



Roles and responsibilities of a CAPE steward

What is a Steward?

“Steward” is an expression used in labour relations to define a union member who assists other members in a designated work area.

The steward is an official of the Association. Only regular members may be appointed as stewards. In workplaces or regions where there is a CAPE Local, stewards are selected and approved by the members at their local Annual General Meetings. In other workplaces where there is no CAPE Local, stewards are approved solely by the National Executive Committee of the Association.

The steward has a recognized status in the workplace because the authority to appoint stewards is provided for in each of the collective agreements. As alluded to previously, the employer is obligated to respect and work with stewards because of the legal rights we have negotiated under our collective agreements. That is why members of the Local Leadership are appointed as stewards at CAPE. Stewards assist Association members within a specific jurisdiction within a department or agency or region.

Legislation, the collective agreement and case law provide protection for stewards when performing their duties. Accordingly, stewards have the authority to deal with the employer on an equal basis. However, stewards are volunteers and as such have the latitude to choose the scope of their activities and the amount of time spent on these issues. Experience, skills and availability are serious factors that govern their involvement in workplace issues.

A strong steward network is important to the Association because it assists the permanent staff in tackling difficult and complex issues in our workplaces. Stewards assist in the promotion of the Association’s policies and programs.

CAPE Labour Relations Officers and CAPE Stewards

CAPE's practice is to provide professional advocacy to its membership. This is provided uniquely by CAPE Labour Relations Officers (LRO's), all of whom are educated and trained in the field of Labour Relations. All have a great deal of experience in the field. The LROs provide advice and guidance to members vis-à-vis their collective agreements, the employer's policies, and the terms and conditions of their employment. They also provide representation for members who require these professional services – whether it be in the form of mediation, conflict resolution, grievance hearings, staffing complaints.

Your dues ensure that you receive the best possible professional representation and advocacy available. This is not a role that the Association delegates to our stewards.

Duties and Responsibilities of a CAPE Steward

CAPE's stewards serve as the eyes and ears of the Association in the workplace. They act as advisors to members and are usually the first link between members in their workplaces and the Association. They also provide a communication link between local management and the Association. Finally, they serve as a link between members and management.

CAPE's stewards keep CAPE abreast of workplace developments, changes, and any and all issues relating to the well-being of the membership. Having said this, the steward has several roles and responsibilities which form part of his or her profile. The steward:

- explains Association policies and programs to members and represents these views at labour-management consultation meetings.
- provides members with up to date information regarding collective bargaining as well as upcoming meetings and issues where the Association has an interest.
- maintains contact with Association staff so as to be fully informed on important issues of the day.
- provides relevant information to members pertaining to the Association's position on legislation and current issues, including information on labour issues and their effects on the general membership.
- aids in recruiting Rand members.

- endeavours to develop a team atmosphere in the workplace.
- creates a positive working relationship with management.
- establishes effective labour-management communications.
- initiates and organizes local labour-management consultation meetings.
- consults with and provides feedback to CAPE NEC regarding issues of importance to the CAPE membership.
- attends Local Leadership meetings to bring issues from their local to the attention of their fellow stewards, and the NEC.