apply to them after the election, whoever wins, if this deal is ratified, we have won at the Supreme Court, we have won, well we won a Charter challenge, when they rolled back and interfered with bargaining in the education sector, so all the unions, including OPSEU, we're the first union to file the Charter challenge, the government lost. So now the government understands that they cannot interfere with collective bargaining, they cannot unilaterally change the terms and conditions of a contract that is bargained and negotiated and ratified, by both parties, so they do not have that in their arsenal of tricks anymore. So, if a government did go down that road, including the Liberals or the Tories or anybody, they would get stopped up pretty quick. So, again, the four year deal, you've got four years of assurity that the terms and conditions are going to stay the same.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much Smokey. We have a question from John in Kingston and it looks to be about the ASMP for Corrections. Do you want to explain your question John please?

John: Hi, it's about the ASMP. The last couple of nights we've discussed that it's humiliating, demoralizing, etc. How come we're not accommodating Corrections employees?

Randy Robinson: Monte?

Monte: Hi, John. Thanks for your question. Again, this employer feels that in Corrections we take too much sick time and they feel this is the only way they can manage it at this time. The employer can change the attendance program, whatever it is, at any time, they don't have to do it during a bargaining round and we had had that argument going back to 2008/2009, where it was ruled that the employer

can have an Attendance Management program, can be good, bad, or otherwise, and we know this is bad and it's had an impact on our members. Again, we've made some headway with new legislation to assist our members in regards to PTSD, and we're also meeting in regards to occupational stress injuries to address those aspects. And we're looking through other types of legislation to make improvements for our members there, but at this time, the employer wouldn't back off the ASMP for our Correctional members. Thank you.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much Monte. We have an online question, this time from Loretta. It says, "do the wage increases also apply to contract members, and what about job security for flex part-time members?" Ron?

Ron Elliot: This contract, this wage increases, will cover every member of this collective agreement. If you're talking fixed term, they will get the increase, if you're talking about permanent part-time, they will get the increase, if you're talking about maybe the odd IT contractor from the outside, of course they're not covered by the collective agreement and they would not get the wage increase, so this covers everyone in the Unified contract and in the Corrections contract.

Randy Robinson: And I think that answers Loretta's question from online. We have Alicia-Marie from Cornwall with a question about LTIP. Alicia-Marie? What is your question?

Alyssia-Marie: Hi. Yeah, hi, I wanted to know, for those of us who are currently on LTIP, if this agreement is signed, will we qualify to go from 66% to 75%? Or does this only start next year, or how does it work?

Ron Elliot: Hi Alicia-Marie. I think what you're referring to is the short term sickness that Mickey was talking about at the start. Mickey wasn't referring to LTIP. What the government did a number of years ago, they changed this so short term sickness, the midterm, and then LTIP. And I think what Mickey was referring to and I heard her clearly, so it's just a misunderstanding, was, what the government wanted to do was take it from 75% to 66%, the 124 days, so we successfully, the MERCs and the CERCs, successfully bargaining that back up to 75% in between the rounds of collective bargaining, so there's another good job done by the CERCs and MERCs who do get agreements throughout the years between rounds of collective bargaining, matter of fact, I know will be coming out soon on the website, they just negotiated a better deal, last week, for our dental plan, which I think the members are going to be quite excited about. Unfortunately, the LTIP percent does not change Alicia-Marie.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much Ron. We have Pauline in Thunder Bay with a question about out-of-country coverage. Go ahead Pauline.

Pauline: Yes, hello. Thank you. That's that we're going to be eligible for out-of-country coverage, but I was wondering what's the amount that we're covered for and is everyone eligible? Do you have to undergo a physical before being, qualifying for it? Or is everyone eligible for the out-of-country insurance?

Randy Robinson: Go ahead Ron.

Ron Elliot: All our members are eligible, and this is a cool thing. What we did was we bargained this with the OPSEU Pension Trust post-retirement benefits for an enhancement for our members, and after we got a longtime friend of mine that had retired, a friend of Smokey's who had retired a little while, phoned me up and said, Ron, that's the best coverage you can get. Now I can't swear it is the best coverage you can get for the price you pay, but I think it's buying in bulk. So, all of our plan B members, in the OPSEU Pension Trust Post Retirement Benefits have the options for this, the Plan A members can buy it, and so it's covered for emergency medical health coverage. I think it's similar to what you'd buy at the bank or through your insurance company or some people have limited coverage through their credit cards that ...

The cool part of this is that it covers you for 90 days at a time. So you can go out-of-country for 90 days, come back for a short period of time, maybe see your grandchildren, and then you're back off again. If you're a snowbird, or if you just like going to the States or another country, and another cool part of this package is there's no pre-existing conditions, there's no exams, you can just buy it and you're covered. The only thing on this is once you go into it, if you go out, you can't go back in so, what it says, and I understand the carrier on this really, is maybe I'd buy it because I'm a little cheap, maybe I'd buy it 'cause I was going to the States as soon as I came home, I dropped the coverage, and maybe if I was going again in a couple of years, I'd pick it up so it's good emergency coverage and people seem to like it. And again, this is totally optional, it's up to the members whether they want it or not. And, limit on claim, I had that answer, and \$1,000,000. Thank you.

Randy Robinson: Okay, thanks very much for that very fulsome response Ron. We have a question online from Brenda, and I want to remind people who are listening right now that this is a little bit like a radio talk show in the sense that it's not always the same audience from minute to minute, so if we have a little bit of repetition, it's because some people who are not on the line earlier, are now on the line and vice versa. So, here's a question that we actually had before but I think is worth repeating. And it's about the TEI. It says, "the TEI is currently available until December 31, 2017. With the collective agreement being rolled over, does this mean TEI is still available to December 31, 2017, and extended into the new collective agreement? If so, what is the new expiry date?"

Mickey's going to answer that.

Mickey: Hi. The TEI, which is appendix 46, there's no expiry date on it. What it says is this memorandum expires upon expiry of the collective agreement, it doesn't have an actual date, so that means that it does get renewed to the next collective agreement and you will see it until 2021.

Randy Robinson: Okay.

Ron Elliot: And if I could add in, that's because this is a true rollover of the collective agreement. And those are the terms the government used, those are the terms we use, and of course it's the tentative agreement.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much Ron. We have a question from Jennifer in Mississauga talking about the top of the pay grid. Jennifer, could you go ahead please?

Jennifer: Thank you for taking my call. My question is, if you are already at the max of your grade, especially the 8 grade, the OAD 8, many of us are already right at the top of our scale. Would we still be given the 7.5 increase compounded over this set period?

Mickey: Hi, yes. It's Mickey. You will get the increases even if you are at the top of the scale so in July, if it gets ratified, you will get 1.5% and then in 2019, you'll get the 1% every 6 months, again in 2020, and again in 2021, which makes it 7.5 and it would be based on the salary of what you were making on that 8, if you were right at the top of the grid.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much Mickey. We have a question that I think is going to go to Monte Vieselmeier, from the corrections MERC team. It's an online question from Sean, and I'm not sure if it refers to special cases or the special wage adjustment, but I'm going to read it as it's written. It says, "special cases in corrections. If the deal is ratified, does that mean that the corrections members can still negotiate special wage increases on top of this?" Monte?

Monte: Very simple answer is yes. And that's one of the things that we fought for in having that changed to legislation and giving up the right to strike is that we could take the wage aspect to interest arbitration and it's included in here, about and beyond the 7.5% that we can take that special wage adjustment again whether its bargained and/or to the arbitrator for that. And like I said earlier, we have an excellent argument because the arbitrator set the stage in his previous award, stating that we should be catching up. And I speak with the Corrections president from federal corrections on a regular basis and I know how they're doing and I think we have room to make up here. Thank you for your question.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much Monte. You're listening to an OPSEU telephone town hall about the contract extensions, offers also known as tentative agreements, also known as extension agreements, also known as rollovers, that OPSEU members are going to be voting on next week on June 20, 21, 22. We're coming in to the last few minutes of our telephone town hall, but we do have time for some more questions, so please, press *3 on your telephone key pad if you'd like to ask a question or just type your question into the chat box and we hopefully will get to it.

Right now we have Charity on the line from Peterborough asking a question about movement on the grid. Go ahead Charity.

Charity: Yes, this is Charity from local 308 in Peterborough. I'm acting president at the moment, and some of my Unified members want to clarify that if we go back to the grid, an example of it would be my raise would be in September, does that mean that I have to wait till September 2018 for that increase?

Randy Robinson: Mickey?

Mickey: Hi, yes. So your grid is based on your merit date and it, so if your merit date is September, then you would wait until September of the following year to get your merit increase to move to the next step. Hope that answers your question.

Charity: It does, thanks.

Ron Elliot: But you would Charity, also, if the agreements ratified, you would receive the 1.5% increase right now, wherever you are on the grid, on July 1, and so on with the raises. You still get the raises on dates stated.

Randy Robinson: Okay, does that answer your question Charity?

All right she's gone. Okay, thank you very much. We have a question from Chris regarding appendix 7 and the classification system subcommittee. Go ahead, Chris.

Chris: Hi, it's Chris. I'm calling from Southland, Ontario. First of all, I'd like to say thank you to all my, or most of my Correctional brothers and sisters who care enough to welcome us former Unified into Corrections. There were 37 special cases at the Unified table and 5 at the Corrections table last round. I'm going to assume that absolutely nothing has happened with any of those special cases since the last contract and in fact, I know of some take aways that happened at the table. So, for Monte Vieselmeyer, when the provincial government told the MERC chair that they would not look at special cases, for the nurses, trades, cooks, etc., that suffer, a lot, with the same issues as our Correctional brothers and sisters do, I'd like to know why Monte didn't bother to say, these are our Correctional brothers and sisters, so they're part of Corrections, and if there are no special cases for them, we have no deal. I for one fought as hard as anyone else for respect as a Correctional member, so why, Monte, did you not stand down, or tell them no thanks, when they told you no for the rest of us?

Monte: We did have that conversation with the employer. Again, this was something that once the employer presented to us, we realized we had to bring it back to the membership, and again, you the members, will decide if this is a good deal, or a bad deal. We do have, still, the option to bring those former Unified special cases to the appendix 7 table, so there still is an opportunity to deal with it otherwise, but bringing this back is specifically, because we couldn't not bring this back to the members, it was specifically that the members have that opportunity, and then you choose and you put your vote, and we want everyone to vote, and how you vote will determine if this is ratified. Again, I

wasn't trying to, nobody's trying to hide anything. This is something the members need to decide and that's where it needs to go. Thank you for your question.

Randy Robinson: Thanks Monte. We have Georgia in Toronto. Of course, OPSEU is not the only union bargaining and not the only union bargaining with the government of Ontario. She's got a question about offers to other unions. Georgia, go ahead please.

Georgia: Yes. Thank you for taking my call. I just have two questions for you. The first question is, did the government make offers to other unions and how do these offers measure up with what we're now considering? And the second question that I have for you is, I've noticed that the [inaudible 01:26:32] for all the workers in other unions, are much more than what we're having right now, what we're getting right now. And I'm just wondering what comparison has been made with what the other unions, the workers in other unions are getting in comparison to what we, OPSEU staff, are getting right now? Sometimes it's very frustrating because we're actually doing the same exact work and you know, we're a bigger union and yet still, it just seems like we're at the bottom, and I'm just wondering how can this be corrected?

Ron Elliot: Well thank you for the question, it's Ron, I can tell you we are far from the bottom. Will other unions be offered this? Yes, AMAPCEO was offered it today and they, and their executive accepted it and it will go to a vote. And it's, pretty much the same as what we've got for the OPSEU Pension Trust Post Retirement Benefits, as soon as we bargained it over quite a lengthy period of time, the government then offered it to [inaudible 01:27:38] and other unions and they took it. OPSEU wage increases are pretty good when compared to other unions. We get the province wide, Canada wide wage increases and collective bargaining that come through monthly from the ministry of labor. OPSEU itself has 932 collective agreements and this is, in my view, pretty good. We have to push up the wages, the executive board, Smokey Thomas and Eddie Almeida, the first vice-president/treasurer, demand wage increases for our members and the negotiators to do the best that we can.

So in my view, this is slightly better than the teachers and how it's slightly better than the teachers rollover or extension agreement is that we really front end loaded the money in this agreement. In other words, your normal increase would have been January 1, 2018, and the folks that met the government were able to drive the government to a deal of July 1, 2017. Now if you look at it in another way, on January 1, 2017, Unified members got a 1.4% increase, so you could say, if you wanted to, and I think it'd be fair to say, that in 2017, Unified members are getting a 2.9% wage increase. Now you could also, it'd be fair, you'd have to say nothing in 2018, but again, it's front end loaded. Now many members in the Corrections category will, if they accept this, will get the 1.5, they got the 1.4, and they get 3.

So many members in the Corrections category in 2017, it would be fair to say and truthful, that they had a 5.9% wage increase. That's pretty good in today's bargaining. If you look at the arbitration world, right now, for paramedics, it's right around 1 to 1.5%. If you look at factory workers, they're still, unfortunately, there's a lot of factories that have half the wages they used to get so this contract, I think is actually pretty good, standard in the province of Ontario and all of our other contracts can now try and build on that.

Randy Robinson: Thank you very much Ron. We are one minute away from 9 o'clock, the time when we're supposed to wrap this up. You've been listening to an OPSEU telephone town hall with guest panelists Warren Smokey Thomas, president of OPSEU, Ron Elliot, chief negotiator for the union, Mickey Riccardi from the Central Employee Relations Committee of the OPS, and Monte Vieselmeyer, from the Correction MERC. Just in the few seconds we have left, I want to turn it back over to Smokey Thomas for a few final comments.

Smokey: First I'd like to thank Monte, Mickey, and Ron for getting on the call with me, and Randy for your very capable MC role, that was very well done and all the team of staff here at head office that helped us put this call together. So just to everybody I'll say this. You've got a decision to make. I hope you're able to have your questions answered, Randy's going to tell you how to get your questions answered if you didn't get through to have your questions asked, and then, all I can say is this, go vote. Go vote, go vote, go vote. And both Mickey and Monte have recommended it, senior staff recommended it, and I'm recommending it to you. However, it is your choice. It is your choice to accept or reject and, as somebody said to me, well what's going to happen if it's rejected? Then we'll just go bargain. That simple. So, but then you start over from square one in the bargaining, so. Anyways, thanks for getting on the call, there's a call again tomorrow night, one over the lunch hour on Friday. So, encourage, if you have colleagues who haven't gotten on the calls yet, please encourage them to get on the call and ask their questions, and hopefully get all the answers they're looking for. Thanks Randy.

Randy Robinson: Thanks very much Smokey. Just one last thing about questions, if you still have a question or would like to leave a comment, stay on the call after we all hang up, and you will be able to leave a voice message and someone will get back to you with an answer to your question if you have a question. So that's been the OPSEU town hall for OPSEU members in the Ontario public service. Thanks again, and have a great evening.