

Coldest Night of the Year

Tuesday, January 8

[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

Good evening. I am happy to be here on behalf of the City of Sault Ste. Marie and City Council and to serve as the honorary event chair.

I want to thank St. Vincent Place for organizing tonight's launch of the Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser, and in particular I would like to recognize Sara McCleary, who I know is working very hard to ensure it will be a success.

St. Vincent Place staff and volunteers are doing important work to address homelessness and food insecurity in our community, and in turn it is important we support them.

When people talk about the future of Sault Ste. Marie, the discussion often centers around the economy, diversification and jobs. However, it is important to recognize that providing assistance for people dealing with poverty is a crucial aspect of creating a more vibrant community. When more people have the support they need to thrive and to feel included, everyone benefits.

There is certainly a lot to do in this regard 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 focusing on our future. The importance of taking care of one another. The importance of collective action.

The Sault Ste. Marie Poverty Reduction Strategic Action Plan and Community Poverty Roundtable are the result of collaboration and they are examples of our community's collective efforts to provide help to those in need.

Poverty is complex and not always easy to see. For some people, it can be temporary and associated with a life event such as job loss. For others, it can span generations primarily resulting from systematic barriers.

The multidimensional nature of poverty means governments and organizations need to address the root causes.

The Poverty Reduction Strategic Action Plan and the Community Poverty Roundtable are helping our community collectively deal with the causes and consequences, such as: food security, essential services, housing and workforce participation.

It is through efforts such as the implementation of our community's action plan and the work of the roundtable that we can address the causes and consequences of poverty, but this can only be done with the support of the community at large.

To develop a stronger and more vibrant community, we need your help. Whether it be a contribution of your time or financial resources, the Coldest Night of the Year is an opportunity for community members to help people dealing with poverty.

It is in this spirit I encourage people to support St. Vincent's and their efforts. Sign up and register a team for the Coldest Night of the Year. Sponsor a friend. Spread the word.

With your help, we will change our community for the better.

Thank you.