



*"My cherry on top was everyone listened."*

# The Minister's Roundtable With Youth in Care

FINAL REPORT



# Acknowledgements

As a provincial entity, Partners for Youth acknowledges that it carries out its work on the traditional unceded territory of the Wolastoqiyik, Mi'kmaq and Peskotomuhkati peoples. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which these nations first signed with the British Crown in 1726.

The treaties did not deal with the surrender of lands and resources, but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations. We, the staff and members of the board, pay respect to the elders, past and present, and descendants of this land. We honour the knowledge keepers and seek their guidance as we strive to develop closer relationships with the Indigenous people in New Brunswick.

Submitted to the Minister of Social Development of the Province of New Brunswick - February 2026

**Partners for Youth Inc.**

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We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who made this work possible. The Minister's Roundtable was more than a meeting, it was a day of courage, honesty and hope. Youth in care were given a space to speak their truths and senior leadership were there to listen and this alone is powerful.

To the young people who shared their voices, stories and lived experiences – thank you. Your willingness to participate took immense bravery. Your experiences matter. Your voices matter. The impact of your voice will reach far beyond this event – shaping better systems for not only yourselves, but for future youth in care.

To the youth's supporters, we deeply appreciate your trust and we remain committed to making sure we collectively provide services beneficial for youth growing up in care.

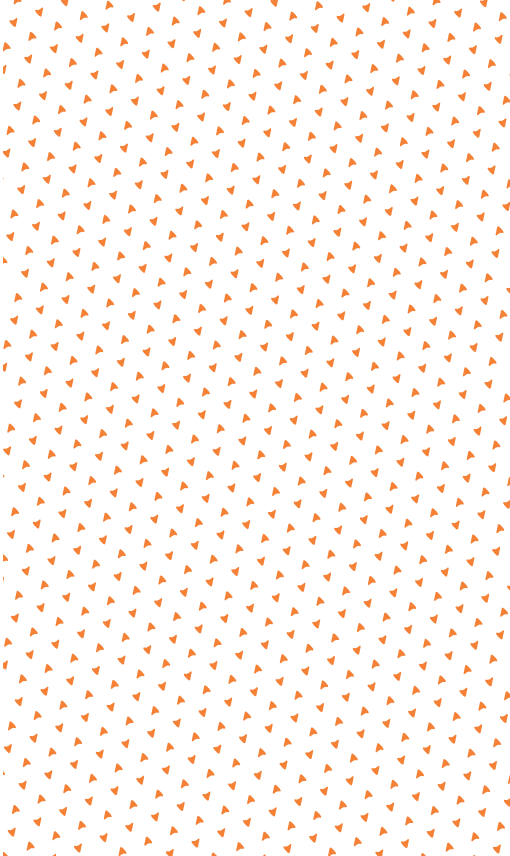
## *Thank you to:*

- Current and former youth in care
- Staff and management with Miramichi Housing Solutions
- Staff and management with Centre for Youth Care in Saint John
- Staff and management with Neighbourhood Works in St. Stephen
- Staff and management with Youth Impact in Moncton
- Staff and management with Centre Priorité Jeunesse in Campbellton
- New Brunswick Youth in Care Network



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## Preamble

The mission of Partners for Youth Inc. (PFY) is to engage youth facing challenges and obstacles in their lives to become capable, connected, and contributing members of their communities. PFY achieves its mission through innovative programs and services which promote experiential learning in safe, supportive, and rewarding environments, in collaboration with public, private and not for profit partners.

Incorporated under the laws of New Brunswick and founded in 1994 by former Senator the Hon. Jim Ross, Partners for Youth Inc. is a provincial not-for-profit in good standing as a federally registered charity. We operate across New Brunswick and provide programs, projects and services in Anglophone, Francophone and First Nations communities. There are no barriers to involvement in our initiatives.

## Rationale

Partners for Youth (PFY) has had a special focus and commitment to youth in care since our founding in 1994, and we are home to The New Brunswick Youth in Care Network (NBYICN), whose mission is to develop and support a sense of belonging and a spirit of leadership in youth who find themselves in the provincial care system. Since its beginnings in 2010, network members have had a considerable impact on the legislation and policies that govern and administrators who manage the care system.

Throughout the years, The New Brunswick Youth in Care Network have met with many former and current youth in care. Building relationships, empowering youth, and advocacy has always been at the forefront. One way the New Brunswick Youth in Care Network achieves this is through the Summer Engagement Sessions, traveling across the province, which have been occurring since 2023. Meeting youth where they are at, creating a safe space to chat about challenges and successes have continued to foster positive relationships in the lives of youth. While partnering with Social Development on the development of a Rights Handbook in November



2024, the NBYICN Project Coordinators travelled the province to hear from current and former youth in care who are lived experts, to assist in creating an educational tool to explain the rights of every youth in care. The NBYICN Project Coordinators noticed key themes that emerged from these discussions and which need to be addressed in each region. While creating The Rights Handbook Report, released on June 1, 2025 – Partners for Youth knew more needed to be done and youth’s stories and voices needed to be heard and with the support of the Department of Social Development – the Minister’s Roundtable with Youth in Care was planned.

With a focus on current youth connected to the care system, NBYICN Project Coordinators connected with community partners and social workers to compile a list of youth under the age of 24 to discuss what it is like living in the New Brunswick care system. It was vital to have a variety of youth with different genders, cultural backgrounds, languages, and regions to get representation of youth living in care across New Brunswick. Most youth who participated in this event were under guardianship orders, where

the Minister of Social Development is their legal guardian. This responsibility includes “the custody, care and supervision of the child or youth and all other parental rights and responsibilities with respect to the child or youth” (Child and Wellbeing Act, 2022). The importance of the Minister of Social Development to listen to what is occurring which positively and negatively effects the lives of their own youth in care is paramount. Knowing the importance of this event, Partners for Youth Inc. Staff coordinated, prepared, and empowered youth over many months to make the day safe and meaningful. Considerable time was spent with youth participants to prepare and plan for the Roundtable. Most preparing sessions occurred in person or virtual depending on the youth’s preference. Staff travelled to Campbellton, Miramichi, Moncton, Saint John, and Saint Stephen areas, with a total of 16 different meetings, to ensure youth felt prepared to participate in this important day.

# Overview of the Day

The creation of Minister's Roundtable went far beyond booking an event space, with youth being in the forefront of all decisions. The Minister of Social Development, Hon. Cindy Miles, was joined by seven other senior government staff, Partners for Youth Inc staff, youth support workers, and most importantly 20 former and current youth in care. The youth's willingness to openly share their hopeful, painful and honest stories of their time in care created a safe space for understanding that no report could ever replicate.

**The Minister's Roundtable focused on 6 main questions throughout the day:**

- 1. What do you wish the system understood about what it's like growing up in care?**
- 2. Do you remember or know how many placements have you had and how did moving affect you?**
- 3. When decisions are or were being made about your life, did you feel involved in the process?**
- 4. Were you and are you able to speak up when something in your life wasn't right?**
- 5. What advice would you give to a child entering the system today?**
- 6. What needs to change?**

Between each question, youth had the opportunity to take a break and participate in different break out rooms focussing on physical, emotional, and psychological wellness. Throughout the day, scribes were busy compiling youth's stories and answers and organizing it into multiple key themes. Themes ranged from knowledge of rights, family separation, social ostracism being in care, basic human needs not being met, lack of transition planning and so on.



“

*I came in here thinking that you were aware of all this and it's shocking to see that you're not. I'm not angry, sitting here and being angry won't fix anything.*  
- Youth in Care

NEW BRUNSWICK  
**Youth  
in Care**  
NETWORK



**RÉSEAU DES  
Jeunes pris  
en charge**  
DU NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK

At the end of the day ten key themes were identified and everyone together (youth and departmental staff and the Minister) participated in a dot-mocracy exercise. Everyone received 12 dot stickers to put on the themes that they believed were important to them. Knowledge of rights upon entering the system while ensuring education and support systems are provided was ranked number 1 with 80 votes. The key themes throughout this document are put in order of priority, which was defined by the number of votes each priority area received.

To finish the day, everyone participated in an ‘apple, onion, and cherry on top’ debriefing activity where people could describe what they liked, disliked and what they were grateful for during the day.

 **My apple (likes) was:**

*“I liked how everyone spoke at least once!”*

*“I liked the democracy. I found it interesting and cool to see everyone’s opinion.”*

*“I found people who have gone through same experiences.”*

*“Everyone had an opportunity to share their voice and experience without judgement.”*

 **My onion (dislikes) was:**

*“The hurt that many in the room experienced.”*

*“I have nothing bad to say.”*

*“A heavy day.”*

*“The consistent themes experienced by youth in and from care and lack of speed in system transformation.”*

 **My cherry on top (gratefulness) was:**

*“I am grateful that I have the opportunity to make a difference in kids lives.”*

*“For a chance to speak and be heard.”*

*“I got the opportunity to be here.”*

*“For people’s vulnerability.”*

## Priority Areas and Recommendations

Following the focus on the discussion questions the scribes presented 10 priority action areas for consideration by the group and all agreed they were the overall areas of concern. The group then collectively prioritized the focus areas that are as follows in order of importance:

### 1. Rights – Knowledge of child rights given on entering the system and an education and support system provided to each child and youth.

Knowing and having their rights respected was the top priority for the youth that day. Youth acknowledge they do not know their rights, those working with them do not know their rights and they feel as though their rights are not being addressed and often times when they are, the “adults seem cold, uncaring and unapproachable” (Youth in Care). Youth want to be heard and they are tired of advocating for themselves when no one else will. The inconsistencies between youths’ experiences are vast – some youth have no access to mental health services, no supportive adults, or proper education. The youth are tired of yelling to seek attention from staff or social workers but yelling is sometimes the only time they feel heard.

*“When you grow up, most of us aren’t aware of what’s right and what’s wrong. We weren’t raised to pinpoint these problems; we were raised that these problems were normal. As a young person, my feelings didn’t matter very much – I didn’t see trauma as a problem. These problems are normal so I should get used to it and there was no point advocating as I didn’t know that things needed changed. Without change these problems will haunt kids for the rest of their lives. Every kid in care should get a therapist.” – Youth in Care.*

*“Growing up, when first put in the system, a lot of decisions are out of my reach. A placement for two days turned into a month, then six months, and now permanent care – all out of my hands... For younger kids, the decisions aren’t made by them and it makes them feel like they have no rights to their life and no control.” – Youth in Care.*

*“Growing up in the system, its not comparable to having parents and having good experiences with them, it’s hard to go into the group home and you can’t trust anybody. Just follow the rules because you could be moved to another house. It’s hard to keep your head up because you don’t know where you are going to next.” – Youth in Care*

*“It’s terrifying being put into a house with strangers, being put into a room with other residents knowing they could have worse situations, in my situation it was scary and I didn’t want to leave my room.” – Youth in Care*

## **2. Family Separation – Siblings separated and no contact with important and trustworthy family members.**

Being in care is scary; you feel alone, segregated, and when first entering it is a new reality. Many youth have been separated from their siblings, the ones who raised them, protected them, and loved them. New Brunswick has hundreds of youth in care and it can be hard to organize siblings into placement to accommodate them. Siblings are one of their most valued relationships in a child’s life. There is a feeling of safety with familiarity, which youth in care yearn for after being taken away from their parents or guardians. The youth don’t want to be separated, only seeing each other through supervised visits. They want to be together, creating memories,

not increasing trauma. Further to this are positive extended family relationships or close contacts – most of these connections are severed when entering care and this is inflicting even more trauma on a child or youth entering care.

*“Only trouble is being in contact with family and not being allowed to see my sister. Once in my second foster home, my aunt was not a good person according to social worker. I couldn’t make phone calls, everything had to be approved, but I just wanted to be in contact, to have connections and stability. My aunt was the only one person approved in 3 years. It took 5 years to have supervised visits with my aunt, and it took 7 years to even have her come to my basketball game.” – Youth in Care.*

*“Siblings getting spilt up and pulled apart. It’s easy on them (Social Development) but not on siblings. Siblings are best friends; when they split up things will be ten times worst than if they were together.” – Youth in Care.*

*“When my sister was in care, she was alone. They took me to see her and we were put in a room and isolated, our conversation monitored. I was told if you want to see her you have stay in the room and understand confidentiality. She was isolated compared to other troubled kids, group home workers treated her like shit, like she would lash at any moment.” – Youth in Care*

*“I really hate splitting siblings up, my youngest sisters were 3 and 12, our older sister was our mom, our older sister raised us. I went with my younger sister and my other sister stayed behind.” – Youth in Care*

Families should be supported early on and there should be a space for discussions and safety planning for family visits. The system should not be allowed to separate siblings unless there is a safety concern, which should be evaluated and addressed

## Priority Areas and Recommendations

to keep the family unit together. When we consider the Child and Youth Wellbeing Act, “The Minister or the Court shall consider the best interest of the child or youth above all other conditions.” A visit isn’t enough for siblings in care, they need connection, and protection, and their safety network of safe family members.

### 3. Social Ostracization From Being in Care – curfews, no phones, hoops to jump through to see friends and family and join in normal teen activities.

Many youth growing up in care do not get the interactions they need with people their age. These children feel lonely and just want to feel normal. Youth are missing out because of all of the barriers they face such as social worker’s approval, group home rules, having your friend’s guardian fill out a Social Development form, not allowed to have friends over and so on. They are not able to leave their room if another youth in the home is in crisis, or if the group homes are understaffed. Youth deserve a childhood and typical teenage experiences. Youth can learn and grow through friendships. Our priority is to keep them safe but current conditions shelter these youths. Youth development and growth happens when they feel safe enough to make mistakes and learn from them; but if we shield them from everything, how will they learn? When a youth is first in a group home and is told to give staff their phone, their only connection, only known thing they have and often times their safety network, it can lead to further trauma. Cell phones are one of the bigger communication tools used in today’s world. Youth are already considered vulnerable, but taking away their connections can increase their vulnerability.

*“Feeling alone. When I was first brought into the system, I felt separated from everyone. My way of coping was to make myself as small as possible. I still feel anxiety talking about it with everyone.” – Youth in Care.*

*“Access to hanging out with friends, I had to travel across the city to hang out as we couldn’t have people come to the group home. It makes it hard to maintain healthy friendships. I am putting myself in bad situations so I don’t feel alone... The people around us changes and having to constantly go across the city to see friends is not affordable and its not safe to walk but I do it anyway because I have to.” – Youth in Care.*

Youth don’t want to be known as the complicated friend because of the background checks on friends and friend’s family members. Many youths break the rules because there are so many barriers put in place. We want youth to be connected and contributing members of society. Trust, relationships, peer support as well as a supportive team of professionals can help youth thrive.

*“I would go to friend’s house and be out past curfew and the cops would be called. I would be escorted back and then my things would be taken as punishment.” – Youth in Care*

*“I was threatened, I would have the cops called on me if I didn’t hand over my phone, I went through 5 phones in 4 years because they would take it. I had constant fear pushed onto me and I was never able to speak up for myself.” – Youth in Care*

#### 4. Simple Basic Human Needs Not Being Met – education tools, hygiene needs, clothing, teaching life skills.

Youth spoke passionately about needing their basic needs met, they want products that work for their hair and skin, educational tools to help them succeed, and different clothing to wear other than 1 or 2 outfits. Many group homes tend to feel like prisons to youth, they do not feel safe or as though they are at home. They feel trapped due to the restraints and lack of basic needs. These youth want peace, they want a place suited for their needs, not a place that is so structured there is no place for them to grow. They need someone to be there before situations escalate, to treat that as human and not label them because of their trauma.

*“Basic needs are almost never met, hygiene products are begged for, if you’re someone with sensitive skin it doesn’t matter you get what you get, it needs to be focused on, hygiene is needed for learning to be human, they need to be taught, the kids aren’t just being ripped away from a house but a family, how are they supposed to know that unless they don’t teach them, group homes need teachers.” – Youth in Care.*

*“I was not able to chose what came with me, had to pick 5 things from my whole childhood to keep and I chose a purple sheep and still hold it to this day. I couldn’t choose my blankets or pillows it had to be little things and I didn’t get 5 things because they were too big. I still sleep with my sheep, it is the last piece of my childhood that I have.” – Youth in Care.*

*“I moved 13 times and every home affected me differently, I have attachment disorder.”  
– Youth in Care*

In practice there should be more funds available for youth to get their individual needs met, to have the proper products they need, to have enough clothes to wear, to work on an individualized plan concerning communication needs and cell phones. Youth need to be supported with and taught independence, hygiene, and living on their own – they need to be supported and cared for.

#### 5. Lack of Transition Planning - Aging Out of Care, Cutting relationships With Supports upon Moving Out:

Another common theme during the Minister’s Roundtable was turning 19 years old and aging out of care. Many youth in attendance were turning 19 very soon and they expressed a high level of stress and uncertainty. They didn’t have a solidified future plan and they were scared supports would disappear. The system needs to work on ensuring no youth slip through the cracks before and after the transition period. Once these youths turn 19, the staff they built relationships with leave, the house they lived in is gone, and it is time for them to do it on their own. If you are lucky you get a social worker who will fight to ensure your needs are met, but not everyone is that lucky.

*“19 next year, one year until I age out on my own. It’s one last year with the people I’ve tried to build a relationship with. It’s sad that once I’m 19 it’s gone and I cannot contact those I’m in a relationship with. I have to go a year without talking to them. Staff and residents have been more consistent than anyone as I am not in much contact with my family. As bad as it is now, it’ll be worse when I move out.” – Youth in Care.*

*“A lot of kids in group homes age out and the system makes promises to help but then the system wants nothing to do with them, the second you turn 19 the system disappears and you end up in tent cities and homeless.” – Youth in Care.*

## Priority Areas and Recommendations

*“My sister, they got her crappy apartment, horrendous and unsafe, I hated going in to go see her. The apartment was run down, shower was disgusting, months after it was still like that. It was horrendous for them trying to not to help her find something better.”*

– Youth in Care

Preserving relationships when youth age out of the care system needs to be a priority for a solution. Youth need to have the option to maintain relationships and visit social workers and staff at the home as they transition out. Youth need more freedom and choices as they age within the system so that when they get older so they can have a better understanding and a higher level of readiness as they age out. Transition plans and goals should be made more than a year in advance and youth should be able to move slowly, have a plan that works for them such as one night at their new home, another at their placement until they feel comfortable to embark on their journey.

### 6. Proper Safety – ie. Youth roaming streets and not cared for except if missing curfew

There appears to be a disconnect between allowing youth more responsibility and balancing their safety needs. Youth are given free time, where they have to go out and do something as part of their care plan. If there are no drivers, youth are expected to walk across town. There is so much supervision in the home but none on free time. Curfews are set in place and when curfews are missed, even though staff know where the youth is, the situation on many occasions, is escalated to police involvement.

Before putting residence together, each of their safety should be looked at. We want to ensure the youths success, not risking their safety. Bringing people to a safer space, isolating them from the outside world, and keeping them locked in can make them relive so many traumas that have made it so they are in this situation in the first place.

*“I got to a group home, three weeks in and I got community time. One hour a day to see my friends, which has now increased to 3 hours a day. Me personally, I don’t like going out because there’s a lot of sketchy people. A person came up to me and said do you smoke, and another time the same person was chasing us for an hour. We had to go into Tim’s and get an adult because it was so scary. I don’t feel safe.”* – Youth in Care.

*“When my phone was taken away, it took away some of my safety. You have no connection to the outside world. Curfew was at 8pm and they didn’t care what we did. We could leave in the morning and be on our own all day. At 14 years old the curfew went to 10pm. It wasn’t safe. I went walking the streets for freedom and wouldn’t get back until 10 on the dot.”* – Youth in Care.

There should be more of a conversation with youth regarding outings, curfew, and even living with other residents. Expectations from both sides should be considered. Youth homes should have a driver or two on site to get from point A to point B safely so that youth can feel like they have a regular childhood. Youth need to feel safe in their environments, in and outside of placements, to learn and thrive.

## 7. Inconsistency – ie. Different rules for different youth, inconsistent supports offered to youth

While each social worker in the Province of New Brunswick follows the same guidelines for the Child and Youth Wellbeing Act, the roundtable gave us more insight of how inconsistency is occurring for youth across New Brunswick. Youth spoke about lack of consistency in services, expectations, and supports across different placements, social workers, and regions. Many shared that what was available to them would depend on where they lived and who their worker was rather than their individual needs. Youth longed for genuine and secure relationships with staff, social workers, and others but with the revolving door of placements and trust is very difficult to navigate.

*“I’m blessed to have good social workers, I’m glad to see those people, but these people won’t stay with you. You want to build family relationships, but they aren’t your family.”*  
– Youth in Care.

*“In my situation, the rules and regulations changed a lot and no one wants to say why or what they mean. They have a lot of control over decisions in life and when you ask questions to try and understand decisions, they get frustrated and no one wants to sit and have conversations with you. There are lots of unstable and rules change in the different homes.”* – Youth in Care.

Inconsistency creates confusion, frustration, and a sense of inequity among youth. Youth spoke on having to relearn systems after each move, or change in social worker, which added to the emotional stress and instability of living in care.

Given each youth will need different supports to succeed, all youth in care should know what to

expect from the services they are a part of and have their hierarchy of needs met. Youth want consistent standards, clearer expectations across residential homes, and having a voice in decisions made about them. Youth deserve to feel secure and supported in their own home and not be set aside when they become a certain age or because the focus is on another youth in the home. If case plans move with children and youth regardless of placement, then the system should be more predictable and standardized but this is not the case.

## 8. Communication Between Partners – ie. Group homes, foster parents, community partners and constantly changing social workers

Communication between youth, community partners, residential staff, social workers and others including must be constant and youth focused but it is not. Case plans are fragmented and not communicated to all partners, poor communication between service providers leads to decisions being made for the youth without them and others being aware. These breakdowns can lead to youth feeling like their opinions do not matter and feeling alone, agreed upon plans not being followed and a fragmentation of supports and long term planning. The impact of the lack of communication is most strongly felt but children and youth and a consequence is an increase in mental health struggles and youth falling through the cracks.

*“I asked when I can see my siblings and my social worker told me not right now, probably in a few weeks. Those few weeks went by and I got switched to another social worker and the cycle started again.”* – Youth in Care.

*“Overall communication should be better between residential staff and social workers in the system. I would ask for basic things, they would read the logs and ignore it. They don’t want to deal with it.”*  
– Youth in Care.

## Priority Areas and Recommendations

Creating safe spaces for youth to express their opinions and listening to their thoughts on case planning can empower youth and provide better outcomes for their future. Improved collaboration between partners can be a critical factor in creating smoother transitions, more responsive care, and better relationships with youth.

### 9. Big Age Differences in Residential Homes

Youth noted about significant age gaps occurring in different residential settings across the province. This brings to light an important topic of discussion on age ranges in residential homes, making sure we provide a safe space that is developmentally appropriate for all youth in care. Personal safety and risk is significantly increased with high age gaps among residents in group homes and other residential settings. Youth need to be able to communicate, learn and grow with peers their own age. There needs to be a focus on placing children and youth in an environment that is conducive to their learning, development, and individual needs. With large age gaps comes different rules which can be problematic for children and youth who are living together.

*“I wish the system knew that it was difficult. We need interactions with kids our age. I lived with a bunch of younger kids, and I don’t get interactions with kids that are my own age.”*  
– Youth in Care.

*“Walking on eggshells with these kids, with kids under the age of 4 and newborns, and having interactions with them is really hard.”*  
– Youth in Care.

### 10. Lack of Preparation for Moving to New Placements

Unpredictability and a lack of stability are common themes in the life of a child and youth in care. Youth spoke on having anywhere between 3 and 18 different placements before turning 18 years old. While moving from one place to another causes instability, fear, anxiety, sadness, and complex trauma – the lack of communication and preparations for new placements is a significant problem which can cause extreme stress and feelings of uncertainty leading to depression, fractured attachments and in some cases PTSD.

*“Every time we moved it opened old wounds. It was not worth staying anywhere as you get comfortable and you just move. It is a repetitive cycle. In my current home, for the first time it feels like I belong and I hope that it’s not just temporary.”* – Youth in Care.

*“I have been in 13 to 16 different placements, not counting when I was a baby. I don’t remember my childhood. I get attached to a placement and every time then torn away. I don’t want to get attached anymore, made friends everywhere and it just gets taken away.”* – Youth in Care.

*“Kids are seen for their situation but not who they are. I was locked up and trafficked and the same thing is happening again. I can’t contact anyone who is able to speak for me and ensure that I have some sort of freedom, my situation can’t be forgotten about.”* – Youth in Care.

Youth described the emotional toll of abrupt transitions and how it still affects their everyday

lives. They emphasize the importance of clear communication, being given an opportunity to ask questions and to have involvement in the decision making process. If a change of placement needs to occur there needs to be a more therapeutic process for the transition. We can assume that by improving the process and that with better preparation and clearer communication, we could help reduce trauma and focus on continuity of care for youth between different placements.

## Closing

The Minister's Roundtable was a powerful and insightful day, not only from youth having an opportunity to share their stories and speak their truth about living in the provincial care system but from all the key themes and recommendations that were collectively identified. The 10 key themes are a critical starting point for action.

**All ten (10) priority areas need to be addressed and taken seriously**, not just by a few lines of text in a response but by a comprehensive action plan with measurable outcomes and accountability. The Roundtable was not so much an ending point as it was a starting point – it is a beginning. A beginning to create a better experience and future for all children and youth in care. The insights shared will help guide the improvements, advocacy, challenge assumptions, and inspire action across New Brunswick. And perhaps most importantly, it reinforced the notion of continuing to center youth voices in decisions that affect their lives.

Perhaps the most difficult question of the day was saved for the closing – what advice would you give children and youth as they come into the care system?

*“Their voice does mean something, keeping quiet doesn't get anything solved, aim big, have ambitions and a future. Fuck what other people think. Prove yourself to yourself.”*



*“Find your voice and make it loud, you will never get heard unless you do. Find a support system which is hard to find. Younger kids are going into care not knowing what a support system is and that needs more focus.”*

*“Along the lines of finding your voice, it's all about that, there's nothing else if you have no voice, you'll just keep going on the ride and that's hard to do for years. I'm still struggling with finding my voice but I try.”*

*“Be prepared for some positives, some negatives, prepare for staff who are there for paycheques.”*

*“It's not going to be easy, its hard to feel like you belong and sometimes you will feel like you shouldn't be where you are. Don't get too attached to the staff, one left before my birthday, and then another one left, they were always there for me and it was really hard.”*

*“Play the game, do what they say and hear them out, wait for time to age out of care.”*

*“Always try to be heard and try to make people understand you.”*

*“Get through it, find a silver lining in every situation, finding a silver lining helps put a smile on your face. If I wasn't chucked out by my mom I wouldn't be in school, make sure your voice is heard and don't take no for answer. We are played like pawns, we have to speak up to make our voice heard, make yourself equal, never take no for an answer.”*

*“It’s not your fault that you landed in this situation but you have to keep fighting, you can create troubles, but you have to make your voice be heard, you need to fight for what’s dear to you.”*

*“Don’t compare yourself to others which is easy to do as people. People tend to compare themselves to others, compare yourself to yourself and who you want to be, be who you really are.”*

*“Not to be a people pleaser whatsoever, don’t do something because you are told to, do it because you want to and you feel it’s right.”*

*“Don’t let your social worker use your success story to say that everything is going well.”*

*“If you’re stuck in foster care and group homes, your voice doesn’t matter, pushing against rules, breaking rules didn’t get me anywhere, the situation got worse, shitty and terrible. Speak up and don’t be afraid to say no, but follow the rules which will make things easier.”*

*“Know you have rights and those rights have to be followed on a human and a legal basis, there are people who will advocate for you, you can speak to others, use knowledge to speak up and hold power in a situation.”*

*“Team up with the people you’re living with, find a friend, you need someone in that situation. I did not know that children had rights until this year, every single right has been disrespected in some way or violated, the second I walked into the group home my rights were violated. Kids need to know that they have rights, they can’t conceptualize that they do have rights and that needs to be brought up.”*

“

*There are not enough words that hold - thank you. The team beside me want change and a system that lets every young person thrive. I’ve heard you and I want to honour you and your stories. We know it will be challenging but there is no hesitation. Thank you for forging that path forward, I am grateful for you.*

**The Hon. Cindy Miles, Minister of Social Development**