

City Council Inauguration
Monday December 1, 2014, City Council Chambers
[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

Thank you Mr. White.

I look forward to the time you and I will share sitting next to one another over the next four years and I thank you for your assistance throughout the transition.

In that respect, I would also like to thank Chief Administrative Officer Fratesi for the time he has offered and provided. It was helpful and appreciated.

And lastly, in the same respect, a very special thank you to who will formally become as of today my primary assistant here at City Hall, Lisa Bell. Your professionalism and your professional enthusiasm are, simply put, fantastic.

Council. Family. Friends. Saultites. Welcome.

A special acknowledgement and welcome to Mayor McIntyre and Mayor Harry who are with us today.

I would also like to acknowledge Mayor Macgregor and Mayor Irwin who could not be with us today.

Though I know Mayor McIntyre, Mayor Harry and May Macgregor, I do not know them as well as I would like. I will do my best to remedy that over the coming months. In the meantime I thank them for their support, their kind advice and the contributions they made to our community when they served the office I now serve.

I do know Mayor Ron Irwin well. Mayor Irwin was with me when I knocked on my first door as a political candidate. He has been with me since. Although we are in almost every respect very different people, I hold his friendship and his mentorship in the highest regard. I thank him for both and I thank him for his contribution to our community as Mayor, Member of Parliament and Privy Councilor.

I would like to acknowledge Mayor Debbie Amaroso and the contributions that she has made to our community as both Mayor and as a city councilor. Her effort, dedication and commitment are commendable, recognized and appreciated.

I would also like to acknowledge all of the members of our community who ran for council but were not elected. I respect your efforts. Though you did not meet the result you hoped for or intended, you should not discount your contribution. It is meaningful and important and I encourage you to continue participating in whatever way you determine most appropriate.

Today with this Oath and through this ceremony, before all of you and with the electoral consent of our community I assume, in my assessment, two roles. Neither role, from my perspective, is more important than the other. They are in a number of ways indivisible but I will nonetheless address each in turn.

With respect to the first role, by prescription of law, I am now and will be for the next few years the Chief Executive Officer of Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie. This is perhaps the role, and maybe I am being too forthright here, that I am the least intimidated by but there is good reason.

My role as Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation rests and relies upon the employees of this Corporation.

My success in it is largely predicated upon your efforts and your abilities.

I believe in both: I believe in your effort. I believe in your ability.

You may recall that during the campaign I proposed something that my campaign called an 'Employee Incentive Program'. I do not yet know if this Council will see fit to endorse and pass such a proposal but that is in some respects ancillary to my point.

I proposed the program because I believe in the front line employees that work for this City. I believe that you are fortunate to have good, stable and secure jobs and that you take pride in these jobs, that you care about these jobs and that you care about the community and the people that you serve.

I also believe that you know, better than I do, how things can be improved at City Hall. How we as a corporation can be more efficient and how we can spend or allocate tax payer dollars, your dollars, better.

I have met many of you and I know that we share common interests and common values. We care about our community and we want to help make it the best place it can be. We can improve our community together but only if we try sincerely, if we work together sincerely, me in my role and you in yours and neither more important than the other.

With respect to the second role, I am the figure head for the City of Sault Ste. Marie and the Chair of this Council. This role is no less or no more important than the first but it certainly sits more heavily on my shoulders.

As I contemplated assuming this office, this meeting, today, I kept coming back to my grandparents.

All four of my grandparents were born in Sault Ste. Marie. My grandfather Provenzano was a steelworker. He lost half of his foot and a part of his hand in the steel plant but nonetheless made sure that he provided for his family and that his children were educated.

My grandfather Boschetto started a bakery that my mother grew up in.

At the outset, her family lived at the bakery, in a few small rooms attached to it and turned that little bakery into a very successful and sizeable business. I still meet people to this today who tell me that their parents or grandparents worked at Blue Bird and every time I do, I smile and I am thankful. I remember the bakery fondly.

This is why this role sits heavily on me: this City is where my family found and fostered its opportunity and I now represent it.

I want to thank the citizens of Sault Ste. Marie for trusting me to represent them. I appreciate that I have a responsibility, out of respect for this office, our community and your support, to hold myself to a higher standard. I will.

I will be mindful, every day, of your trust and I will work hard, everyday to earn and deserve that trust.

I am here to work, day in and day out, so that we can try, as best we can as a community, to create the circumstances where more of us can succeed through hard work and dedication.

And this all brings me to you, to this Council, the Councilors that I will serve with.

I have met with each of you over the past few weeks and I thank each of you for giving me that time.

We are facing some very important challenges. Our demographics are difficult. Our death rate is out pacing our birth rate. We need migrants to move to Sault Ste. Marie. We need young families to stay. This requires both economic and social opportunity. It is challenging to develop either.

Our infrastructure requires some significant attention and renewal. This requires resources. Resources are harder and harder to come by.

Costs, as we are all aware, continue to rise and will continue to rise even if there is no new spending by the simple fact of inflation. We have to be as sensitive as we can be to costs because, as you are aware, they are ultimately passed along. It is my sincere belief that people are finding it harder to make ends meet. We can't make it harder.

There are no simple solutions but the simple truth of the matter, from my perspective, is this: you can move this community forward – your 12 votes govern our community's direction.

I am, to a large degree, in your hands.

Our community is, in the same respect, in your hands.

I will get much of the attention when things go well. Your efforts, in those times, will not be lost on me and I will share any credit I receive with you.

I will get much of the attention when things do not go well. I accept that because that comes with this job and I asked for this job but also because I trust that you appreciate the nature and depth of your offices: you are the stewards of this community and you have been trusted to represent its best interests. If all of us approach our offices in good faith, our common interests will always outweigh and outnumber any of our differences. These offices are a trust; we hold them out of respect for those who came before us and with a mind to leave them in a better position for having served in them for those who come after us.

I would like to end my comments by acknowledging all of the family and friends who are here to share this time with us. Not just my family and friends who have become, through their kindness, love and support, dear to and inseparable from me but all of our family and friends.

It is hard to stand for these offices, it is difficult to subject yourself to public comment and public criticism, to speak your mind and stand your ground and we, those of us sitting here and those of us who tried but fell short, draw you into this whole process. Thank you.

Thank you for standing up with us and standing up for us. Our whole democratic system, the freedoms we enjoy municipally, provincially and federally are predicated on these processes and these processes are predicated on your participation. All of us sit here for you and because of you.

Thank you.