

OFFICE OF THE
MAYOR



CORPORATION OF THE
CITY OF SAULT STE. MARIE

May 24, 2017

City Council Members
Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie
99 Foster Drive
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

Council:

I have been thinking for some time about the nature, tone and scope of our Council agenda, debate and discussion. I have met with a number of you one – on – one and have had we have had some discussion about the topic and you are, in the main, also interested in raising the level of dialogue. I thought it appropriate that I make an effort to articulate some of my own thoughts for your collective consideration.

We all recognize that our community is in the midst of a very challenging period. The Essar Steel Algoma process has taken longer than we would have hoped or expected. As a result Essar's insolvency, our community has lost a significant amount of GDP and consumer confidence has been weakened. The City is short a significant amount of tax revenue and it will have to take steps to address the resulting cash flow challenges. This has created some additional anxiety both within our staffing ranks and the community at large.

We all agree that the community looks to us for leadership at all times but even more so when things are difficult. I suggest that we should be mindful of the reality that if we are not positive ourselves, we cannot expect our community to be. If we speak negatively about our own efforts, our budget or our municipal levy, we can expect other people to feel negatively. Additionally, doing so undermines our collective effort and a lot of the good and earnest work that we have done. This has been a very busy term and I believe this City Council should be proud of what it has accomplished in challenging circumstance. Collectively and with the support of staff we have:

- Worked through a significant period of senior administrative transition;
- Reviewed all of the city spending;
- Kept the increase of our core city spending below inflation for the last two years (1.29% in 2016 and 0.73% in 2017);
- Implemented new budget cycles that give Council more information and control over budgeting;
- Finalized the daycare matter;

- Improved the emergency medical service response times;
- Supported many positive quality of life developments including the Gore Street reconstruction, the Pump Track completion, the Strathclair Dog Park opening, the Community Orchard planting and Hub Trail continuation at Etienne Brule and the opening of the Sensory and Adventure playground at Bellevue Park.
- Decreased energy and maintenance costs re: street lights;
- Decreased cost of living and business cost by reducing both electricity and water waste water burden (SSM is now third lowest energy cost in Ontario and 6th lowest water/waste water cost);
- Decreased our average municipal burden (combined residential taxes and water/wastewater costs) to the 5th lowest in the province;
- Updated the Corporation`s vision, mission and strategic plan to include community development as a core function;
- Restructured the senior city staff to introduce a community development capacity;
- Undertook a review of our economic development activities and funding decisions;
- Froze our own honorariums;
- Reviewed our own Council's composition and voted to decrease our own numbers beginning with the 2018 municipal election;
- Implemented a number of measures to improve Council transparency and accountability;

I note that this list is not exhaustive. Many of you have started a number of really progressive and important initiatives that are completed or in progress (ie. establishment of William H. Hearst Day, Canada 150 and the splash pad project). Many of you have ensured that our ongoing projects and efforts kept going (ie. Christmas lighting award, Walk of Fame and the Green Committee). I respect your initiative, your effort and your commitment.

At the same time, there are undoubtedly some actions that have been taken that fairly deserve scrutiny and criticism. We have to make sure that we address problems as they arise and that senior administration is clear about our expectations and is accountable for their conduct as we for ours. I have been mindful and respectful of your concerns which I have often shared and I have always expressed the same to administration, as per my role, and I will continue to do so. Just as we have to do our job, they have to do theirs.

To my last point, I think we do our job best when we raise the level of discussion and discourse. I believe Council has to make a concerted effort to focus on the broader, more substantial issues that affect the direction of our community. You will soon have an opportunity to do that with two matters very shortly due before Council: the community adjustment report and the recommendations on the future of our economic development. I am hopeful that each of you will see projects or recommendations from the community adjustment committee that you believe in and want to work on.

With respect to economic development, I am hopeful that we will have some good and substantial discussions that will lead to a productive decision on our economic development efforts. They are, in my opinion, central to the future development of our community and precisely the type of discussion we need to be having.

While things are challenging, let's acknowledge that they have improved. Just a year ago, Tenaris was idle and we didn't know what the privatization of OLG's lottery operations would mean to their employees. Today, Tenaris is again running with a healthy work force and OLG's

Yours truly,

Christian C. Provenzano, B.A., LL.B., LL.M.

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