

Nominations Executive 2022/2023

President

Nominee: Astrid Hobill

Department: Department of Art History and Art Conservation

I am PhD candidate in the Department of Art History and Art Conservation where I served as active steward in my department for 5 years. I have also served 901 as Co-chief Steward in 2018-2019 and, most recently, as 901 President and a member of the Unit 1 Bargaining Team. After securing wins around mental health, accommodations, training for anti-racism and sexual violence prevention, and a professional development fund this year I hope to be reelected as President in order to implement these gains and work on strengthening our community.

This upcoming year, I hope to work with the executive, stewards and members-at-large in order to bolster members' knowledge of the variety of supports that the union provides, and to engage more members in different committees, projects and events throughout the year. We hope to build on last year's mobilization in order to continue outreach to members. We want to ensure that graduate student workers and postdoctoral scholars are involved in collectively working on improving our working conditions and building community. The input from each and every member is important and helps us determine priorities for this coming year will continue to be mental health supports, issues pertaining to equity, and the increased cost of living and the housing crisis in Kingston.

If I am elected president, I will work to ensure that our membership — teaching assistants, research assistants, teaching fellows, and post-doctoral fellows—all feel that PSAC 901 is working in their interests and that they can come forward with any issues they are facing, or initiatives they want to see accomplished. Beyond bargaining, I want the union to continue be a place where members can organize for their interests on campus and for solidarity with other groups around Kingston and beyond. Both virtually and as we begin a return to campus, I want the union to become a place of community-building for our membership, where graduates and post-doctoral fellows can come together. Thank you for considering my nomination!

Vice President Community Relations

Nominee: Justyna Szewczyk-El Jassem

Department: History Department

I have greatly enjoyed my work as current VP for Community Relations and would like to continue working with all the great people I crossed paths with. The recent mobilization around bargaining shows how much we can achieve when we work together. I believe that only by building a university-wide community involving multiple stakeholders we are able to achieve change. As a VP Community Relations, I would like to continue building and fostering relations with other student bodies at Queen's in order to create a more inclusive, safe and supportive work and study environment.

Vice President Postdoctoral Scholars

Nominee: Ramjee Kandel

Department: Chemistry

Dear PSAC members

I am Ramjee Kandel from the Department of Chemistry. I have been serving PSAC 901, unit-2 from 2020. I started raising the concerns of Postdoctoral Scholars at Queen's University as soon as I took the oath. During

my term, I have been working actively to help my fellow friends in giving useful information and suggestion as well as solving individual problem in a confidential manner. I have raised concern of post-docs at staying Queen's housing in Joint Union Management Committee, the issue is being heard. Based on my portfolio, I have been involved internally with the PSAC Executive and attending Childcare Bursary, Postdoctoral Fellow, and Budget Committees' meetings.

Moving forward, I am willing to secure the right of postdocs in the following ways.

1. Conduct meeting regarding our needs
2. Monitor the working hours of postdocs in weekend.
3. Accessing the ARC in subsidized fee
4. Increase in childcare benefits
5. Ensure the rights of applying at the Queen's housing (progress ongoing)
6. Become eligible for internal applicant status for Queen's jobs and many more.

So, in achieving the above benefits, I would like to renominate myself for the post of Vice President Postdoctoral Scholars for 2022/2023. I need your support to remaining in this position and serving you in the coming days.

Nominee: Kaveh Mousavand

Department: Mathematics and Statistics

I am a Coleman postdoctoral fellow in the department of Mathematics and Statistics. I joined Queen's University in July 2020 and during the pandemic era, which limited my personal and professional connections with the new environment. Consequently, it took me some months to identify the offices and people who could assist me as a postdoc, or support me when I needed some help with some unforeseen circumstances.

In addition to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, part of the aforementioned gap between me, as a new member, and the postdoc community was due to lack of interaction between postdocs, as well as low visibility of the postdoctoral unit. Since then, I have tried to establish a closer connection with different people/offices at Queen's who are involved in the activities aimed at (or related to) postdocs. After nearly 20 months at Queen's, I have noticed some progress in the situation, and I would like to contribute to that during the rest of my stay. In particular, my primary objectives are as follows:

- Stimulate a closer interaction among postdocs, so that information and first-hand experiences from one generation get passed onto the next, faster and more efficiently;
- Encourage a more inclusive environment so that postdocs from different academic and cultural backgrounds feel welcomed to share their thoughts and concerns;
- Fortify the connections between different aspects of postdoctoral life at Queen's (academic, professional and personal), so that they are viewed as connected components of the postdoctoral life at Queen's, rather than disconnected modules.

In order to approach and accomplish these goals, I would pursue the following ideas:

- Find and maintain a point of contact in every department that hosts some postdoctoral fellows, and try to communicate with them regularly. This allows us to exchange information easily and efficiently, and address the needs in a more timely manner.
- Host different events (in-person or remote) and invite all postdocs to meet each other in different contexts and exchange ideas and experiences. These activities can vary from social gatherings to the more formal discussion panels for various subjects.
- Maintain a close connection with the offices at Queen's where postdocs should (or can) reach out in order to address their needs. That is to have a more smooth experience for postdocs, particularly when they move into Queen's and are new to the environment.

To increase the chance of success, I will employ some former experience I have obtained from several years of serving in different organizational capacities, as well as the observations I have made during my stays at various academic environments that have run a successful model. In doing so, I will certainly benefit from the fresh impetus and ideas provided by postdocs, and aim to keep a healthy relationship with the other members of Queen's community.

In short, I aim to reduce (or hopefully eliminate) the existing gaps that distance members of our community from each other. To do so, I need the others– their ideas and their assistance!

Yours faithfully, Kaveh Mousavand

Vice President Research Assistants

Name: Gabriela Castillo

Department: History Department

Hello, I'm Gabriela Castillo, I'm a Phd Candidate in the department of History, working on Transnational Labour History. Aside from working as a TA and a TF, I've worked as a Research Assistant for the past 4 years. Today, I'm standing for the position of VP Research Assistants
I'm a passionate advocate for justice and for our union; I think PSAC 901's recent bargaining victory showed us in very concrete ways that there is strength in numbers and there is strength in our unity of purpose. In light of this, I believe that those students with a classification status of Graduate Research Fellows need our immediate attention, since they are not being classified as unionized research assistants. That would be my main goal as VP Research Assistants and I hope everyone is on board.

Name: Miles Lambert

Department: Rehabilitation Therapy

My name is Miles Lambert, I'm a 1st year MSc Candidate with the school of rehabilitation therapy, supervised by Dr. Afolasade Fakolade. My role within the Union at this time is two-fold, serving as the Departmental Steward for the Rehabilitation Science Department as well as the Chief Returning Officer to the Union at large. In my time at PSAC Local 901, I have developed a strong knowledge of the Collective agreement, as well as seen the hard work put in by our bargaining committee in securing better working conditions for our student worker. As a result of the latter, and being qualified by the former, I hope to be nominated to the role of VP RA. I feel that my time with the union has solidified my expertise in executing the duties related to this office, and my ability to lead and coordinate a team being improved upon and reassured through my role as the Principal Investigator on my current research project, working with fellow Masters students in accomplishing our own individual goals while delivering collaborative and effective leadership, alongside compassionate support.

As a result, I believe these experiences have equipped me to carry out the duties of this position, ensuring positive teamwork with the RA Committee, and ensuring the representation of the interests of Research Assistants are protected and delivered at every meeting. Ultimately, I hope to be a VP RA for the RA's, and deliver a member-driven platform, addressing the issues identified as important by the members, and delivering the best possible supports for RA's.

Information Officer

Name: Brittainy Bonnis

Department: Cultural Studies

In addition to working as 901's Information Officer this past year I also served as a member of our Bargaining Team with our President - Astrid Hobill and our VP Research Assistant – Rohit Revi. I have worked as the 901 Health and Safety Representative for the Isabel Bader Committee and have aided in managing the Health and Safety Portfolio while that Executive position has been vacant. In the past I have served as 901's Moderator

and, over the past few years, sat on a bunch of committees including Union Structure, Budget, Bylaws, Staff Management, and Mobilization.

As Information Officer I have been responsible for facilitating communications between Executives/Committees and 901 members (also PSAC, Queen's and the Kingston community). This year I also wrote or co-wrote bargaining updates and communiqués and arranged media interviews and bargaining coverage. I have worked to improve our communication via social media, revamped the newsletter and continuously worked towards accessibility in all our communications. I also designed our new logos! The website ever remains a work in progress, but the hope is that with the help of the new Office Manager this too will soon be much improved.

As a member of the Bargaining Team this past year I have been made aware that our members aren't nearly as well versed in role of 901 in their working lives as they could be. If I am re-elected as Information Officer, I will expand my focus to include education campaigns so that members are better able to access the benefits of union membership - benefits have expanded with our historic bargaining wins including Mental Health and Professional Development Funds. I have been so encouraged by the membership's rallying around our bargaining demands this year and believe that communication with our members is a vital component in continued community building – I hope to continue to be a part of those processes.

We accomplished a lot this year! It is my hope to continue to serve 901's membership with the benefit of all I have learned over this interesting and sometimes difficult time. If re-elected I will continue to work to expand communications within the membership, the Queen's community and Kingston at large.

Treasurer

Nominee: Harshavardhan Thyagarajan

Department: Biology

I'm a graduate student and teaching assistant in the department of biology, and I nominate myself to contest election for the Treasurer's position on the executive committee of PSAC Local 901.

I'm interested in working in this position to maintain smooth functioning of this portfolio, and to continue improving systems so that this work becomes increasingly simple as we move forward. Through my previous work on the exec, I am familiar with the functioning of the local's budget, and I'm aware of the specific work the portfolio will have to deal with in 2022-23 through the influx of funds associated with the bargaining negotiations just completed.

I have previously served the local as one of two co-chief stewards between November 2020 and April 2022, working to mobilize the local's steward network and create stable structures that aided institutional continuity. In this time, I have been part of the budget and structure committees for two years running, which are directly relevant to the position in question, besides also serving on the grievance committee, and the mobilization committee as the campaign assistant in bargaining negotiations.

I believe that I'm a good fit for this position for 2022-23, having a clear understanding of what the position needs, and the skills required to deliver this.

Co-Chief Steward 1

Nominee: Avi Friedlander

Department: Physics, Engineering Physics, and Astronomy

I am a PhD candidate in Physics currently finishing the 3rd year of my program. I have worked as a TA throughout my degree with the exception of this current semester. For the last two years, I have been actively involved with organizing in PSAC 901. In the 2020-21 academic year I was the steward for the Physics, Engineering Physics, and Astronomy department. As a steward I actively participated in stewards council and worked on the grievance committee. At the start of bargaining I joined the mobilization committee and got hired as a mobilizer, continuing in that role throughout the entire bargaining process. As a mobilizer I focused on increasing participation and access to information for all union members so that bargaining would not only be effective but also representative of what members wanted.

If elected as co-chief steward my main goal will be to create opportunities for all graduate workers to get involved. I intend to do that by helping rank-and-file working groups form and organize and providing ample training opportunities for anyone who is interested. Having working groups open to all members that work on a variety of issues means that all members will have a low-barrier way of getting involved in something they see as valuable. These working groups can be focused on fixing specific issues we face as graduate workers or even creating opportunities to have fun and meeting other graduate workers. Creating training opportunities is important because leadership cannot be restricted to elected executive positions. It is important that every graduate worker knows people in their department who have the leadership and skills to help them address issues they face as a graduate student and worker. This can be done partly by continuing to grow stewards council and ensuring it includes active representation from all departments.

Co-Chief Steward – 2 (Grievances)

Nominee: Jake Morrow

Department: English Department

Hi all, Jake here.

I'm just wrapping up the first year of a PhD here at Queen's where I've lucked into a life where I get to study, write, and teach poetry as a "career." What a friggin' dream!

In my time at Queen's, I've also been lucky enough to serve as the English departmental steward and a member of PSAC 901's Mobilization Committee. As a steward, I've ensured that my department has been, not only well-informed, but also empowered and motivated to actively participate in union actions and events throughout the year. No small feat in (another) pandemic year!

As part of the mobilization committee, I was able to help the bargaining team with mobilization and communication strategy leading up to our successful strike mandate and ratification votes. As part of that work, I was organizing and running strike-vote info-sessions, helping to plan and coordinate behind the scenes work during town halls, mobilizing membership for the strike and ratification votes, and documenting our path to success so we can build on these incredible gains during our next round of bargaining. My main goals as a co-chief steward would be to build on the groundwork that has already been put in place, and to expand and strengthen the stewards' network so we can maximize informed participation across the membership. By focusing on growing and strengthening participation, we can lay the foundations for a strong local and ensure our departments, committees, and working groups are thriving and able to do their best work; that way, we can build the best possible community for all our colleagues and students, present and future.

I'm a big believer that it's important to leave every place better than you found it. That's what I hope to do with my work here.

Equity Officer

Name: Prerna Subramanian

Department: Cultural Studies

My efforts as the Equity Officer of PSAC 901 have been focussed towards facilitating bursaries smoothly and timely and also focus on pushing for equity goals as central to our bargaining process. As the chair of Bursary Administration Committee within my role as Equity officer, I was able to create forms, analyse fund disbursement methods and successfully administer three bursaries that were approved in the last AGM: a UHIP refund for migrant members, a hardship bursary for equity-seeking members, and a bursary to financially support gender confirmation procedures for trans members of our union. As the incoming time of bargaining was already being prepared for by the Union, I used my time to research equity concerns for bargaining. I conducted research on multiple academic sector unions in Canada and their approach to sexual harassment and sexual violence in order to proffer sexual violence leave as one of our demands. I also analysed trends of our bursaries which showed us how Mental health services were woefully inadequate for graduate students and alarmingly, no mental health benefits were being provided to TAS, RAS, TFS. Through my research, I found out that EFAP services are indeed provided by multiple academic institutions to their TA/RA/TF members. I facilitated hiring of a Defund YGK researcher and also a Mental health service researcher in my role in order to create much needed knowledge around inequitable workplaces and also possibilities of solidarity with anti-racist actions like that of abolition and defunding of police. Along with Health and Safety Officer, I also conducted a consultation session with our disabled members to understand the need for a better IERP process which I also put forward as an equity concern for bargaining. Alongside our President and Co-Chief Stewards, I conducted multiple equity consultations with anti-racist organisations on campus in order to work towards bargaining demands that include anti-racism as its central anchor. Recently, my efforts went into bringing PSAC 901 and SGPS together for #PivotTheGradClock campaign for graduate funding extensions that has gathered enormous support from faculty and students alike. I am happy to note that most of our equity demands were met in the bargaining period. And as promised in the last term, we were able to create an active anti-racist working group for holding space for racialized student workers.

If given the chance to continue in this role, I would want to work on demands which have not been met, or have been partially accepted, through active mobilization and engagement with the student body. As my two years have been both pandemic ridden and bargaining oriented, I now want this year to be solely focused on engagement with the rank and file members of Queen's who are especially migrants and racialized students. Concerns like that of guaranteed fifth year packages, anti-racist trainings that aren't tokenistic and making union an anti-racist place will be important to me. Unions should be a place where workers seek refuge and the power to organize and as an equity officer, I would love to make PSAC 901's labour mandate to be a mandate of anti-oppression as well.

Health and Safety Officer

Name: Daniel (Dan) Reddy

Department: Chemistry

"I was once told that a **manager's** duty is to ensure that everyone gets paid, whereas a safety officer's responsibility is to ensure that everyone gets home alive at the end of each working day. Perhaps jarring at first, there is a lot of truth in the quote. Fostering a safety culture (in all senses of the word) will be my primary obligation as the Occupational Health and Safety Officer for the Executive Committee.

I am currently an international first-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Chemistry at Queen's. Regarding my technical background, I completed a Master of Science degree in organic chemistry from Purdue University and most recently finished a year-long assignment as a government contractor working in the areas of explosives preparation and safety. Especially in the chemical sciences, safety is a number-one priority. I

take my personal safety as well as the safety of others seriously and will apply this same care to our campus community as the Safety Officer. At Purdue, I was a representative on the Chemistry Department's Safety Awareness and Compliance Subcommittee, as well as the Safety Representative within my research group. I am confident that I will meet and strive to exceed the expectations of this position, including but not limited to: Appointing JHSC members, attending meetings, coordinating training, performing inspections, and reporting to the PSAC 901 Executive. Furthermore, I believe that the proposed amendment to expand the Safety Officer's oversight to include mental health is an important safety consideration. Mental health is part of the Total Worker Health concept and a crucial aspect of any safety program, especially campus wide. I will work both collaboratively and independently to assess campus safety and bring all safety issues to the attention of the appropriate bodies, being sure to find solutions so that these issues do not perpetuate.

I am passionate about helping people and believe this trait will be my greatest asset as our Safety Officer. For reference, I completed the GALLUP CliftonStrengths assessment, and my top five themes were: 1) Competition 2) Harmony 3) Intellection 4) Deliberative and 5) Achiever. Please contact me by email (daniel.reddy@queensu.ca) with any additional questions about me and/or my platform.

Name: Jacqueline Giesbrecht

Department: Cultural Studies

I am a PhD student in Cultural Studies, where I served as a steward for the last year. In this role, I have kept my department informed about Union news, opportunities, and grants and encouraged their participation in this last round of bargaining. I organized and ran a strike-vote info session, plastered the campus with posters, and participated in the door-to-door mobilization campaign at Queen's student housing. I am well-equipped for this Executive position due to my past involvement in the Union, strong organizational skills, and passion for physical and mental health and safety.

If elected as the Occupational Health and Safety Officer, I would appoint and train the Joint Health and Safety Committees member representatives and efficiently coordinate the campus safety inspection process. I would promptly communicate any concerns with relevant Queen's representatives to ensure that your workplace is free from potential hazards and that all safety guidelines are being followed. This would include any public health guidelines that may be in effect and the continued provision of adequate ventilation in classrooms. As someone with immunocompromised loved ones, you have my commitment to take your health seriously even after the pandemic is declared to be over. You also have my guarantee to use my position as best I can to simultaneously advocate for improved accessibility on campus. As a disabled person who has worked as a support worker and currently researches accessibility barriers, it's just a part of who I am and what I do.

We know, too, that occupational health and safety extends outside of the physical work location. The Covid-19 pandemic and the demands of online teaching and learning have taken a toll on our mental health and bodies. As we recover from prolonged isolation, some of us may experience sensory overload, anxiety, or depression as we move back into larger in-person social settings and deal with changing health guidelines. We may continue to experience the physical effects of online teaching and learning, such as eyestrain from increased screen time. With so much time spent online, we may also be concerned as cybersecurity threats such as doxxing as they become growing issues for public-facing academics. All of these are normal and reasonable feelings and concerns related to our occupational health and safety.

To address these concerns, I would work to compile and share (and, when necessary, develop) relevant resources so that members know where and how to access support to maintain and improve their health and safety both inside and outside of the physical workplace. Crucial in addressing these concerns is the new Mental Health Fund. If elected, I will continue to advocate for mental health services that are the most useful for this membership. I will ensure that members are informed about the fund and that it is disbursed in a timely manner. Workplace health and safety can easily become about ticking boxes to meet a minimum. With me as the OH&S Officer, you could be assured that this would not be the case.