

**Bell Let's Talk**

**Wednesday, January 29**

**[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]**

Good morning everyone. I am happy to be here for this gathering in recognition of the Bell Let's Talk initiative. Before we head outside to raise the flag, we have some guest speakers here with us to discuss the importance of mental health awareness and Bell Let's Talk.

The City of Sault Ste. Marie recognizes that mental illness is a serious issue. We need to support our staff through the appropriate programming and we need to continue breaking down stigmas and misconceptions through education and honest discussion.

The City is striving to create an environment of acceptance and awareness at the municipality and across the community.

From an employer perspective, the City coordinated its first mental health training initiative four years ago and two years ago we launched a Peer Support Program, which received financial assistance from the Bell Let's Talk Community Fund last year.

From a leadership perspective, it is important for City Council, along with all of our City staff, to further awareness about mental health by speaking out about this issue and by supporting events such as today's flag raising ceremony.

Through our words and through our actions, all of us can help create a community where everyone feels welcomed, accepted and supported.

In recognition of Bell Let's Talk, City staff have been fundraising for the Peer Support Program and I ask all of the Fire, Police and EMS personnel in attendance to come up here so we can present you with a cheque.