

Speaking Notes – Day of Mourning Ceremony

[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

Good morning, thank you for inviting me to speak today. I know this is a somber occasion, but I am glad to see all of you here today for the National Day of Mourning in remembrance of workers who have been injured, become ill, or lost their lives in the workplace. I am honoured to be here as a representative of the City of Sault Ste. Marie to participate in this observance, and to help reaffirm our community's commitment to workplace health and safety.

For most of us, work forms an integral part of our lives. Though work can at times be a joy and at others a frustration, its routine and regularity is often comforting. When we head into our workplaces it is usually with the expectation that the day will pass without incident. The idea that we could be harmed, killed or become seriously ill as a result of going to work seldom enters our minds.

Traditionally, the roots of Sault Ste. Marie's economy have been firmly planted in areas such as manufacturing and heavy industry. Our reliance on these sectors has made our community susceptible to workplace tragedies.

While some vocations carry a higher degree of risk than others, no workplace is ever totally immune from hazard. It must be acknowledged that the Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie has been affected by tragic events during the course of its history. Today, we pause sadly to remember the passing of James Vecchio, who lost his life while working for the City.

The memory of lives that have been lost or changed as a result of workplace accidents and occupational disease is the fuel that must continue to drive us forward in the cause of worker safety. It is a cause that is a shared responsibility amongst workers, managers, employers and governments. In order to reduce the prevalence of workplace fatalities, injuries and acute and chronic disease, all parties must be willing to work together, and to continually strive to do better.

The challenge—which I feel we all recognize—is that there will never be a finish line to this endeavor. The day will never come where we can say, “we have done enough, we have gone far enough, we need go no further.” Each day the challenge of keeping our workplaces and job sites safe continues unceasingly, and we have to be willing to constantly apply ourselves to meeting it.

For my part, since becoming Mayor I have been pleased to see the emphasis that is placed on health and safety at the City of Sault Ste. Marie. Our Human Resources department includes a dedicated Return to Work Coordinator—Beth Madonna. Beth helps employees who have been hurt or injured reintegrate back into the City workforce and she makes sure they are provided with the support and assistance that they need.

We also have on staff Aldo Iacoe, who is our Manager of Health and Safety. Aldo is a tireless champion of workplace safety. He has been instrumental in developing and promoting the City’s “Target Zero” policy, which commits us to the goal of having zero workplace injuries and illnesses.

Beth and Aldo demonstrate their commitment each and every day. I am sure that many of you have similar health and safety champions at your respective workplaces, or are perhaps champions yourselves. I ask you to continue with your efforts and commitment and to encourage others to do likewise.

Today, we mourn and remember the victims of workplace injury and illness. But we also honour them by rededicating ourselves to the cause of workplace safety. Let's continue to strive to do better, to prevent future tragedies, and to keep all of our workplaces safe.

Thank you.