UTGSU By-Elections: Division Four
Candidate Statements

Candidates
Siti Hazirah Binte Mohamad

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There are many things wrong with how this university is run. As a second year international PhD student at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health (DLSPH), I have personally faced and continue to face financial and housing insecurity all throughout my time here. I was excited to begin my PhD in what I thought was a vibrant city with a financially secure funding package. Little did I know about the disappointment that I would be met with upon arrival, and the precarious reality of many graduate students in one of the top universities in Canada.

In a bid to try and improve the condition for graduate students in my division, I served as a divisional student representative during the previous academic year. In my role, I gained an insight into the workings of the department and spoke to a large swath of the student population at DLSPH. Through this, I learnt that there were many challenges afflicting graduate students, particularly on the issue of funding. However, I kept getting told that this matter was beyond the scope of the department/public health school and must be brought up at the university level. So here I am putting my money where my mouth is and trying to advocate for change at the higher level.

I have met many international students through my participation in the Centre for International Experience programmes at UofT and realized that the precarity faced by graduate students cuts across divisions, departments and extends to the whole university. As a well-resourced university with a sterling reputation on the world stage, it was unfathomable to me that things are the way they are currently. As a health policy scholar, I also believe strongly in the power of unions and the importance of student organizing and representation to effect change.

I sincerely believe that things could and should be better than they currently are. It is up to us students to demand accountability and work towards the betterment of conditions. Having lived on campus for the past two semesters and as an active participant in many UofT initiatives such as Bikechain, Alternative Reading Week and Hart House, I have many ideas for how things should be improved. I am thus seeking a mandate from the student body to turn these ideas into
reality. I am not sure whether I will be able to change many of the things I want to, but I would at least like the opportunity to try and leave this place better than how I found it.