

# Steward

## Roles & Responsibilities

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The Steward is one of the most important positions within the labour movement, and probably the most recognizable. You are the first person that members in your assigned area contact for information about their workplace, union, Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), and for help resolving workplace issues. As a Steward, you are a vital link between the members, your local (or bargaining unit), SGEU, and management.

To many members, the Steward is "the union," and their relationship with the steward will have significant influence on their view of SGEU. Through their actions, attitude and approach, stewards are the SGEU that our will members remember. Therefore, it is critical that the image and reputation put forward by the steward is one worthy of their trust, confidence and respect.

Under the guidance of your Chief Steward, you will work collectively with other Stewards, elected leaders, SGEU Labour Relations Officers, bargaining unit and sector officials. Our members will most often turn to you, the steward, when seeking advice. In order for their opinions to be valued, the steward must be familiar with several documents including: the SGEU Constitution, local bylaws, their CBA, workplace policies and practices, and any relevant legislation. Above all, the Steward must be a fair and objective advocate for all members in their workplace.

### Qualities of an Effective Steward:

- **Able to Resolve Conflict:** You will be recognized as a good problem solver.
- **Credible and Reliable:** You will be seen as an honest and credible person with a high degree of integrity who respects the privacy and confidentiality of each member.
- **Assertive:** You will be assertive (not aggressive) and decisive, with the ability to deliver difficult and unpopular news.
- **Respected:** You will be recognized and respected for possessing a strong work ethic. The Steward is positive, motivated, enthusiastic and an energetic supporter (and promoter) of the union.
- **Diplomatic:** You will demonstrate commitment to the principles of justice, equality, security, fairness, and democracy.

- **Compassionate:** A Steward needs to be compassionate and able to develop a rapport with the members. You will make members feel comfortable, and provide them with support and encouragement.
- **Able to Communicate Clearly:** A Steward needs well-developed communication skills, including the ability and willingness to give your undivided attention. You will be thorough, well-organized, and empower members to help themselves by providing them with information and support.

## Key Responsibilities and Workplace Expectations

As an SGEU steward, your key responsibilities include:

- Building solidarity and promoting harmonious relationships among the members, and discouraging factional bickering in the workplace.
- Serving as the protector of the rights of our members.
- Enforcing the collective agreement and/or any applicable legislation by identifying violations, investigating complaints, and meeting with management to solve problems or file grievances.
- Providing information on programs available to members through the union and employer, such as Workers' Compensation, Long-Term Disability, and Employee & Family Assistance Plans.
- Defending the union from harmful rumours by promoting and maintaining a positive, professional, and proactive relationship, both within the union and between the union and management.
- Investigating and responding to members' concerns in a timely fashion.
- Gathering necessary research materials to support your bargaining unit's negotiating committee.
- Learning from your fellow members by asking for their advice. Their knowledge, strengths, and experiences may help you to help others.

## Union Expectations:

Your fellow members expect you, as a Steward, to:

- Support and cooperate with your Chief Steward, local executive, and SGEU leaders and their appointees, and never work in conflict with them.
- Get to know SGEU, including understanding our history, structure, mission, and role within the labour community.
- Encourage members to attend meetings, and (when asked) offer a brief report on the issues discussed at the meeting in such a way that those who didn't attend will recognize their importance.
- Maintain open lines of communication with the Chief Steward, other Stewards, officers, members, and the SGEU Office.
- Report to the local executive the successes and challenges you have faced.
- Ensure that all members are abiding by the rules set forth in the SGEU Constitution and your Local bylaws.
- Attend and actively participate in union meetings.
- Attend training sessions offered by the union.
- Promote union-building activities such as: welcoming new members; recruiting volunteers to become actively involved in union affairs; and exploring opportunities for increased membership participation.
- Promote and support the "union label" by buying products that have been produced by unionized workers.

Standing in solidarity with SGEU, you will help us succeed in our efforts to enrich the lives of the working men and women. Stewards are the backbone of the labour movement, and the front rank of every battle!