

Inaugural Address

December 3, 2018

[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

Thank you Mr. White.

I acknowledge, with respect, that we are in Robinson-Huron Treaty territory, that the land on which we are gathered is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe; home of Garden River First Nation, Batchewana First Nation and the Metis Nation. I also acknowledge that this area is historically known as Bawating.

I thank piper Scott MacGillivray for piping us in, the Algoma Festival Choir for the National Anthem, the Healing Lodge Singers for their welcome song and Sister Mary Sammon for her blessing.

I also want to recognize Mayor Ron Irwin who is here with us tonight. Ron served our community as a City Councillor, a Mayor, a Member of Parliament and a Cabinet Minister. He served our country as an Ambassador and a Consul General. He is a tremendous friend and mentor and I thank him for his unwavering and unconditional support.

I want to acknowledge and thank all of the members of our community who ran to serve on this Council.

Standing for these offices is a significant challenge. It can be difficult to get through the grind of a campaign, to subject yourself to public comment and criticism, and all of us who participate, draw our family and our friends into the process.

To my own family and friends: to Kyleigh, Isla, Chloe and the little one that will be joining the four of us in the spring, to my parents and my siblings, to Paula and Tom, and all of my aunt and uncles and cousins.

Everything begins and ends with you.

I would not have stood for this office 4 years ago, or again this year, without your support. You are my greatest blessing.

To Sault Ste. Marie: Thank – you. I am humbled and heartened by both the election result and the opportunity to serve as your Mayor for another four years.

Over the past term, we managed through a very difficult time for our community.

While doing so, and among other things, we reduced budgeted City expenditures, restructured our economic development efforts, began competing for a billion – dollar industrial project and developed a broad – based community plan, FutureSSM.

We are now acting on that plan and I am confident it will help our community create a more stable and vibrant future.

However, I think it is important that the community hears me say this: I see, recognize and understand our community's challenges. I am committed, each and every day, to work collaboratively with this Council and the Community to meet them:

The opioid epidemic and the overdose crisis is at the forefront of our concern. The City and Sault Ste. Marie Police Services are in constant communication with and supportive of the health care providers and the front line workers.

We have and will continue to lobby our federal and provincial partners to make the necessary investments to meaningfully address this epidemic.

We have demographic challenges from youth outmigration, to an aging population, to the need for skilled labour and labour force development. Our unemployment rate is currently one of the lowest in the province of Ontario, and employers of all size and sector are have a difficult time filling jobs. At the same time, the number of people in our community on social assistance has increased.

Too many of our residents remain affected by poverty and food insecurity and more are at risk as the costs of living rise more quickly than income.

We have aging infrastructure and a substantial infrastructure deficit. Our roads, sewers, bridges, electrical and water systems all need significant renewal and substantial investment.

We are not alone in these challenges. They are challenges that are being faced across our province and our country but we, as a Council, should take no comfort in the company.

I will work every single day of this term to build on the work of the last term, to work with our community partners to address these challenges, and to earn the confidence you expressed in me on Election Day.

I will work solely for the betterment of our community at large and consider only its best interest as the singular most important measure.

To the newly elected City Councillors: I believe, very sincerely, that this Council has a tremendous opportunity this term and I am excited to be here with you.

Algoma Steel is now an independent operation with new owners and it is on the verge of a substantial capital investment that will give our community an economic boost.

We have solid budgetary policies and processes that we can rely upon, and build upon, to ensure that we continue the work of the last four years, allocate our community resources responsibly and minimize the municipal burden on our ratepayers and citizens.

Our PUC is headed in an exciting direction. With our battery storage and smart grid projects, we can become national leaders in energy infrastructure. The home is in the midst of transitioning from a being consumer of power, to generating, storing and consuming its own power. There is no reason why Sault Ste. Marie can't be on the forefront of this development and the technical innovation that will, inevitably, come with it.

Speaking of energy generation and consumption, we can and should have better transit and active transportation systems in our community. We can do a much better job moving people around our community and giving people safe non – vehicular transportation options.

We can and need to improve City Hall's IT infrastructure. Staff will be delivering a path forward to us, but that path forward will require significant investment that we need to make.

We are in the midst of refocusing on our tourism efforts and working with our tourism partners to build that sector of our economy. We live in a tremendous place and we can be a tremendous destination.

Our downtown can be revitalized quicker than our current efforts allow. Staff will be bringing us exciting plans that we can, and should, act on to accelerate change. This type of investment is the precise quality of life investment we need to make to ensure our youth, our young professionals and tradespeople, see a life for themselves here.

In FutureSSM, we have a team of young professionals in City Hall, collaborating with leaders and citizens across our community, and focused solely on our community's development. FutureSSM can make a difference if we stay committed to it and support its efforts.

We have developed, and will continue to develop, positive relationships with our First Nation neighbors and partners.

We have tremendous First Nation culture and heritage in and around Bawating and we can become a national leader in Truth and Reconciliation. We can be a community that others look to, from coast to coast, as an example.

I strongly believe that this Council has the opportunity to turn all of these 'cans' into 'wills', if we choose to.

If we choose to:

We will become an innovative municipality;

We will have a modern and effective municipal transit system;

We will develop a community wide active transportation system;

We will be a national leader in Truth & Reconciliation;

We will be a model community for electrical innovation;

We will be a tremendous destination.

This journey from 'Can' to 'Will' comes directly through us and is completely dependent upon us, the discussions we have and the decisions that we make in this Chamber.

So as we begin this term together, as we all accept the shared responsibility of governing our community, together, I respectfully suggest we be mindful of what I believe are some important truths:

These offices are a trust; we hold them out of respect for those who came before us and with a mind to leave them in a better position for those who come after us.

If all of us approach our respective responsibilities in good faith, our common interests will always outweigh and outnumber any of our differences.

If we are negative or pessimistic, if we get caught up in the small stuff, or in the day – to – day of the City operations and manage the Corporation by motion, we will simply diminish our own roles and risk squandering the opportunity that is before us.

If we are forward looking, progressive and innovative, our staff will be forward looking, progressive and innovative. If our staff is forward looking, progressive and innovative, the municipal corporation will be forward looking, progressive and innovative. If the municipal corporation is forward looking, progressive and innovative, our community will undoubtedly follow.

If we are positive and constructive, if we work to elevate the discussion and we are thoughtful about the broader challenges facing our community and the solutions to address them, we will set an example for both our own staff and our community at large.

It begins with us.

The leadership and direction of our community begins with us and that leadership and direction carries through our staff to the community at large. Nothing we want to see happen will happen without our staff. We will get much farther and make much more progress if the discussions we have at this table are respectful of them and their role.

To City Staff: I want to begin by thanking you for the work of the past four years. We introduced a lot of change and we met a lot of challenge and we did so successfully. For my part, I want to acknowledge that none of what we have done or what we will do is possible without you.

Many of you have heard me say that it is a privilege to come here and work with you every day.

It is a privilege to have a job that you can come to, every day, where your work is to support, improve and serve the community that many of our family and friends live in, and that many of us love.

Your work is meaningful and it is important and it can make a difference. You can make a difference in your community by simply coming to work and doing your job well.

My coworker, Lisa, is my most ready example: Mayor for a Day, Every Breakfast Counts, the Community Christmas Tree Lighting. Think of how positive and important each of these events are for our community. Not one of them would have happened, or be what they are, without Lisa and those of you who inspired her or joined us in our efforts, like Larry and Andrea and Dan and Andy and Justin and Bob and Jake and Stephanie.

To both Council and Staff: It is a privilege to work for and serve our community. We have a great opportunity this term, which we will seize, all of us, City Council and staff, by working hard, working together and looking forward.

I am confident of that and I look forward to working with all of you.

Thank you.

Mr. White, we can proceed with the remainder of our meeting.