

**Silver Ribbon Gala**

**Wednesday, May 23**

**[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]**

Good evening everyone. I am pleased to be here and to bring greetings of behalf of City Council and the City of Sault Ste. Marie.

I want to take a moment to recognize Sault Ste. Marie Police Chief Bob Keetch, District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board CAO Mike Nadeau, members of City staff and City Councillors Paul Christian and Lou Turco for joining us here this evening.

I also want to recognize the members of the Sault Ste. Marie and Area Drug Strategy Committee. Thank you for all you are doing in service of our community. Your actions are impactful, and your work as front line staff and in support of front line staff is important.

An occasion such as this evening's gala is an opportunity for the community at large to support our front – line workers. I am pleased to see such a strong turnout and thank everyone who made the effort to attend.

The gala is also a chance for us to wear a silver ribbon in an effort to combat the stigma unfortunately still associated with mental health and addictions.

Mental health and addiction touches all of us. No matter our job, or social circle, or personal means, we have all dealt with, or we all deal with, mental health and addiction challenges.

Whether they are our own, or those of people that we love, or people that are in proximity to us on a day – to – day basis, these challenges are present in each of our lives and each of us contends with them to varying degrees.

As a Mayor, I am afforded a platform. I have and will continue to use it to speak up for causes I believe in and to speak against things that I do not.

In this respect, it is critical for our local leaders to send a message to people suffering from and fighting through mental health and addiction challenges.

We need to say: You are important. You are important to your community. You are important to its future. We acknowledge your challenge. We care about your challenges. And we are working to provide you the support that you deserve.

For my part, I recognize that we certainly have much more work to do. I commit to continue to work with our community partners at the ALT, SSMPS, SAH, GHC, APH and the SSMA Drug Strategy Committee to develop the systems and supports our community needs to more effectively address our challenges.

I want to close by thanking the members of the Sault Ste. Marie and Area Drug Strategy Committee for their collective efforts.

I am very judicious about when I choose to speak for the community at large. I believe it is a privilege that I should only use sparingly and when necessary. I think it is important I do so here.

To all of our front-line workers here tonight, and those that could not make it, on behalf of the community at large, I want to recognize and acknowledge both the challenge of your work and the critical importance of your work.

You provide support and hope to people when they need it most. It is tireless work. It may often be hard to see progress. It takes a tremendous amount of your personal energy. It requires commitment, perseverance and, most importantly, kindness.

You truly are the measure of a caring community. We need you and we thank you.

Thank you.