

**Sault Pridefest Flag Raising**

**Tuesday September 8, 2015, 9:00 a.m. – Civic Centre**

**[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]**

Good morning. To everyone in attendance, thank you for making the effort to get here early in the morning on the Tuesday after a holiday, on the first day of school and all the rest. I am glad to see you and to share in this event with you.

I'd like to acknowledge the dignitaries who have preceded me here, Elder Barbara Day and Chief Dean Sayers—thank you both for participating. I'd also like to give my thanks to Teddy Syrette for emceeding today's ceremony and for all of his work helping to organize the Pridefest celebrations.

In keeping with the theme for this week, I would like to say that I am "proud" to be taking part in this morning's ceremony as the Mayor of the City of Sault Ste. Marie.

Since before I was Mayor I've watched the evolution of Pridefest and Sault Pride and I've been encouraged and inspired by what I've seen.

Days such as this serve to remind us that we've come a long way. Our society has come a long way and we in the Sault and area have come a long way too. And certainly, there is still work to be done. There always is and likely always will be, but it is not wrong for us to reflect on the progress that we have made and feel a measure of satisfaction.

Because I sincerely feel that we are getting there. That we can get there. That we can be an open, inclusive and understanding place, a place where differences and diversity—in all their forms—are not just tolerated, but celebrated.

Most of us are adults and we live here because we have chosen to. And when you choose to live somewhere, it's about more than residency. It's about more than having a place to work or go to school. It's about more than paying taxes and carrying out the transactions of day-to-day living.

It's about having a home. Home is a place to belong, where you always feel at ease, where you always feel welcome. It's a place where people help each other and stand up for each other.

As one of the elected leaders of this area, I will do everything I can to ensure that our community—in the broadest sense—is a home for everyone.

So the message I would like to impart to all the citizens of our area is this: whether you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersexed, two-spirited, or straight, this is your home. You belong here. You are welcome here, wanted here, and you always will be.

Thank you for allowing me to speak and share these thoughts with you today. I'd like to offer my best wishes for a fun and successful Pridefest.