



President's message:

Staying the course on a successful 52-year partnership

It's always nice to be able to start with good news, and plans to hire [500 new full-time correctional staff](#) is the best news we've heard in a long time.

This month's announcement from the Ford government is the result of months and years of patient and persistent work, both publicly and behind the scenes. No one can just walk in off the street and persuade a government to spend millions of dollars on anything. It's the result of building relationships, making a strong case over a long period of time and having the patience to see it through until the end.

OPSEU has been working hard to make governments and Ontarians aware of the heroic work being done on the front lines of corrections.

Our tireless efforts over the years have created a solid foundation of dialogue with the government. The announcement of hundreds of new corrections hires is just the latest in a string of wins. Since I've been President, we've had many successful initiatives, including:

1. Five MPP lobby days at Queen's Park to bring corrections members' message directly to the decision-makers. One of these days was exclusively dedicated to the health care crisis in corrections. These further enhanced the public image of corrections members and made the Crisis in Corrections a political issue.

Along with the Ministry Employee Relations Committees (MERCs) and the ministries' health and safety committees (PJOHSC) (DHS), we've worked extremely hard to foster good working relationships with our elected officials in both government and opposition parties.

2. We've held many news conferences at Queen's Park to raise awareness of the Crisis in Corrections.
3. OPSEU punches above its weight in its public profile in the news media. Our profile is as good or better than national unions that are far larger than we are, and no provincial union even comes close. This has allowed us to get publicity for the problems we face in the corrections system. What it really boils down to is that when OPSEU talks, the decision-makers at Queen's Park listen.
4. It's because of this painstaking relationship-building that we were able to get [Bill 163](#) passed, which ensures correctional officers, youth services officers, probation and parole and probation officers diagnosed with PTSD are presumed to have developed it at work. This removes the requirement that they prove their diagnosis is work-related, opening the door to treatment options and WSIB benefits for PTSD sufferers.
5. Because of our hard work, we influenced the government to build the Correctional Workers' Monument on the grounds of Queen's Park, and we were further able to influence the government to enact [Bill 116](#) to recognize the first week of May as Correctional Services Staff Recognition Week.

6. During the 2015-17 round of bargaining, we were also able to get the government to agree to a standalone collective agreement for corrections, which included lobbying the government to make the necessary amendments to the [Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act \(CECBA\)](#).

OPS Unified members were given full autonomy to vote either to join the corrections collective agreement or remain in Unified. They overwhelmingly chose to join corrections.

The new standalone corrections collective agreement replaced the right to strike with interest (binding) arbitration – something corrections members long sought. Further, it deemed all correctional staff members as essential.

It came into effect on January 1, 2018, giving corrections members one of the best collective agreements in a long time. As a result of the terms of the agreement and awards by the arbitrator, corrections members have seen substantial increases in pay and benefits, bringing them to within a dime of their federal counterparts' pay scale. We expect even more wins in the next agreement and more favourable arbitrated awards.

Are there still corrections collective bargaining improvements to be made? Yes. Aside from extremely rare cases, an arbitrator almost never awards everything at once. We must recognize that arbitrators follow a principle of gradualism and replication. We should see that collective bargaining as an evolution.

7. We fully funded a health and safety educational seminar with all local presidents and local health and safety co-chairs in May 2019, thereby strengthening the resources and knowledge of our corrections members.

There is no great secret to our success: it's hard work and persistence. It's also our willingness to invest hundreds of thousands of dollars over the past few years on member lobbying and public relations efforts to demand action on the Crisis in Corrections. OPSEU and its corrections members have developed a winning partnership based on a depth of understanding of the issues that takes years and even decades to develop.

The COVID-19 pandemic has given the public a far greater appreciation of the heroic work that frontline public sector workers do, and I'm optimistic we can use that as a springboard to make more gains for our members.

OPSEU has always supported the Corrections Bargaining Unit and will continue to do so – whether through financial resourcing or political influence. Let's keep moving the ball up the field.

In solidarity,



Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President of OPSEU



A Message from the First Vice-President/Treasurer:

COVID-19 as a litmus test for a union's worth

As if Ontario's correctional workers didn't have a tough enough job as it was, COVID-19 has made it even more demanding – and hazardous, for both staff and inmates.

COVID-19 poses a serious threat to our adult correctional system, because it spreads among people in close quarters. I am a Correctional Officer, and I've seen too many situations where there are two, three and even four inmates crammed into tiny cells. You have to move quickly to stop a pandemic like COVID-19 from spreading among them – and our members who watch them.

As COVID-19 started spreading in Ontario, Smokey and I got on the phone with Solicitor General Sylvia Jones, Corrections Ministry Employee Relations Committee (MERC) members, senior ministry management and public health officials, and [we made nine demands](#) – and got the government on board with all of them.

The MERCs and health and safety committees (PJOHSC) (DHS), with the support and influence of OPSEU, pushed through more safety protocols combined than any other corrections jurisdiction, including at the federal level, represented by the CSN-affiliated Union of Canadian Correctional Officers (UCCO).

We were able to ensure:

1. All adult institutions created isolation and intake units, thereby helping to ensure that all new inmate admissions were quarantined for a minimum of 14 days before being introduced into the general population
2. In both youth and adult, all staff and visitors were actively screened, including a temperature reading, before entering institutions
3. All non-essential inmate transfers ceased
4. All institutions and offices received increased and improved cleaning
5. Enough hand sanitizers and cleaning supplies were available to corrections staff members
6. Two-thirds of the Probation and Parole Officers in the Ministry of the Solicitor General work remotely
7. All probation staff in the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services worked remotely
8. Compensating time off (CTO) was increased and payout was extended by a full year
9. Every local president of an adult institution was fully booked off by the ministry to make certain each institution had a full-time local resource for information, dialogue, and health and safety
10. All corrections staff members were provided with surgical masks for each shift, including enhanced PPE, such as gowns, gloves and N95 masks, for those working in more critical areas. When the ministry said COs couldn't wear masks, OPSEU was

there to twist the government's arm – and permission soon followed

11. Frontline corrections members received pandemic pay – an additional \$4 an hour. Much of this money is actually transferred from the federal government. It's interesting that UCCO-SACC-CSN – which represents federal corrections officers – couldn't secure some of this money for its members from its own employer.

In one month alone – from March to April – the inmate population fell from 8,344 to 6,025, a drop of almost 28 per cent.

These measures and the superb work you are doing on the front lines have kept COVID-19 from getting out of hand in our corrections system. It's something you can be proud of, and not every jurisdiction can boast of our success.

Contrast OPSEU's actions with UCCO. On April 29, frustrated they couldn't negotiate adequate surgical mask supplies for their members, they purchased – *from their members' money* – cloth masks which, as we know, don't provide the safety that surgical masks do.

On May 13, concerned their employer might not be providing an adequate supply of hand sanitizer, UCCO again spent *their members' dues* on purchasing hand sanitizer. Why did they give up forcing their employer so early?

The upshot? Hundreds of inmates and federal officers were infected by COVID-19. This was tragic and should never have happened.

In contrast, the numbers of Ontario correctional workers, youth and inmates infected with

COVID-19, absolutely and as a percentage, were much lower.

OPSEU takes care of its own, and our reputation precedes us. When non-unionized workers want the most effective representation and to pay the lowest dues, they come to us. Maybe that's why our membership has doubled to 165,000 in the past decade or so.

Some unions, like CSN, are stagnating and hungry for fresh sources of income – and look towards workers who are already well represented. In fact, in 2017, CSN lost 20,000 health care members in Quebec. They'd had enough of CSN's representation and went to other unions, leaving a \$10-million hole in CSN's budget and forcing it to make drastic budget cuts.

Instead of spending their time, and their members' high dues, creating pipe dreams for our corrections members, I humbly suggest CSN get their house in order and start properly supporting their own corrections members in UCCO.

In solidarity,



Eduardo (Eddy) Almeida
OPSEU First Vice-President/
Treasurer



A Message from the Adult and Youth MERCs, PJOHSC and DHS

Many members are under the misconception that OPSEU's President negotiates with the employer on behalf of the Corrections Bargaining Unit. In actuality, that work is done largely by the respective Adult or Youth Corrections Ministry Employee Relations Committees (MERCs) and/or Provincial Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (PJOHSC) and Divisional Health and Safety Committee (DHS), with support from OPSEU and the President's Office.

Your MERC and PJOHSC/DHS members are correctional or youth workers who have been elected by delegates selected by the division membership at the local level. Contrary to popular belief, MERC and PJOHSC/DHS members' wages are not paid for by OPSEU. In fact, they are funded by the employer. While some meeting expenses are shared between the employer and OPSEU, the majority are funded by the employer.

MERC members have a specific mandate: to promote and advance the union agenda and enforce the collective agreement on behalf of the Corrections Division.

PJOHSC/DHS members also have a specific mandate. They review health and safety issues with ministry-wide applications and make recommendations that help with resolution and/or implementation.

MERC and PJOHSC/DHS members work with the employer on their respective committees to resolve workplace issues. When the employer seeks to implement an initiative, the respective MERC and PJOHSC/DHS members advocate on behalf of the division to proactively minimize any negative impacts. Initiatives are often amended, based on recommendations to the employer.

MERC members are also responsible for expanding ongoing communication and connection with the locals. Regular and timely communications are provided to local presidents (Institutions) and Regional Employer Relations Committee chairs (Community) for dissemination to the division at large.

As well, a website has been created and supported, paid for by OPSEU, that's specific to the Corrections Division. It's updated and maintained by the MERC members:
www.correctionsdivision.ca.

PJOHSC and DHS have also developed a transparent line of communication with local health and safety co-chairs in order to deliver current information to the division. Both MERC and PJOHSC or DHS have been, and continue to be, fully transparent and engaged with local executives or local joint health and safety committees. Both adult and youth use regular teleconference briefings to communicate with the membership.

The MERCs oversee a number of subcommittees with specific agendas, which deal with issues such as rollovers, discipline settlements, training initiatives, workload, employee accommodation needs and staffing issues.

Furthermore, when labour relations or health and safety issues arrive at the local level that cannot be resolved, or if they have provincial impacts, they are often forwarded to the MERC or PJOHSC for discussion/resolution. At all times, the best interests of the division are first and foremost when advocating for resolution.

The PJOHSC or DHS also oversee a number of subcommittees with specific agendas, which deal with such issues as PPE (personal protective

equipment), OSI (occupational stress injury), community escorts, fire safety, clothing, canteen, free issue and infrastructure.

With OPSEU's support over the last several years, we have spread our #CrisisInCorrections message. As Smokey notes in his message, these include:

- Queen's Park lobby days and media conferences to advance our concerns to MPPs and the decision-makers. We've attained much success with our lobby days. The introduction of body scanners, the completion of the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) survey, additional funding for more IST and ICIT teams, additional dog handlers, announcements and plans for new institutions (Thunder Bay and Ottawa) are all a direct result of lobbying
- presenting at standing committees on legislation (e.g., [Bill 163](#)), where we achieved status for presumptive PTSD
- playing an active role in segregation review policy and presenting at standing committee in opposition to proposed Bill 6 which sought to overhaul the *Ministry of Correctional Services Act*
- meeting with inmate advocacy groups to discuss the unintended impacts and dangers to correctional staff created by changes to segregation
- The most recent success came with the announcement of over [500 new, full-time correctional staff positions](#).

Your respective MERC, PJOHSC and DHS committees continue to push for better and safer workplaces, with OPSEU's assistance.

SolGen MERC

Chris Jackel: CO, MERC Co-Chair

Chad Oldfield: CO, MERC Vice-Chair

Janet Lavery: CO, MERC Member

Scott McIntyre: PPO, MERC P&P Member

OPSEU Staff: Sandra Harper

SolGen PJOHSC

Ryan Graham: CO, PJOHSC Co-Chair

Michelle McClean: CO, PJOSHC Vice-Chair

Joely Price: CO, PJOHSC Member

Gord Kiernan: PPO, PJOHSC P&P Member

MERC Representative: Chris Jackel

OPSEU Staff: Joscelyn Ross

MCCSS YJ MERC

Peter Harding: YSO, Co-Chair

Mike Fallon: YSO, Vice-Chair

Johanna Sinclair: PO, MERC Member

OPSEU Staff: Sandra Harper

MCCSS YJ Divisional Health & Safety (DHS)

Tom Gibson: YSO, Co-Chair

Paula Vandeusen: YSO, Vice-Chair

Lizanne Leclaire: PO, Member

MERC Representative: Peter Harding YSO

OPSEU Staff: Joscelyn Ross

Don't get scammed by CSN

What do you call someone who tries to sell you something you already have, and promises you things they can't deliver?

In Ontario's corrections workplaces right now, you'd call them "CSN":

Here are a dozen things CSN organizers are promising OPSEU members. Don't be fooled – here are the facts.

#1. CLAIM:

CSN can be certified as the bargaining agent (under the name "OACE-AECO-CSN") for the Corrections Bargaining Unit in a matter of "weeks or months" after a vote this fall.

REALITY CHECK:

OPSEU is designated in legislation as the bargaining agent for all OPS members. Challenging this legally could take years, not weeks or even months. And during those years, there would be a "freeze provision" in effect.

That means the current contract would be frozen and the Corrections Bargaining Unit would not be able to bargain improvements during that whole time. The bargaining team won't be able to bargain a new contract, and the MERC teams won't even be able to negotiate with the employer on workplace issues during the freeze period, which could be years long.

And after all that, CSN's chances of success at this action are slim to none – and if they don't know it, they should. Signing a card with CSN just helps them build their database with your personal information – just so they can freeze your bargaining for years and have nothing to show for it at the end when they lose the legal challenges.

What a waste of their time and their members' dues – and the loss of your future gains when they delay your bargaining.

#2. CLAIM:

CSN will give you carriage rights for your grievances.

WRONG.

CSN does *not* have member carriage rights. If you want to take your grievance all the way to arbitration, CSN can decide against moving forward after an "executive review."

YOU ALREADY HAVE IT WITH OPSEU.

Grievance carriage rights for members are enshrined in OPSEU's constitution – it is up to you how far you want to take your grievance. And OPSEU has three grievance officers solely dedicated to handling corrections grievance arbitrations, a legal firm on retainer, support staff, plus a staff representative assigned to every corrections

local who helps handle corrections grievances every step of the way.

OPSEU spends about \$2.25 million per year on corrections grievance arbitrations and legal costs alone. That doesn't even include the cost of corrections grievances before they reach arbitration – that is, the staff representatives assigned to each corrections local who attend grievance meetings, the support staff who handle the paper work, and our vast regional office infrastructure which makes that kind of staff support possible at the local level.

Do you think CSN, which doesn't have member carriage rights, would spend that kind of money on corrections grievance arbitrations?

#3. CLAIM:

CSN can take over all the grievances OPSEU has filed for you if they become the new union.

WRONG.

OPSEU has no obligation whatsoever to spend their time or money transferring grievance files to another union. There is past case law on exactly this issue. If the Corrections Bargaining Unit leaves OPSEU, your grievances could be dropped.

#4. CLAIM:

You will be more autonomous if you join CSN.

REALITY CHECK:

The Corrections Division has as much autonomy in OPSEU as you would in CSN. You currently have a standalone bargaining unit with your own bylaws. You set your own demands and negotiate your own contracts with the assistance of OPSEU staff and legal counsel dedicated to corrections bargaining. You elect your own Corrections Division leaders (MERC teams and joint health and safety committees (PJOHSC/DHS) for adult and youth) who enforce the contract and negotiate with the employer between rounds of bargaining.

The only people who vote for OPSEU's Corrections Division leaders are corrections workers. Each local sends corrections members to Corrections Divisional Meetings to elect your leaders and vote on changes to your bylaws and the structure of your division. OPSEU has even funded additional Corrections Divisional Meetings to do this work.

If you join CSN, you will be subject to CSN's constitution, just like OPSEU. CSN staffs their union centrally and regionally, just as OPSEU does. (The difference is, OPSEU's staff are all in Ontario, not Quebec.)

You'd have to pay a minimum of 1.15 per cent of your dues directly to CSN – that's almost as much as you pay OPSEU now – plus an extra dues levy on top of that to your own local union for the services you need that CSN doesn't provide centrally. The federal correctional officers who are represented by UCCO, a CSN affiliate, pay 1.95 per cent dues in total. That's 42 per cent higher than OPSEU's dues.

Compare that with OPSEU, where you pay 1.375 per cent dues in total, and OPSEU remits a portion of that money *back* to your local (based on your membership numbers) to spend on whatever union business your local sees fit.

Also, you'd have a lot less say about how the dues money you pay to CSN is spent. It's decided at CSN conventions and federation meetings, where the Corrections Bargaining Unit would make up a much smaller percentage of the CSN membership than they do at OPSEU's conventions and divisional meetings!

#5. CLAIM:

CSN is a national union with members and offices across Canada.

REALITY CHECK:

Almost all of CSN's offices are located in Quebec. Their sector-based "Federation" offices are all located in Quebec. CSN's 13 regionally-based "Central Councils" are

almost all in Quebec with the exception of one called "Outside Quebec" and that council consists solely of UCCO – the federal correctional officers union. The only offices CSN lists on their website outside of Quebec are four UCCO offices in four different provinces and they are dedicated solely to UCCO business, not yours. The CSN website is almost completely unilingual in French with the exception of a few documents and recruitment pages in English. CSN is not affiliated with the Ontario Federation of Labour or the Canadian Labour Congress. It's a joke for CSN to imply that they have unions (plural) "throughout Canada".

#6. CLAIM:

You will have access to regional offices in Ontario with an adviser in each office.

YOU ALREADY HAVE IT WITH OPSEU.

OPSEU has 20 fully-staffed regional offices and 27 membership centres across Ontario which corrections members can access at any time. Each corrections local has a staff representative assigned to provide them with support at an office nearby. Not only that, but OPSEU has a negotiator and three grievance officers assigned solely to representing corrections members at the bargaining table and in arbitration hearings.

REALITY CHECK:

Compare that to CSN. As mentioned above, almost all of their offices and their staff are in

Quebec. For their UCCO members who are spread out across Canada, they only have four regional offices outside Quebec to serve them. How many do you think they're going to set up for us in Ontario? So far they just have one, in Kingston – and that's a UCCO office.

#7. CLAIM:

CSN members pay more in dues but don't have to pay dues on overtime.

REALITY CHECK:

Let's calculate that out, comparing OPSEU's dues rate with the CSN rate that the federal correctional officers pay, to see just how much overtime an OPSEU member would have to work just to break even with the much higher CSN dues:

- A Correctional Officer 2 or Youth Services Officer at the top step of the wage grid would have to earn \$33,000 per year in overtime alone to break even.
- A Probation Officer 2 would have to earn more than \$35,000 per year in overtime to break even.
- A Nurse 3 General would have to earn more than \$40,000 in overtime to break even.

That's a lot of overtime. Earn any less than that, and you're paying lower dues with OPSEU.

#8. CLAIM:

You'd be better off with the PSPP than OPTrust as your pension plan.

REALITY CHECK:

1. The PSPP pays less in retirement than OPTrust.
2. The PSPP financially penalizes you at retirement for being married. OPTrust doesn't.
3. You would lose complete control over your pension with the PSPP.

At age 65, a Correctional Officer, Youth Services Officer and a Correctional Nurse would get almost \$1,000 less per year with the PSPP. An Office Admin 8 would get \$800 less with the PSPP.

And with the PSPP you lose even more money at retirement if you're married. The PSPP adjusts your pension downwards to partially pay for survivor benefit coverage for your spouse. With OPTrust, the survivor pension is fully subsidized – you don't lose any money.

Finally, and this is really important – with OPTrust, OPSEU has equal control with the employer over your pension. As joint sponsors of OPTrust, the employer cannot make any changes of any kind to our plan without OPSEU's agreement. OPSEU also has equal say in the type of investments made.

With PSPP you'd lose all control over your pension. PSPP has only one sponsor: the employer, the Ontario government. They could decide tomorrow to make sweeping changes to your benefits, your contribution rates, your cost of living raises in retirement – even the defined benefit plan type itself.

As the only Plan Sponsor of the PSPP, the Government of Ontario makes all decisions about the pension plan. The Ontario Pension Board of Directors administers the PSPP. The Directors can make recommendations to the Plan Sponsor, but the final decision lies completely with the Government of Ontario.

So who are the Ontario Pension Board of Directors and how do they become Directors? Well, they are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. There has to be a minimum of four Directors, and only one of them has to be union-side.

Right now, the Ontario Pension Board has six directors. One is from AMAPCEO and one is from the OPP Association. There's no guarantee that the Lieutenant Governor in Council would appoint anyone from CSN to the Board of Directors, and even if they did, CSN would be completely outnumbered.

Why would anyone want to give up complete control over their pension to their employer?

#9. CLAIM:

CSN organizers promise to “reinstate” binding arbitration and make corrections staff essential workers.

YOU ALREADY HAVE IT WITH OPSEU.

The Corrections Bargaining Unit has already achieved binding arbitration instead of the right to strike. It's been in place since January 1, 2018. With no right to strike, we're already deemed an essential service.

#10. CLAIM:

Members from all job classifications will be able to bring their issues during bargaining and vote on the demands we bring to the bargaining table.

YOU ALREADY HAVE IT WITH OPSEU.

In the lead-up to bargaining, all locals are encouraged to have a demand set meeting where corrections members from each local bring forward and vote on priority bargaining demands. These demands are all then tabulated and ranked by the bargaining team.

Once bargaining begins, under rules of arbitration, only tentative agreements are voted on by the members. If a tentative agreement cannot be reached, then the arbitrator accepts the issues that have been agreed to by the union and the employer, and makes a decision on all of the outstanding issues that could not be agreed. The

arbitrator issues a final and binding decision that includes both the agreed-to issues and the ones the arbitrator had to decide, and that decision is final and binding. There is no vote on the arbitrator's decision, as outlined in [Section 44\(1\) of the *Labour Relations Act*](#).

The most recent corrections bargaining team also published 24 *LockTalk* bulletins during bargaining to keep members updated, step-by-step, on what was happening.

#11. CLAIM:

The OACE-AECO-CSN represents Ontario correctional workers.

REALITY CHECK:

Who says they do? Right now, the OACE is an empty storefront, consisting of a website, a self-declared "executive," and a bunch of far-fetched promises backed up by a provincial union in Quebec that has no experience dealing with our employer or the political, social and financial realities in Ontario.

#12. CLAIM:

The OACE-AECO-CSN has an "interim" executive committee.

REALITY CHECK:

Who voted in any of this supposed "interim executive"? Apparently they were "chosen" by a few "founding members" at "an initial meeting" according to their website.

Do they really think they can just appoint themselves as the unofficial leaders of thousands of correctional workers until the highly unlikely event that CSN is certified as our bargaining agent? (And just a reminder: it could literally take years for the legal challenges to run their course.)

OPSEU has real democracy. It has elected leaders in the Corrections Division, including elected MERC team members for both adult and youth corrections to stand up for your rights with the employer, as well as an elected Corrections Bargaining Team. Elected Joint Health and Safety Committee (PJOHSC/DHS) teams for adult and youth corrections. Elected local executives and stewards. Elected Executive Board Members in every region (two of whom are Corrections Division members). Elected Regional Vice-Presidents. An elected President. And an elected First Vice-President/Treasurer, who also happens to be a Correctional Officer.

Corrections members are well represented by OPSEU.

OPSEU delivers the goods



On June 16, Solicitor General Sylvia Jones announced the government was investing more than half-a-billion dollars over five years to transform the province's broken correctional system. Jones made it clear the focus of the investment would be the safety and security of frontline staff.

The funding announcement was the culmination of countless efforts by OPSEU over decades and through different governments to get, first, a recognition that Ontario corrections was in a state of crisis; and second, an admission that it was in need of massive investment to prevent a powder keg from exploding – with dire consequences for correctional staff, inmates and communities.

President Thomas and Vice-President/Treasurer Almeida, himself a correctional officer, made fixing the corrections system personal priorities and poured many millions of dollars into getting the government to act – and act in a transformative way: OPSEU would not be satisfied with duct tape workarounds.

Since launching its Crisis in Corrections campaign in 2016, the union has seen some

impressive advances. The government recognized the system was broken and that significant change was required. Funding was allocated for new jails in Thunder Bay and Ottawa. We achieved presumptive PTSD coverage for correctional staff in [Bill 163](#). There were a number of new hires to fill vacancies. The union negotiated a standalone corrections collective agreement. Corrections workers were recognized as essential workers, and the right to strike was replaced in favour of arbitration. The latest round of bargaining achieved significant improvements in pay and benefits, setting the stage for even more in the next round.

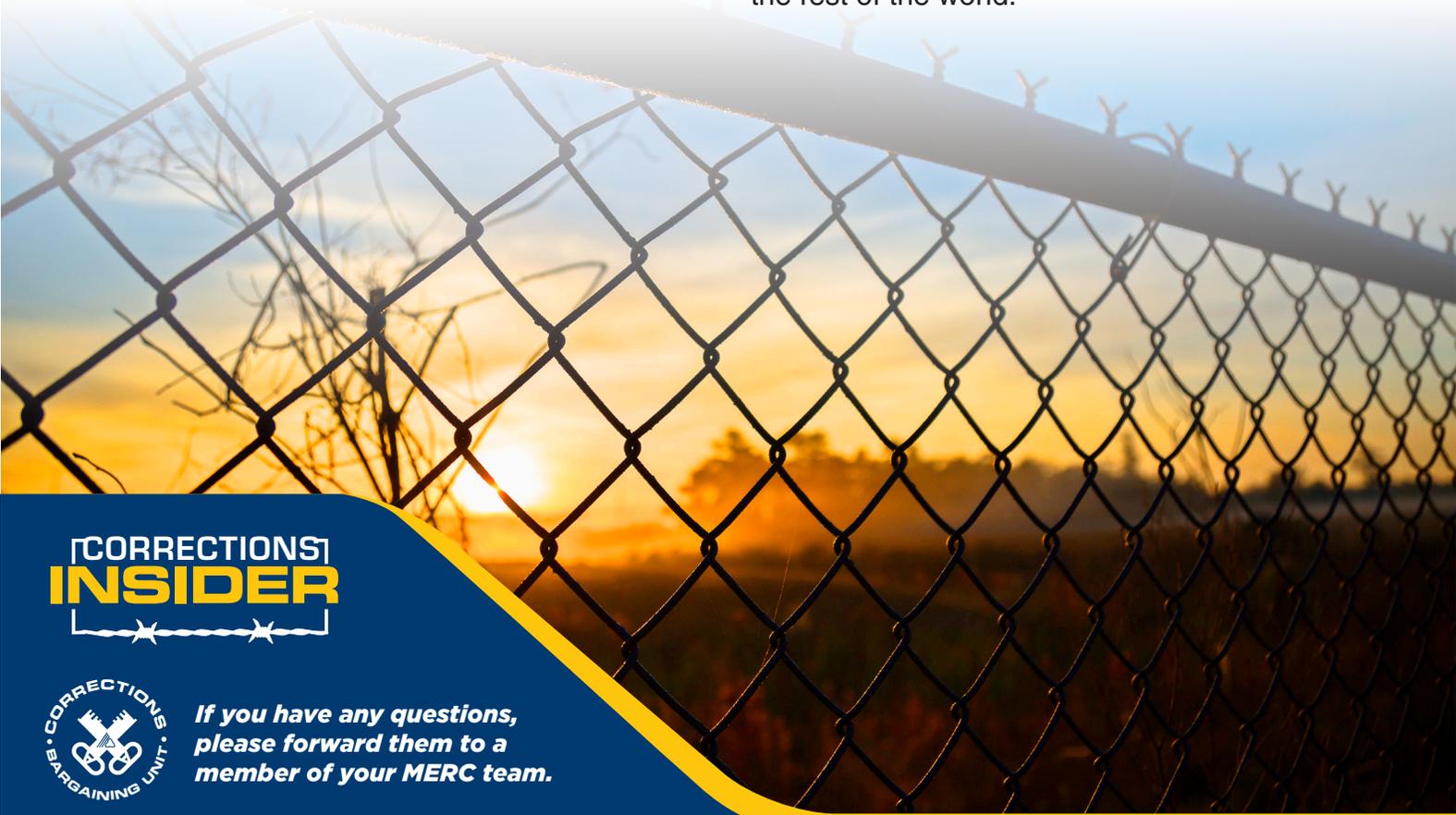
The announcement of \$500 million to be spent on 500 new full-time positions, over 85% of which are in the OPSEU Corrections Division – not simply additional staff for existing positions – and money for desperately needed infrastructure is the crowning achievement of OPSEU's dogged efforts. It comes from innumerable meetings and phone conversations with elected and ministry officials, collaboration with opposition MPPs, Queen's Park lobby days, campaigns, hardnosed bargaining and expert legal representation. We simply refused to throw in the towel.

The new positions will be created and new staff hired no later than March 31, 2021. The foremost justification for the new hires, according to the government, is to address mental health and addiction challenges – a vitally important recognition of the unique, and growing, challenges corrections staff members face in watching over an inmate population, 50 per cent of which presents with mental health and addictions issues.

Funding will go to bringing corrections infrastructure out of the Victorian age and into the 21st century with the aim of reducing chronic overcrowding and improving services within our institutions. This will provide inmate programming, where it doesn't currently exist, and improve it where it does.

All Solicitor General corrections members, ably represented by OPSEU and their MERC and PJOHSC, have a right to express real pride and satisfaction at this unprecedented infusion of dollars into our starved and broken corrections system. Over many years, you were the glue that kept it from falling apart. It was your commitment to duty, and pride in your work, that prevented you from giving up when it seemed the government had given up.

Our corrections workers, past and present, deserve Ontarians' deep appreciation for keeping the province's communities safe during the crisis in corrections. But the story – and the struggle – doesn't end here. Much, much more needs to be done to fix the system. With its influence, experience, size and high profile among the Ontario public, OPSEU is the only union that has what's needed to take Ontario's correctional system to the next level: one that is a model for the rest of the world.



[CORRECTIONS]
INSIDER



*If you have any questions,
please forward them to a
member of your MERC team.*

Corrections Insider is authorized for distribution by:

Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President, OPSEU

Chris Jackel
B-MERC/MERC Chair, Corrections Bargaining Unit

OPSSU

