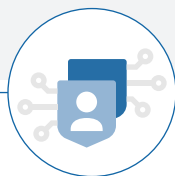


Your rights and responsibilities as a steward



Your rights

The rights of a steward are recognized in labour law, and as a steward, you are a critical part of the labour relations system. The rights and responsibilities of stewards are also outlined, in part, in your collective agreement, but all stewards have fundamental rights to:

- › File a grievance, advance it through steps in the process, and have management respond to it
- › Investigate and interview members about grievances and other workplace issues
- › Represent members in meetings with the employer
- › Talk with members about their concerns and issues
- › Participate in union activities, elections and learning opportunities

You may also, depending on your collective agreement, have the right to:

- › Conduct some union work on the employer's time
- › Hold membership meetings in the workplace
- › Conduct balloting for local executive elections, strike and ratification votes

Your responsibilities

Your key responsibilities as a steward are to:

- › Advise and represent members
- › Communicate, inform and listen
- › Find practical solutions for problems
- › Build the union in your workplace
- › Treat all members fairly and with respect

The duty of fair representation

The union has a statutory (or legal) obligation to treat people fairly. Section 12 of the BC Labour Code outlines the Duty of Fair Representation. It requires the union's representatives, including stewards, to "not act in a manner that is arbitrary, discriminatory or in bad faith". This duty extends to all employees in the bargaining unit who pay dues but have not signed a membership card.

When a worker comes to you with a problem, be open-minded, and treat them with fairness and respect. The worker has a right to file a grievance, even if we don't think it is viable. You can provide advice but never dismiss a concern or complaint out of hand. If a worker chooses to file a grievance, support and assist them. Don't accept the boss's interpretation of the grievance and always give the worker the opportunity to respond to the employer's description of things.

Never discriminate against a worker on any grounds prohibited by the Human Rights Code (and by union policy and principles!). Never act dishonestly or out of ill will, such as personal dislike or revenge. If you find yourself unable to deal with a member impartially, then find them another steward. If a worker feels that the union has treated their problem in a discriminatory, superficial or indifferent way, they can file a complaint against the union with the BC Labour Relations Board. The union has checks and balances in place to accurately assess the merits of grievances. Some grievances may be turned down after careful review by the staff representative because they are unlikely to succeed at arbitration. The worker has the right to appeal this decision.