

LET THE HISTORY OF SAULT STE. MARIE BE WRITTEN UNDER OUR NEW FLAG

Gilbert Baker, the designer of the Rainbow Flag once said, “a flag is something that’s really different than any other form of art — it’s not a painting, it’s not just cloth, it is not a logo. It functions in so many ways, it’s interpreted in so many different ways.”

In Canada, we as a nation experienced the emotion of a new flag on February 15, 1965, when, after 210 days of debate in Parliament, the Maple Leaf was hoisted above Centre Block for the first time. Though at the time of its unveiling, former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker quipped that, “It is a flag without a past, without history, without honour and without pride,” the Maple Leaf became not just the Flag of Canada, but a symbol of national pride. It is more than a red maple leaf between two red bars; it represents peace, kindness and respect.

It is hoped that today, April 12, 2016, will mark a similar opportunity, on a smaller scale, to that day in 1965. Not only is today the 104th anniversary of the founding of Sault Ste. Marie as a City, today is the day when Sault Ste. Marie will hoist, for the first time in its history, a flag that will hopefully one day become a symbol of Sault Ste. Marie so immediately recognizable that it transforms from being the Flag of Sault Ste. Marie, to an embodiment of all that is great about Sault Ste. Marie. It is my hope that our new flag will become more than a logo on a cloth, as Baker described it, but that the history of Sault Ste. Marie will be written under our new flag; that the flag will become a symbol of a community that continues to innovate and improve, that marches forward in the face of adversity, and especially, a symbol of civic pride.

It has been suggested by some that a new flag is not a priority, and that it is a waste of taxpayer dollars. Allow me to briefly address these points: First, nobody would disagree that there are significant issues to deal with in Sault Ste. Marie; our local industry is suffering, and Council must help guide the economy through its necessary transformation. We as Council are focused on these issues, and working with all levels of government to make sure appropriate action is taken. The economic issues are being and will continue to be addressed, but Council can also continue to advance our City’s cultural footprint and that is what this new flag helps achieve. Second: this flag was designed a graphic designer employed by the City whose job description includes creating signage throughout the City. The new flag has not cost taxpayers one additional dollar from the City’s budget.

So today, as we fly our Sault Ste. Marie flag for the first time, let us feel hope, pride, and loyalty to our community, and let us smile upon the fact that Sault Ste. Marie is not just a “Naturally Gifted” community, but most importantly, that Sault Ste. Marie is our community.

Matthew Shoemaker
Sault Ste. Marie City Councillor