

Special Olympics Opening Ceremony

Thursday, January 31

[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

Good evening everyone. On behalf of the City of Sault Ste. Marie, it is my pleasure to welcome all participants, along with their families and friends to the 2019 Ontario Special Olympics Winter Games!

I want to recognize the members of Council we have with us tonight: Councillors Corey Gardi, Luke Dufour, Lisa Vezeau-Allen and Matthew Shoemaker.

I want to recognize the leadership team at the Special Olympics and all of the volunteers who have worked hard to organize the games and who will be working very hard over the coming days to ensure everything runs smoothly.

I also want to recognize all the police officials here tonight; including representation from the Sault Ste. Marie Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police and the RCMP, along with officers from the United States.

From raising money to assisting with the organization of events, police services have been long-standing supporters of the Special Olympics in what is an outstanding demonstration of what it means to be committed to your community.

And speaking of commitment, I want to recognize the Knights of Columbus, who have a lengthy history of involvement with the Special Olympics, dating all the way back to the inaugural games.

Over the past five decades, the Knights of Columbus has served as an official partner of the Special Olympics and they donate substantial time and money year-after-year to this important and worthwhile cause.

Winter sports and Sault Ste. Marie are a natural fit, and we are excited to play host to the games and these tremendous athletes.

While this is the first time we are hosting the games, Sault Ste. Marie has a long history with the Special Olympics. We are very proud of the many Saultites who have been involved over the years with the Special Olympics—whether as athletes, coaches, organizers or supporters.

To all of the athletes, I want to wish you the very best. It takes an incredible amount of training to get ready to compete in the games. Your participation is a testament to your hard work and your positive attitudes.

To all of the supporters, organizers and coaches: thank you for helping the games and the athletes. Your guidance, assistance and support has made and will continue to make a positive impact on the lives of the athletes.

On that note, I know our local volunteers are ready to ensure the games run smoothly and the attendees all experience a memorable time in our city.

I understand that about 600 volunteers have signed up to help out; which is really a great example of the caring community we have here in Sault Ste. Marie. It is always heartening to see Saultites come together to offer help when it is needed, time-after-time.

I hope that all of our visitors from out of town enjoy their stay in our friendly and Naturally Gifted community. We have a variety of attractions as well as excellent dining and shopping available for you to experience during your free hours between games, including our annual winter carnival Bon Soo, which gets underway tomorrow evening.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer to offer a few words on behalf of the City.

I hope everyone has a great time and enjoys the competition!