

Thinking about being a steward?



Ten Reasons to be a steward

1. It gives you the tools you need to help your co-workers and yourself.
2. It allows you to build a healthier and more democratic workplace.
3. It gives you the ability to protect and defend your rights in the workplace.
4. It is healthier than complaining.
5. It is a good way to learn more and gain confidence.
6. It can be a lot of fun.
7. It is one of the best ways of staying informed.
8. It is an opportunity to build new skills and practice old ones.
9. It is an opportunity to work with others on a whole range of work-related issues: pensions, child care, international trade, etc.
10. It is an opportunity to make a difference.

What is a steward?

Stewards are the link between the union and its members in the workplace. They are the people who members go to if they have a problem. Stewards defend members' rights in the workplace. These rights are spelled out in the collective agreements that CUPW has with various employers.

Stewards also help the union distribute information, organize activities and put on education seminars.

All members in good standing are eligible to be stewards. This means anyone covered by a CUPW agreement, including private sector workers, urban operations temporary employees as well as rural and suburban mail carrier route holders and on-call relief employees.



What does a steward have to know?

The union wants you

Stewards play a key role in the union. CUPW's ability to negotiate collective agreements, solve members' problems, fight harassment and defend public services depends on a strong network of stewards who can reach, assist and mobilize members.

Thinking about being a steward? Talk to your local executive.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead, Anthropologist

Produced by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers
www.cupw-sttp.org



Stewards have to be familiar with the collective agreement that covers their workplace. But don't worry if you are not. The union offers training. The union will also teach you how to investigate members' complaints and file grievances.

Stewards have to keep up to date on what's going on in the union and in the labour movement.

This information is generally available through CUPW bulletins, the CUPW website (www.cupw-sttp.org) or the union's newspaper *Perspective*. CUPW also produces two publications for stewards: *Our Health Our Safety* and the *Stewards Action Bulletin*. Most local executives also share information with stewards on a regular basis.

Stewards also have to know their workplace — the members, the type of work they do, their hours of work and who the supervisors are.

But stewards don't have to know everything all at once and they can expect help from experienced union representatives along the way, plus resources like a steward's kit.

Glossary of terms

Collective agreement: A collective agreement is a small book that sets out the rights and rules that apply to members in your workplace. These rules prevent management from being arbitrary or discriminatory when they assign work, schedule vacations, grant leave for the death of a relative, etc.

Grievance: CUPW's collective agreement or contract with your employer gives the union the right to submit complaints or grievances on behalf of members when employer representatives violate contract rules.

Local: The union has components across the country called locals. A local is made up of CUPW members in a defined area. It may include all members in a large city, one town or several small towns. Each local belongs to one of the eight regions in CUPW.

Local executive: Each local has a president and a number of other executive officers. The executive distributes union information, recruits stewards and reports at union and labour movement meetings. It also organizes local meetings, negotiations activities, campaign actions and strikes when necessary.

Members in good standing: Members who are up to date in paying union dues.

Steward's kit: A union bag containing a clipboard, a steward's manual, a CUPW steward's button and other useful material.