

**Speaking Notes – Franco-Ontarian Day & Flag Raising**

**September 25, 2015 – 11:00 a.m. Civic Centre**

**[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]**

Good morning and “bonjour.” It is wonderful to be here today to celebrate Franco-Ontarian day. I’d like to welcome our students who are in attendance as well as the members of the Centre Francophone de Sault Ste. Marie, who have helped to organize today’s festivities. In particular, I want to mention and thank Suzanne Salituri for inviting me and making arrangements with my office.

I’d also like to acknowledge City Councillor and Federal Liberal party candidate Terry Sheehan. I’d also like to recognize Councillor Matthew Shoemaker for joining us. Council Shoemaker is a graduate of Notre-Dame Secondary School. I’d also like to thank the staff members from City Hall who have come out to attend this morning’s ceremony.

For more than 400 years, francophones have been playing a lead role in Ontario's history. Our own part of the province is no exception. The first Europeans to visit this area were francophones, and the community that eventually became Sault Ste. Marie was first established by French Canadian missionaries in 1623.

But we are not here just to acknowledge our history. We are here to recognize our own present-day Franco-Ontarian citizens in Sault Ste. Marie, and how they are contributing to making our city a vibrant, dynamic and diverse place. And today that is what we are going to do, by celebrating the language, culture, and traditions of Franco-Ontarians.

I have spoken before about how Sault Ste. Marie is—and must be— a home for everyone. A place where it is recognized that diversity adds to our strength as a community, just as a rope grows stronger, as more individual strands are woven into it. A place where differences are celebrated, and where we take pride in ourselves and each other.

On this day in Sault Ste. Marie we say that we are unreservedly proud of our Francophone heritage and all of you—our Francophone community members. And likewise, it is my hope that you in turn feel proud of your city and your place in it.

Thank you again—merci beaucoup— and please enjoy the rest of the celebration today.