



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

(P) 1-902-881-3111 (F) 1-902-881-3115

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SHYFT Takes Exception to Ministers Remarks

SHYFT Youth Service Society is perplexed by the remarks made by Denise Peterson Rafuse, Minister of Community Services, with respect to the services SHYFT provides homeless and at risk youth.

The Minister was quoted as saying; *SHYFT is not providing services to the extent the department envisions and are not actually getting to the core of the problem.* “These statements are absolutely wrong and we demand an apology” states Co-chair Bernadette MacDonald. “By providing a safe and supportive housing option for these youth, it enables us to work with the youth and get to the core of the problem. Anyone with a bit of common sense would know it is very difficult for these youth to deal with core problems if you don’t have a safe home,” explained Ms. MacDonald. “Our facility enables youth to return home, if that is possible, return to or stay in school, find work, find permanent housing, stay out of jail and other institutions.”

“We take great exception to the Minister stating that SHYFT is more of a band-aid approach. We have professional staff that work with these youth so the youth can make informed choices that will work for them. Sometimes those choices are returning to the family home if everyone involved is in agreement and sometimes that re-union cannot happen and other options need to be pursued,” said Society Members.

SHYFT takes exception not only to the Ministers remarks but to the approach the government has recently announced in dealing with homeless youth; re-unit with family and if that doesn’t work send them into foster care and if that doesn’t work send them to an overnight shelter. “Their approach is naïve, dangerous for the youth, and a double standard to the services available to at-risk and homeless youth in Metro.”

SHYFT was formed in 2008 when representatives from twenty-nine organization and six community volunteers came together to develop a local housing solution for at risk and homeless youth.

SHYFT appeals to all Nova Scotians to listen to reason and support their service so they can continue to provide what they refer to as effective service for the youth and an efficient program for the taxpayer.

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Press Contact:

Bernadette MacDonald – (Day time) 742-0085 (Evenings) 649-2685