

Sabrina Hope: Candidate Statement President



My name is Sabrina Hope and I am running for the position of **President**. I'm entering my 3rd year of my PhD program in Media Studies.

I just completed my term as the **Administration & Internal Communications Chair** for PSAC Local 610. I have experience being part of committees and working with staff to ensure the running of programs, such as our Extended Health Plan (EHP), Food & Resources Support Committee, and Financial Assistance Committee. I am aware of all the work and dedication that goes into these committees, and I have had a wonderful year working with lots of Graduate TAs across many programs. Everyday I get to see union members working together and truly caring about each other – their TAs work, personal lives, their studies.

I first started with PSAC Local 610 in April of 2016 as a member of the Food and Resource Support Committee (Foodbank). The reason I got started was because in my first year I was part of a grievance in my department because of claw-backs to my funding. The Union ensured that I was able to get the full funding that I was promised.

I have a MA in Drama/English from University of Guelph, a BA in English and Film Studies from University of Western Ontario, and a post-grad certificate in Corporate Communications from Sheridan College. In my first year at Western, I joined Grad Cast, the official radio show of SOGS, which promotes the research of Western MA and PhD students and airs weekly on CHRW Radio Western. I was also a councilor for SOGS representing Media Studies, and I am part of the Media Studies Doctoral Studies Association.

I also have 10 years experience working in communications, media relations, and marketing for various organizations, including United Way of Oakville, Oakville Community Foundation, and Farm Business Consultants. I've served as a board member for Burl-Oak Theatre Group, and a grant reviewer for the Oakville Community Foundation.

In solidarity,

Sabrina Hope

shope@uwo.ca

PhD Student in Media Studies

Candidate for PSAC Local 610 President

Katelyn Mitri

1st Year Ph.D. Student in Sociology

Dear fellow members,

This is a formal statement of my candidacy for PSAC Local 610 president. My choice to run for PSAC Local 610 President comes through my experience within the labour movement as well as my own research. Previously, I have worked alongside PSAC regional and local during the last round of bargaining as a chair of the strike committee. My role included organizing solidarity events, creating communications, as well as developing a strike protocol. I am also an executive for London's Labour Council, which is an organization that supports and assists unions within the London region and organizes events to promote the labour movement. Moreover, I am currently researching the extent to which higher education protects individuals from falling into precarious forms of employment, and overall, have research interests in precarious work and neoliberal reconfigurations of the Canadian economy.

Through my experiences, I have developed an understanding of the financial and institutional issues associated with Western University, and as a previous chair of the strike committee and an executive for London's Labour Council, I feel I must continue to tackle the deeply ingrained problems in academia. While the previous local executives and bargaining team made terrific gains in the newly ratified collective agreement, there is still much more work that needs to be done. Teaching Assistants (TAs) have not received the real wage increase they deserve nor have they been granted the extended funding period that is much needed. At the same time, the employer is continuously taking advantage of TAs precarious and vulnerable positions. For example, Western University continues to raise tuition fees while remaining to pay their employees' wages that are below the poverty line. If elected, my goal is to continue the work of the previous local executives, bargaining team, and strike committee. This includes continuing to mobilize members, provide greater access to information, effectively enforce the grievance process, and hopefully, continue to make additional gains in the next round of bargaining.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Mitri

**Candidate's statement for the Finance Chair position at the GTA union
(PSAC Local 610)**

Dear fellow GTAs,

I, **Mohammad Monirul Islam Chowdhury**, am a 2nd year PhD student at the Civil and Environmental Engineering department. I have joined Western in 2014, completed my MEng in 2016 and started PhD in the same year. It has been four years since I started my graduate program and working as a TA in Western. During the period of my graduate studies I have been involved in many activities. Here are some of my activities-



- Campaign Organizer for GTA bargaining team: 2018.
- Steward: 2017-present.
- Attended meeting for GTA finance budget for the year of 2018-2019.
- Member of Water Environmental Association of Ontario (WEAO)

With the experiences that I have gained by involving myself in various organizations and committees across campus, I hope to serve GTA union (PSAC Local 610) as the **Finance Chair**. If I am elected, I will make sure all the regular financial operations such as continuous recording of all transactions (receipts, dues payments, disbursements), preparing financial statements, draft budget, etc. are performed smoothly and efficiently. Along with all the regular duties, I will try to develop an on-line based budgetary system from where all GTA members are able to see all transactions (receipts, dues payments, disbursements), financial statements, and draft budget. Beside this I will focus on direct deposits instead of issuing cheques for extended health plan, bursaries and other benefits. I will also work on making finance committee more active as the chair of the committee by increasing participation of the members in the committee.

At last, I want to emphasize that I will devote myself sincerely and honestly to perform all the duties of the Treasurer as well as work towards making our GTA union more efficient and productive as a whole. Thus, I need your support and valuable votes to have the opportunity to serve as the Treasurer of the union. Thanks for your time and patience.

Mohammad Monirul Islam Chowdhury,
PhD Candidate,
Civil and Environmental Engineering.

Candidate for PSAC Local 610 External Communications

Jody Tomchishen

3rd year Ph.D. Student in Philosophy

Dear fellow members,

This is a statement regarding my candidacy for PSAC Local 610 External Communications. I have decided to run for PSAC Local 610 External Communications given my experience with social media mobilization. I have spent the last few years working with others, on various social media platforms, to combat sexism and racism online. That experience has taught me how to create online communities to foster real world change, which could also have an effect on signal boosting our concerns to the wider public. During the last bargaining session I worked with the Strike Committee in organizing a social media campaign to contact local members of government and Western University alumni, to further the cause of mobilizing the public. If elected I plan to continue this effort towards the next bargaining session.

The first thing I plan to accomplish as External Communications is to bring back the monthly newsletter. The purpose of the newsletter is to inform the membership of what the union is doing, solidarity events that membership can participate in, as well as to highlight the gains that PSAC Local 610 has won for their members. Keeping the membership informed about what the union is doing is an important part of mobilizing members.

During the previous bargaining session our Bargaining Team made a lot of gains, not just from the University, but in terms of membership mobilization and institutional knowledge. I hope to work with the other executives to help pass on what we have learned from this past bargaining session by creating an institutional memory. In this way, others won't have to make the same mistakes that were made, or rediscover what worked. As a member of the Strike Committee I met with PSAC regional in order to improve communication within the union, and I hope to carry this work forward.

The work of Teaching Assistants remains precarious, and there is so much more we still need to accomplish. The Bargaining Team and the Strike Committee did a great job of moving us towards a better future, which is why I support the nomination of other members of the Strike Committee who are running for executive positions. As a team we can keep this momentum going.

In Solidarity,

Jody Tomchishen

Jen Hinkkala
Candidate for Chief Steward Arts and Humanities



I am a 3rd year Ph.D. student in the faculty of music. The focus of my PhD dissertation is on the impact of teaching environments and employment structures on music teacher's self-care and well-being. In my preliminary pilot study, I found that teachers who had colleagues they could turn to for support were less prone to burnout and were more likely to find their work meaningful than those without support. This is likely true of graduate student teaching assistants as well. As a result, I would like to promote a culture of support among GTAs and improve communication among GTAs.

I have been a union steward for the faculty of music for the past two years, since 2016. As a steward, I have strived to improve the working conditions of GTAs in my department. For example, with the help of my colleagues, I created a survey for GTAs in my department in order to address concerns that continue to be raised in my department. I then used the information to draft a report which was then submitted to the dean of graduate studies in Music as well as the dean of music, and the three department chairs. The dean of graduate studies in music responded positively to the report and it is anticipated that this report will bring about small yet positive changes for GTAs in my department. In addition to my role as union steward I have been actively involved with the union as a member of the Food Support Committee, and the Strike Committee—Social Media Team. As a member of this team I conducted research about the security guards, wrote tweets for the PSAC 610 twitter account and open letters to members of Westerns administration notably Janice Deacon and Amit Chakma. I also served as a SOGSS councillor and Wellness Education Centre Ambassador for the faculty of Music. In both of these roles I have advocated on behalf of my fellow graduate students through letters to SGPS and library staff. I also designed workshops to promote graduate student wellness.

As Arts and Humanities Chief Steward I hope to promote a dialogue about the work conditions of GTAs through surveys and round table discussions with departmental stewards and members. Through these round table discussions, I hope not only to promote awareness but mobilize members to collectively work together to develop action plans to bring about positive changes in individual departments and Western University. I hope to promote member engagement through a variety of solidarity events designed to provide members with social support and educate members about their rights as GTAs. I believe that together we can improve the work conditions of GTAs in the Arts and Humanities at Western University.

Sincerely,
Jen Hinkkala
Jmitch9@uwo.ca

J. Wesley Robinson
Candidate for Chief Stewart of Biological Sciences



I am a first year M.Sc. student in the department of biology. I am self-nominating for a position on the executive committee as a biological sciences chief steward. I obtained a B.Sc. Hon. Spec. in Genetics from Western. I have been a TA for the past two semesters and have been involved in the Society of Biology Graduate Students (SOBGS) as a representative for our PSAC union as well as a Departmental. As a Steward I held a Solidarity Event and facilitated communication between the union and the department. I have also been heavily involved in the recent negotiation process with PSAC and the University, as a co-chair of the Picketing Committee, head strike captain for the Strike Strategy Committee, and actively participating in the Local 610 Strike Committee.

Through the involvement of these committees, we were able to push for the gains of our current collective agreement, and I would like to continue this momentum throughout the upcoming year as an executive member. We can continue to put pressure on to the University to set up our next negotiation process with a higher level of success by mobilizing our membership to act on our current collective agreement. I believe a transfer of knowledge and experience gained from the previous negotiation process to future executive committee members will help push the University further toward attaining a livable wage and tuition rebates. We can achieve the agreement that TA's deserve at Western University and maximize how our union can serve us as members. Together we will keep improving the conditions of graduate students in the Biological Sciences at Western University.

Thank you for your consideration,
Wes Robinson
jrobi8@uwo.ca

Candidate for Social Sciences Chief Steward

Dear Colleagues,

As a first-year graduate student, I became involved in PSAC610 as a steward for the History Department. As a steward I had the pleasure of communicating crucial information to M.A and PhD students while encouraging participation with general union activities. With the strike vote this year I have worked to ensure that information related to the strike mandate vote such as voting dates, bargaining information, and other crucial information made its way to graduate students. I also had the pleasure of serving as a member of the Bylaws Committee (January 2018-April 2018) which has provided me with the opportunity to obtain a rounded understanding on various aspects of the union. To say that the PSAC610 has played an important role in my graduate career would be an understatement. As such, I am declaring my candidacy for the position of Social Sciences Chief Steward to further expand the relationship between PSAC and its members.

As Social Sciences Chief Steward, I will strive to forward PSAC's mission, work to resolve grievances, encourage application for PSAC scholarships, and encourage participation with the union. One of the most important goals I hope to achieve would be increasing communication between stewards, members of the union in the Social Sciences, and the Chief Steward. It is important that stewards and members of the union have access to their Chief Steward to guarantee that their concerns and grievances are addressed. This involves increasing communication with stewards through monthly meetings to ensure that all issues in the Social Sciences are being properly addressed.

In sum, I am excited to play a larger role in the union by contributing to the advancement of PSAC's mission: ensuring that members are informed of their rights, benefits, and duties as union members.

Sincerely,

Robert Armstrong.