Justyna Szewczyk-El Jassem History Department - TA, TF in the Fall '23

I joined Queen's during the pandemic, remotely, from another country. It was an excruciatingly alienating experience until I became a steward for my department. Stewards' Councils, while not super fun over Zoom, still allowed me to connect with others and get involved in student/campus life from afar. When I finally came to Kingston, I already had a friendly and supportive community. Because of this community of shared values, I tagged along and became VP Community.

Recent experiences with organizing Abolish Tuition Rally in March showed me the potential for cross-campus and cross-organizational collaboration. As we approach another bargaining for Unit 1 in 2024, I would like the Local to have strong allies on campus, so we don't face the employer alone.

As VP, I attended many university and city-level meetings, which gave me a fair understanding of different labour issues, power networks and strategies around them. I observed how Astrid Hobill and her predecessor led the Local through tough bargaining with Queen's. I also had the privilege of working with two amazing executive teams and learned much from them about union work and local academic and work cultures. I would love to continue their work as the new President.

I watched how PSAC 901 recovered from the pandemic, becoming again the vibrant and active organizing space on campus that I had heard a lot about. As the President, I will ensure that the Local continues to thrive by supporting and following its members. My absolute priority is to make Queen's a better and safer workplace so that we can focus on our research.