

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**3-26-2020**

**Contact: Joni Talentino, 906-495-1454**

**Authority's prime focus is providing safe housing;  
Special Housing Commission meeting March 30**

SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. -- Since the tribal Board of Directors declared a tribal State of Emergency, the Housing Authority accelerated its planning efforts and steps taken in response the emergency and COVID-19 pandemic.

Providing safe housing remains the primary focus. The initial step was to inform housing residents of the Housing office closure and assure them essential and emergency maintenance continued. Residents were asked to submit any changes or loss of income; rent would be adjusted when the office reopens.

Current rent and home buyer payment collection practices are suspended for the duration of the tribal State of Emergency. If residents received collection or court notices prior to the state of emergency, they are not being pursued during this time.

Housing Commission Chairperson Kenneth Ermatinger called a Special Housing Commission meeting to address necessary policy amendments to further benefit housing residents. The meeting is Monday, March 30, 2020.

Provisions for rent relief and assistance to home buyers who can't make their payments, during this these challenging and uncertain times in the plan.

Housing Director Joni Talentino said, "I am proposing increasing funds for the existing Emergency Housing Assistance Program. Tribal home owners and those renting in the open market will also be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Providing assistance to prevent evictions and foreclosures is crucial."

Talentino added, "I assure you Housing is committed to actions that assist our membership retain their housing."

Tribal Administration is actively following all federal announcements and adapting to new federal regulations with as much flexibility as possible.

###