

**International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

**Tuesday, March 21, 2017**

**[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]**

Good afternoon everyone. On behalf of the Office of Mayor and Sault Ste. Marie City Council, I'm pleased to welcome you here to City Hall. I'm glad we are able to be one of the stops on your itinerary today.

I'd like to acknowledge the dignitaries who have joined us. I'm pleased to welcome Councillor Joe Krmpotich. I'd also like to recognize Brenda Kurczak who is here representing our Member of Parliament, Terry Sheehan.

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is an important annual event. It is an occasion where we can focus our attentions on the ongoing problem of discrimination and also raise awareness of what is being done to address it.

One of the cornerstones of our legal system is the belief that every person is entitled to human rights without discrimination. Sadly, there remain many corners of the world where this is not true, where discriminatory practices are tolerated and sometimes even sanctioned by government authorities.

We are fortunate that Canada is not such a place, and that our society has made great strides in becoming more tolerant and in affording protections for human rights that are guaranteed by law.

However, as far as we've come, it's clear that there is still more work to be done. And we can't take for granted that future improvements will happen of their own accord. We have to work hard to protect the progress that we have made, and even harder to continue it.

Of course, today is also a chance to celebrate the importance of positive values such as diversity, inclusivity, and tolerance.

As I have said before, these issues have a special resonance for Sault Ste. Marie. If we want to be a growing, prosperous City, we have to consciously strive to become a more diverse place and then embrace that diversity. That means taking the time to learn from each other and to celebrate with each other.

Days like today afford us the opportunity to do just that. To that point I'd like to thank the partners who have organized our local events: Algoma University, the Algoma University Students' Union, the Art Gallery of Algoma, the Local Immigration Partnership, Sault College and the Sault Community Career Centre.

In particular, though, I want to recognize the efforts and initiative of students at Algoma University and Sault College to organize both the walk and subsequent activities. Further social progress depends on the younger generations making their voices heard. In that regard, it is great to see the level of engagement of our post-secondary students here in Sault Ste. Marie.

Important change often begins at the local level. So to everyone who is here or who will be participating at events later on, thank you for your demonstrating your support and commitment to building a fairer and more inclusive society.

Thank you again for coming and for allowing me the opportunity to speak. Please enjoy the rest of your day.