

**Strengthening Community Immigration Forum**  
**Thursday February 12, 2015, 2:00 P.M. – Grand Gardens North**  
**[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]**

Good afternoon, I'm very pleased to be able to join you today at the Strengthening Community Immigration Forum.

I would like to first off thank the Local Immigration Partnership for organizing this important forum. I'd also like to thank the guest presenters who have preceded me here for taking the time to share their knowledge and expertise. And of course I would like to thank everyone who has chosen to attend this event today. By being here, you've acknowledged the importance of sharing insights, discussing experiences and listening and learning from each other.

The story of Sault Ste. Marie is at heart a story of immigrants and immigration. My family has been in Sault Ste. Marie for several generations, but like many of our residents, I am the descendant of Italian immigrants.

Today, I am the beneficiary of the hard work of my parents and of my grandparents. But I am also the beneficiary of the decision made by my more distant ancestors to settle in Sault Ste. Marie.

Now, I think we are at another juncture where immigration and attracting newcomers is going to be important to the future of our community. It's my belief that much of our future prosperity is going to depend on what we can offer to people who **don't** currently live here. As residents, we all know the quality of life that Sault Ste. Marie affords—now we have to entice more people to come and share in it. Attracting immigrants is a huge part of the equation.

Our next wave of newcomers will likely come from different places than in the past. Instead of traditional countries of origin like Italy, Great Britain and Finland, a growing share of our new citizens will likely come from Asia, from India and from Latin and South America. A significant proportion may come from our neighbor to the south, the United States. Others may be new Canadians who move here from other parts of Canada and Ontario.

They will move here to work, to attend school or to join other family members. They will open new businesses, bring new skills and bring greater diversity to our city. They will help us grow and gain vibrancy as a community.

It won't always be easy for the newcomers who join us. In some ways, physically moving here is the easy part—it's everything after that is hard. We know that there are barriers for many immigrants that can be difficult to overcome.

There are the material barriers such as finding work and getting educational credentials recognized. There are psychological barriers such as dealing with feelings of loneliness and isolation. Dealing with culture shock. Dealing with climate shock, in the case of those who have never experienced snow or a Northern Ontario winter before.

Obviously, helping newcomers address these challenges is where organizations like the Local Immigration Partnership become so important. It's also where programs like New to the Sault and the settlement services offered by the Sault Community Career Centre become very important.

However, we can't leave all of the work to service providers and government agencies. Building a diverse and welcoming city where newcomers can succeed has to be a total community effort. There is work for everyone. There is certainly work for me.

As Mayor, I'm afforded a bit of a platform. It's my intention to use this platform to speak up for the values I consider important. To me, some of the most important values I want promote are the ones of tolerance, equality, open-mindedness, and respect for others.

One of my goals as Mayor is to foster a welcoming environment in this community for all our citizens. To have it be a place where everyone feels secure, comfortable and valued for being themselves. A place where people of all races, creeds, ethnicities, and sexual and gender identities feel at home.

The idea of home is something I want to touch on a little more. Because I think we all realize that home is more than a physical address or a building. It's an emotional state.

It's one thing to live in a certain place, to work in a certain place, or to go to school in a certain place. But it's another thing to think of that place as home. It's another thing for that place to feel like home.

I realize that it takes time to cultivate these feelings; that it's a gradual transformation and not an instant change. But to our newcomers here today, this is the point where I hope you will eventually arrive—if you have not already: the point where you feel that Sault Ste. Marie is your home. Where you and your family identify as proud Saultites. Where you feel invested in this community and in seeing it grow and succeed.

Furthermore, I want you to know that this community needs you. We need to hear your voices, listen to your perspectives and learn from your experiences. We want to share in your cultures and traditions. I'm asking you to speak up and be active in civic life, much as you have already done by attending here today. With your help, we will strengthen this community, together.

I'm going to close my remarks today by telling you about a vision that I have. There will come a day in the future where there will be another event such as this, and there will be another community leader addressing the crowd.

This person might be the Member of Parliament or the MPP for Sault Ste. Marie. They might be a councillor or they might be a new Mayor. If they are a new Mayor, personally, I hope that they won't have been elected in 2018...but rather, a little further in the future.

When this day comes, the community leader will address a crowd much like this one. They will speak about their story, much as I have done today. They will speak of how their parents or grandparents made the decision to leave China or Mexico or India or Ghana or another corner of the world to settle in Sault Ste. Marie.

They will speak about how they benefitted from that decision and from the hard work and perseverance of their family. They will speak with gratitude about the support that Sault Ste. Marie offered and the opportunities it afforded them. They will speak of how excited they are to receive the community's trust, and to be in a position to give back.

I know this day is coming, maybe even sooner than we might think. And I know that it will be a great day for Sault Ste. Marie when it arrives.

Thank you. I would welcome your questions, should you have any.