



# Know Your Contract

## Representation 101

### Union Basics

The primary purpose of a union is to help bring balance to the imbalanced power dynamic that exists in the employer-employee relationship. To do this, elected and appointed union officials represent the interests of their members on topics ranging from health & safety issues to interpretation of the Collective Agreement and labour law to negotiating new employment terms.

### Stewards & Their Role

The most well-known role within a union is that of steward. Stewards act as both the communicators of the union and the cornerstone of conflict resolution and defense for members facing challenges.

In our Local, stewards typically act as communicators for the union within their own departments, but only represent workers to resolve disputes in other departments.

### The Steward Info-line

There are a number of reasons you might call a steward. It might be as simple as having a question about your job, your wages and benefits, or the Collective Agreement. Or it might be that you have been brought into a meeting with your manager that just starts to feel wrong. Either way, ***there are no stupid questions and it is always better to call a steward than debate with yourself about if it's the right thing to do.***

A list of your stewards and their emails can be found on the Local's website at <http://www.cupe1858.org/stewards.html>

### First You See Em' Then You Don't

Ever wonder why a steward working in your department suddenly disappears from the worksite?

Usually, this means something serious has happened to another worker and that steward

has gone to act as a representative for the worker. While we have requested that the employer provide at least 48 hours' notice of these meetings so that stewards can work with their departments to manage the absence, it's not always possible. If the employer tells the union a steward needs to be present now, the union needs to react immediately.

Stewards have the right to leave their work to attend to their work for the union (Article 8.03). Neither managers nor co-workers should be party to creating an uncomfortable or hostile work environment for a steward for performing their required and vital duties.

### Right to Representation

One of the most fundamental rights a union member has is that of representation. If the employer is going to discipline an employee, the employee has the right to have a steward present to make sure their rights under labour law and the terms of the Collective Agreement are upheld (Article 10.02).

### Don't Go In Alone

If your manager schedules a meeting and tells you that you have the right to have a steward present, don't go in alone! Email your **Chief Steward** ([Crystal.Kreschuk@viu.ca](mailto:Crystal.Kreschuk@viu.ca)) or call your **Local** (250-740-6610; or 250-668-0522) and ask for a steward.

The employer must wait until a steward is available for you before proceeding with the meeting.

### Interested??

Whether you want to know more about your union, are interested in helping with union communication, or want to stretch your conflict resolutions abilities – steward training is a great way to develop new skills.

For more info, contact your Chief Steward.