2023 GSA General Election and Election of the Associate Vice-President Labour: CRO Decision in the matter of alleged breaches brought against Sonalika Patel – 2 March 2023

Several other candidates and students brought to my attention that a candidate for the position of Associate Vice-President Labour, Sonalika Patel, violated several GSA sections of GSA Bylaw and Policy, as well as multiple directives of the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) that were issued at the All-Candidates Meeting. The GSA Elections and Referenda Committee (GSA ERC) was consulted with respect to this matter and, as per GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section I.POL.11.2.e, and a decision was made based on this consultation. The total vote count for this candidate was deducted by 70% after all of the votes were totalled. Please find a summary below of the rationale for this consequence, which also notes the infractions reported and the sections of GSA Bylaw and Policy and CRO directives that were deemed to have been violated:

- A student provided a screenshot of a post in a WhatsApp group was sent to the CRO, where campaign volunteers circulated the voting link on behalf of the candidate. This was a violation of a direct CRO directive sent through email that prohibited candidates from sharing the voting link. As per GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section I.POL.6.2, it is the responsibility of candidates to ensure that campaign volunteers adhere to GSA Bylaw and Policy and directives of the CRO concerning GSA elections and referenda. This resulted in a deduction of 15%.

- Multiple students came forward noting the candidate had accessed their office space and been disruptive. That the same issue was reported by multiple parties suggests, on the balance of probabilities, that this occurred. This was a violation of GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section I.POL.10.11, and this section was highlighted at the All-Candidates Meeting as well. This resulted in a deduction of 15%.

- Two students raised concerns that the candidate asked students to see their phones with the voting ballot displayed. This is a violation of GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section I.BYL.1.1. This was considered an incredibly serious violation that compromises the integrity of the election process (as students felt they were being pressured into voting for the candidate and also because the candidate may have been able to cast additional votes for themselves). Given the seriousness, this resulted in a deduction of 40%.

This information was communicated to the candidate and they were informed they had twenty-four (24) hours to appeal the decision to the GSA Appeals and Complaints Board (GSA ACB).