

Every Breakfast Counts launch

Thursday, June 7

[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

Good morning everyone. I am happy to be here with all of you.

We are here today to announce the Every Breakfast Counts initiative, in partnership with Algoma Family Services, Sault Ste. Marie District Social Services and the United Way.

Hundreds and hundreds of children across our community are dependent on the breakfast programs offered through our school boards during the school year.

In conjunction with our school boards, Algoma Family Services has provided 448,000 meals to children in Sault Ste. Marie through the student nutrition program since 2017.

Unfortunately, a lot of the children who are dependent on the food programs provided through our school system go without once school is out. There is, as a result, a gap.

When we asked about this gap, this need, and how we could assist with addressing it, we quickly determined the following:

Our community has the expertise to help – Algoma Family Services works with our school boards throughout the year to address food insecurity;

Our community has the desire to help – the United Way has developed, and Council has endorsed, a poverty plan, it has acknowledged and prioritized food insecurity and it is currently in the process of establishing a Food Security Resource Center;

Our community has the infrastructure to help – Social Services operates across our community year round and works with many of the same families who are challenged by food insecurity;

So if we have the expertise to help, and the desire to help and the infrastructure to help, what are we missing?

What we are missing is the funding to purchase the food for a summer program.

I not only saw this as a challenge we could meet, a problem that can be solved, I saw it as one we had a responsibility to solve. So my office committed to our partners that they could go ahead and develop the program, and we would make sure the money was raised. That brings us here today.

After some consultation about what would be needed to fund a proper summer program, we set a fundraising goal of \$25,000. This money will be used to purchase fresh fruit, milk, yogurt, cereals and other healthy food options.

Algoma Family Services has used its expertise to develop a food plan and is also able to assist in increasing our buying power.

Social Services staff and summer students will buy and distribute the food through the *kids being kids* program at various locations throughout the city. We are also looking into the possibility of providing snacks for children through programming offered at the Greco and Manzo pools. I understand there are some children who are enrolled in *kids being kids* with us today, and I want to welcome them to the Civic Centre.

The United Way of Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma District will accept the donations. Members of the public who want to provide support can do so through my office or directly through the United Way.

And as for my office, we are going to be soliciting financial support from our community. I am going to ensure that we meet our goal and that this program is funded. I have already started and we are on our way.

We talk a lot about jobs and the economy and diversification. These are all very important things. But the reality, at least the reality from my perspective, is that these things will not take route, they will not come to pass, if we can't, or don't, take care of our those of us who need assistance, especially when those are our children.

There is certainly a lot to do and that can often become overwhelming but it need not be. It need not be if we focus on some basic principles and values. The importance of working together. The importance of focusing on our future. The importance of taking care of one another.

This initiative is rooted in these values. As a result, I am confident that it will be successful and that we will, collectively, make a difference.

In that spirit, I want to end by recognizing the great people and community partners who have worked with us to get to this point and who will work with us as we make this program a success.

Mike Nadeau, Carla Fairbrother and Susan Parr from Sault Ste. Marie District Social Services;

Gary Vipond and Mike Delfre from the United Way;

Alex Pasiak and Emily Tremblay from Algoma Family Services; and

Virginia McLeod from the Community Services Department;

I also want to draw some attention to some people in very close proximity to me every day: Andrea Viotto from the CAO's office, Jordan Allard and Lisa Bell from my office;

I have often said, when speaking with City staff, often in this lobby, that I feel blessed that I get to come to work every day and improve the community that people I love and care for call home.

You all have that same opportunity. Lisa, and Jordan, and Andrea exemplify that today. We would not be here but for Lisa's heart, and Jordan and Andrea's support.

I get most of the attention but I should not. I am only one member of this team, albeit the most-high profile, but certainly not the most important.

Everything good we do and everything good that we have got done, we have done together. Thank you.