

New Contracts for Local 8300

Two units in Local 8300 finalized new contracts, increasing wages and bolstering benefits, including pensions and shift premiums.

The units, both based in the Toronto area, represent workers at two retirement communities, Russell Hill Retirement Residence and Chartwell Hollandview Trail Retirement Community, including personal support workers (PSWs), dietary staff, drivers, housekeepers and others.

Russell Hill

The roughly 65 members of the Russell Hill unit ratified their agreement in March. They got across-the-board raises, shift premiums for evenings and weekends, increases to vision benefits, and for the first time ever, a pension plan, which starts in 2019.

Unit Chair Liezsel Cariaso said the whole unit made gains in the new contract, especially with the pension, but the committee worked particularly hard to help the unit's approximately 20 PSWs.

PSWs help residents with personal tasks ranging from dressing and bathing to helping administer medication. However, because Russell Hill is a retirement community rather than a nursing home, nearly all the residents live independently and don't need full-time care.

"Since the beginning, PSW's hours have always been treated differently," said Cariaso. "Their hours depend on what the residents need."

The new contract gives them a special adjustment to their wages, works to increase their hours and allows them the opportunity to get into the benefits program.

"I'm satisfied with this agreement," said Cariaso. "We helped people who needed it, and got something for everyone. The union is for everyone."

Chartwell Hollandview

The road to a first contract for the 80 members at Chartwell Hollandview was more difficult.

"It was a long, frustrating process," said Maria Lombardi, who served on the bargaining committee.

She said the group was in negotiations for more than two years without making much progress. Ultimately, the contract was set by an arbitrator in December 2017.

Health care is considered an essential service in Ontario, which means the unit fell under the Hospital Labour Disputes Arbitration Act (HLDAA). The law states that if the two sides can't come to agreement, the contract will be set through arbitration, which is what happened at Chartwell.

In the end, the group got a wage grid to help iron out disparities in seniority, wage increases, a pension plan and shift premiums.

Local 8300 President Carolyn Egan said that the amalgamated local, which includes some 2,200 members in industries from upholstery and light manufacturing to the service sector and health care, has been working to balance the needs of its diverse members.

"Our workplaces are different," said Egan, "but a worker is a worker. At our meetings we do a lot of talking and a lot of listening to each other. There's a lot of sharing of strategies."

Tell Us Your Stories!

Has your local done something outstanding? Have you had a great solidarity action? Done something huge to help your community? Made significant connections with other labor groups? Is your Women of Steel or Next Gen committee making waves?

Tell us about it!

**Contact Jess Kamm Broomell at
jkamm@usw.org
or at 412-562-2446.**



Have internet access?

Love staying up to date on all the latest and greatest from the USW and beyond? Join the [USW Healthcare Workers on Facebook!](#)