

**Ontario Native Women's Association Annual General Assembly**

**Saturday September 19, 10:00 A.M.**

**[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]**

Good morning, thank you for inviting me here and providing me the opportunity to speak today.

On behalf of the Office of Mayor and Sault Ste. Marie City Council I would like to extend a welcome all of the assembly participants and delegates. For those who have travelled from afar, welcome to our community. I hope you enjoy your stay here and are able to experience some of what our City has to offer during your free moments.

In particular, I would like to thank Cora McGuire-Syrette for inviting me to attend and Raven Linklater for making the arrangements with my office. I'd also like to acknowledge the presence of Chief Isadore Day and Dr. Carolyn Bennett—thank you for coming to our community.

As a City, we are very glad that the Ontario Native Women's Association chose to host this year's Annual General Assembly in Sault Ste. Marie. I can't help but feel that the Sault is a very fitting venue for your event. Our neighbours include two First Nations communities and we have one of the province's largest urban indigenous populations within our city.

So I'm very glad to have you here for this general assembly. And while I have you here, I would like to commend the work your association has been doing. Your programming helps meet critical needs and your policy and research addresses issues of importance, such as housing, homelessness and poverty, and also ending violence against aboriginal women.

I think we all recognize that there is much work that remains to be done on the issues that the Ontario Native Women's Association is engaged with. There is work for organizations such as yours and for allied organizations such as the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres. There is work for elected officials at all levels, including those at the municipal level such as myself.

What lies before us is the difficult work of building relationships, strengthening relationships and addressing complex problems. Problems that in many cases will not be resolved easily or quickly. But we have to have the fortitude to try and to keep trying to resolve them, even in the face of the inevitable challenges that will arise.

Since I took office, strengthening relationships with Sault Ste. Marie's Anishinaabe citizens and neighbours has been a priority of mine. I realize that progress takes time and that I have not yet had much time as Mayor. But I feel we are moving ahead. Slowly, but palpably.

Thank you again for allowing me to share these thoughts with you. Unfortunately, I will not be able to stay much longer as I have another engagement at a local men's shelter to get to, but I wish you all the best with the rest of your proceedings.

Thank you.