



# SGEU Steward Roles & Responsibilities

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The steward is probably the most recognizable and one of the most important positions within the labour movement. You are the first person that members in your assigned area contact for information about the workplace, SGEU, collective bargaining agreement (CBA) and for help resolving workplace issues. Therefore, the steward is a vital link between the members, your local, SGEU and management.

Too 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 the steward will be the SGEU that our 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 collective bargaining agreement, 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:**

**Resolve Conflict:** You will be recognised as a good problem solver.

**Credible and Reliable:** You will be seen as an honest and credible person with a high degree of integrity and respects the privacy and confidentiality of each member.

**Assertive:** You will be assertive (not aggressive) and decisive, with the ability to deliver difficult (even if unpopular) news.

**Respected:** You will be recognized and respected for possessing a strong work ethic. The steward is positive, motivated, enthusiastic and an energized supporter (and promoter) of the Union

Diplomatic: You will demonstrate commitment to the principles of justice, equality, security, fairness and democracy.

Compassionate: The steward is compassionate and is able to develop a rapport with the members. You will make members feel comfortable and provide them with supportive encouragement.

Communication: The steward has well-developed communication skills including the ability and willingness to give your undivided attention. Is thorough and well organized and empowers 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 discourage factional bickering in the workplace.
- Serve as the protector of the rights of our members.
- Enforce the collective agreement and/or any applicable legislation by identifying violations, investigate complaints, and meet with management to solve problems or file grievances.
- Provide information on programs available to members through the union and employer, such as Workers Compensation, Long-Term Disability, and Employee & Family Assistance Plans.
- Defending your union from harmful rumours by promoting and maintaining a positive, professional and proactive relationship within the union, and between our union and management.
- Investigating and responding to members concerns in a timely fashion.
- Gathering necessary research materials to support negotiating committee.
- Learning from your fellow members by asking for their advice because their knowledge, strengths and experiences may help you to help others.

### **UNION EXPECTATIONS:**

Your fellow members expect stewards to:

- Supporting and cooperating with your chief steward, local executive, SGEU leaders and their appointees and never working in conflict with them.

- Getting to know SGEU, including understanding our history, structure, mission and role within the labour community.
- Encouraging 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.
- Maintaining open lines of communication with the Chief Steward, other Stewards, Officers, members and the SGEU Office.
- Reporting to the local executive the successes and challenges you have faced.
- Ensuring that all members are abiding by the rules set forth in the SGEU Constitution and your local bylaws.
- Attending 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 or; exploring opportunities for increased membership participation.
- Promote and support the "Union Label" by buying products that have been produced by Union members.

Standing in solidarity with SGEU, you will help us succeed in our efforts to enrich the lives of the working men and women. The back bone of the labour movement and the spearhead of every battle is the Steward.



# Chief Steward Roles and Responsibilities

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You are a workplace leader representing SGEU, coordinating stewards, and enforcing the collective bargaining agreement. You work collectively with stewards, elected leaders, and SGEU staff in your workplace, bargaining unit, sector and management. As chief steward, you fulfill the duties of a steward, but also work with other stewards in your zone to do the following:

## Communication

- Encourage stewards to approach you with questions about processes and contract interpretation and with reports of workplace conflicts and issues.
- Advise stewards and members about union activities and advise bargaining unit and sector leaders about workplace developments.
- Ensure new-member orientations are occurring as needed.
- Ensure you have strong relationship with the assigned SGEU Labour Relations Officer.
- Inform stewards and members of changes in the collective agreement or interpretation, and of relevant arbitration decisions.
- Be accessible to your stewards by telephone or in person.

## Conflict Resolution

- Assist in resolving conflicts between members, stewards or between members and the employer.
- Be knowledgeable about both workplace and union harassment policies and procedures.
- Encourage stewards to talk to you when they encounter harassment in the union or in the workplace and work with stewards and/or the SGEU Labour Relations Officer to resolve the problem.
- Hold regular meetings of all stewards. Topics should include current workplace issues, barriers facing equity-group stewards, discrimination/harassment of stewards and in the workplace, and strategies to address issues.
- Work to dispel, not encourage rumors.

## **Grievance Co-ordination**

- Assign complaints and grievances to stewards in your zone, taking into account:
  - Stewards's specialized knowledge
  - The chance for new stewards to gain experience
  - The need to prevent steward burn-out
- Members' right to the steward of their choice shall be adhered to.
- Assist stewards, as needed, in writing and investigating grievances properly and in judging whether a complaint is a grievance.
- In communications with the SGEU Labour Relations Office, keep track of filed grievances and ensure the necessary tasks are completed.
- Educate stewards that all grievances shall to be fully investigated against a violation of the CBA and/or any other Statutes or Laws, before being filed. Educate stewards on the internal appeal processes.
- Ensure contract enforcement by:
  - Not agreeing to any deal that violates the collective bargaining agreement or other rights in a statute.
  - Challenging violations of collective-agreement and other rights in statute

## **Leadership**

- Promote maximum involvement by members in union activities, especially within the collective bargaining process.
- Delegate duties to stewards (and panel reps where relevant)
- Call and chair regular steward meetings to share information, identify best practices, and review grievances and other workplace issues
- Chair other meetings when necessary, such as membership or union-management committee.

## **Recruitment**

- Actively recruit new stewards with the goal of achieving a representative steward body in SGEU.

## **Mentoring & Training**

- Ensure you are familiar with your collective agreement, related legislation, workplace policies and procedures, SGEU policies, Steward Manual, and union resource people.
- Complete training as set out in SGEU policy.
- Orient new stewards and support them to meet the expectations set out in the steward job description.

## **Provide or arrange mentoring for new stewards**

- Encourage stewards to take appropriate training, such as ULD 10, ULD 11, ULD 20, ULD 30, and conflict-resolution.
- Update stewards about education opportunities.
- Encourage stewards to set appropriate limits to prevent stress and burn-out.

### **Administrative Duties**

- Ensure elections are held for stewards and OH & S committee.
- Ensure that stewards are being registered with SGEU Membership Records after each election.
- Ensure distribution and posting of union information within your zone.

