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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**BAWATING URBAN INDIGENOUS COMMITTEE SUPPORTS MAYOR'S OPEN LETTER SEEKING FUNDING TO COMBAT OPIOD CRISIS.**

*Urges Mayor for a multi-partner and culturally appropriate strategy to address Indigenous Homelessness in the Sault.*

**(Sault Ste. Marie, ON, Dec 21, 2018)** – The Bawating Urban Indigenous Committee fully supports Mayor Provenzano's open letter MPP Ross Romano, Minister of Health and Long-term Care Christine Elliott, and CEO of the North East Local Health Integration Network Jeremy Stevenson urging them to act quickly and favourably on two funding requests to address the drug problem in Sault Ste. Marie. The Bawating Urban Indigenous Committee is comprised of four local Indigenous organizations, Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services, Indigenous Friendship Centre, Waabinong Head Start and Neech-ke-wehn Homes.

The Bawating Urban Indigenous Committee recognizes that there is a major issue in Sault Ste. Marie in regards to drug abuse and believe the city should utilize a multi-partner strategy to help address this issue facing our community. In addition, a culturally-appropriate plan is needed to help address the disproportionate number of homeless Indigenous people in Sault Ste. Marie. Those experiencing homelessness also experience higher than average rates of mental health issues and drug abuse.

The Bawating Urban Indigenous Committee, with the help of the Ontario province, is fully prepared to support and allocate more resources to help all people who are experiencing homelessness, addiction and sociological issues in our community. The committee believes in using a wholistic and culturally-appropriate approach to provide safe and affordable housing while creating a greater sense of community in the core of downtown Sault Ste. Marie.

The committee recognizes that in order to provide the necessary supports, a multi-partner approach works better than individual efforts. The committee is prepared to work with the province and other partners because we recognize that together, we can simultaneously undertake a proactive approach to stem the tide of increasing levels of poverty and drug abuse in our community.

