



SHYFT Youth Services, PO Box 2000, Yarmouth, NS, B5A 1E5

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March 16, 2012 - **Press Release**

### **SHYFT Appeals for Honesty**

SHYFT Youth Services Society wants the government to be honest, in particular the Minister of Community Services, in her reference to SHYFT agreeing to no longer be a 24/7 service for homeless youth after March 31<sup>st</sup>.

“We signed this letter of agreement with the Department of Community Services under duress. After the Department of Community Service (DCS) told us they would cover our accumulated deficit it suddenly came with conditions. One being, that we no longer be a 24/7 service for homeless youth. We signed this letter in order to have our deficit covered and to continue our services for at risk youth. Our feeling of coercion was fully discussed with officials at DCS”, explained Society Members.

SHYFT has highly qualified and professional staff offering an individualized service and have always worked together with the Departments of Health, Justice, Education, and Community Services as a hub model with all supports in place. All supports ARE in place and we have been highly successful.

“From our experience, over the last 14 months of working with this high risk youth population, some youth have re-integrated with their family of origin or extended family, some have gone back to school, some have found employment, as well as a number of other terrific outcomes (see attachment). The common denominator for all of the youth we have worked with is the stability and support that SHYFT Youth Services provided so the youth could make informed choices that worked for them”, explained Ms. MacDonald.

SHYFT Society says it is also concerned with the first option the government is suggesting, re-integration with the family. “Studies on homeless youth have shown a high level of sexual violence and incest among this population<sup>1</sup>. If youth aren’t stabilized in a safe and supportive housing environment such as SHYFT, we question if the youth would feel safe about disclosing abuse”, explained Ms. MacDonald.

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<sup>1</sup> Homeless youth fleeing violent families of origin, 1/3 of which are sexually violent families – Stats Canada 2011.

SHYFT gets to the absolute root of the issues with the homeless and at risk youth. SHYFT was modeled around those residential programs that are currently funded by DCS and continue to exist in Halifax such as Phoenix.

“We have listened to the youth and we have worked with at risk and homeless youth directly for 14 months. We know that SHYFT Housing Services is an effective service for the youth and an efficient service for the tax payer. Our prevention program is helping the Finance Minister to get our province “Back to Balance”. We implore the provincial government to recognize the cost benefit and support our operational needs”, Society Members reiterated.

SHYFT will continue to pursue all options to maintain 24/7 transitional housing for at risk and homeless youth.

A Community Meeting is being organized for Monday March 26<sup>th</sup>. 6:30 at NSCC Burrigge Campus, Amphitheatre. Everyone is welcome. For more information call SHYFT 881-3111.

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### **Press Contact**

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