

BPW Sault Ste. Marie Women's Week Celebration

Thursday, March 8

[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

Good evening everyone, I'm pleased to be able to join you and bring greetings of behalf of my office and City Council.

I'd like to recognize the president of BPW Sault Ste. Marie, Marlene McKinnon, our guest speaker for the evening, Melissa Kargiannakis and I also want to offer my sincere thanks and congratulations to our honourees: Elaine McDonagh, Alysia Mitchell, Jennifer Sarlo, Donna Mansfield and Dr. Sarah White.

Over 100 women have been recognized during more than 25 years of celebration, and I credit the organizers for continuing to provide an opportunity to highlight the impactful actions of women in our city.

Regardless of whether you have been formally recognized this evening, you are all difference-makers and agents of positive change. Our city has benefitted immensely from your talent, drive, and determination.

Groups such as the BPW Sault Ste. Marie play a vital role in fostering an atmosphere where women are encouraged to participate fully in their communities.

Going forward, I ask you to continue to be dedicated and passionate about pursuing your goals. To advance and prosper, our community and our region needs the contributions of dynamic and capable women. The positive examples that you are setting, will serve as an inspiration to Sault Ste. Marie's next generation of girls and young women.

I made the following comments last year but I am going to make them again, because I believe that are important and they are certainly sincere.

Speaking personally, because of the resemblance I share with my father and the fact we share a profession, in law, and the very close relationship I had with my uncle Carmen and that fact that we also share a profession, in politics, and our collectively shared surname, I am always associated with my father's family and rarely with my mother's.

This was never lost on me and considering how successful my mother's family was and the impact that it had on my life, it always strikes me as a bit imbalanced.

To this day, the dearest person in my life was my maternal grandmother and two of the most influential people in my life have been my mother and my sister. This is not to take away from my father, or my uncle for that matter, and their influence on me. They were no doubt also important but in a different way.

My mother was a homemaker but she was also a full time teacher and late in her career an administrator. My sister is a human resource executive who has worked with the likes of Ford of Canada and Canadian Tire and now runs her own consultancy.

As much as I learned from both my father and my uncle, it is my grandmother, my mother and my sister who taught me about strength, commitment and, most importantly, kindness.

As the proud father of two very little girls, one who will be celebrating her second birthday in three days and another who will be four months old in 4 days, it is my very sincere hope that, through your leadership and our committed efforts, we will continue the work of building a fairer and more equal world.

On that note, with a provincial election coming up this spring and municipal election in the fall, I encourage women to consider putting their names forward as candidates.

In 2014, Ontarians elected a record 38 female Members of Provincial Parliament and 145 women ran for office. I hope that trend continues.

Municipally, we have three women City Councillors whom I am proud to serve with in Councillors Myers, Hollingsworth and Hupponen.

Our community is better off with increased female representation not just politically but in all aspects of life in Sault Ste. Marie.

So in that respect, I thank you for your respective contributions to our community and to gender equity. I thank this evening's honorees for setting such a fine example for others to learn from.

I will do my best in my leadership, to follow in yours.