

Sensory Playground Opening

Tuesday July 19, 5:00-7:00 p.m.

[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

Good evening everyone. I'm very happy be joining you here. I'd like to thank our Member of Parliament, Terry Sheehan, for taking the time to celebrate the opening of this new playground with us.

Virginia has already mentioned how this project came to fruition through the efforts and generosity of a number of contributors and individuals. On behalf of City Council, I'd like to once again acknowledge the work of the committee and also the funders of the project:

These are: Employment and Social Development Canada for their support of the playground through the Enabling Accessibility Grant, the Rotary Club of Sault Ste. Marie, Algoma Autism Foundation and Community Living Algoma.

We also had a number of city departments contribute labour to the project. These include: the parks and carpentry divisions from public works and engineering services, the recreation and culture division of the community services department, as well as many summer students.

This project we are celebrating marks the first large playground expansion at Bellevue Park since 2003, which we can see from here and which also happened to be supported by Rotary. The new equipment that we are officially unveiling today includes many firsts for our City and also Bellevue Park.

While everyone can enjoy this new playground, much of the equipment will have a special appeal for children with autism spectrum disorder. The sensory stimulation on offer at this site will encourage autistic children to explore, interact, and of course, play.

This new playground is a great enhancement to our city's signature park. It's also a sterling example of the power of partnerships and what we can accomplish through collaboration and working together.

At the City of Sault Ste. Marie, our recently completed corporate strategic plan identifies partnership development as a key focus

area. All of us hope to see more projects come to pass in the future from this new emphasis on working together with groups in the community, and by empowering staff to find creative approaches to enhance the quality of life in our City.

So thank you again for the allowing me the chance to participate in today's celebration. I'd now like to call up our next speakers, Rotary Club of Sault Ste. Marie President Melinda Mills and Past President Derek Walz. As we just concluded Rotaryfest this past weekend, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Rotarians and volunteers for their hard work to deliver another outstanding summer festival. Welcome Melinda and Derek.