MADELEINE LEBRUN

The Chair: The next presentation will be from Madeleine Lebrun.

Ms. Madeleine Lebrun: Thanks for having me. I'm Madeleine Lebrun. I'm with SEIU and with Red Cross home care. I've been hurt by the bids. Please try to understand, it's very emotional for me to talk about it, because I've been with the Red Cross for 20 years. In 1998, when Harris came into power, they introduced the bid. We used to be 500 members. We used to go in in the morning and we'd stay four hours with a client. We had time to give them a decent bath. We had time to feed them. We had time to take care of their pet sometimes. We had time to do housekeeping, maybe light, but anyway, we did. The people felt special and we treated them as special, with respect and dignity. But Harris, when that government came in, took that away from them and took that away from me, because now I have to go in, sometimes at 7 o'clock, wake up that client, "Get up and go for a shower now," when she's not ready. If I try to be nice, coax and beg -- sometimes I almost have to shove that person in the shower because I have to be out of there within an hour and I have another client that's waiting for me. That's the sad part.

You want to introduce bids? You want to degrade people? That's what it comes down to. Right now, we're down to 55 members in Red Cross. Is that fair? No. I gave my heart, I gave my soul, I gave my strength to help the people, but you came in and said, "Get away. I will take over" -- with no heart, no feelings. That's what hurts me, because it could be your mother or your father that I'm going to take care of. Would you like them to be treated that way or would you like to be treated that way yourself? No. Those people went to war. Those people fought for freedom and for dignity and respect, and what do we do? We take that away from them and we say, "Too bad."

Money starts talking now. You know what happened? When the bid came along, they told the old lady, "If you want more hours, pay." Don't forget, they have a pension; that's all they have, most of them. Most of them have no children. I mean, the ones I'm working with have no children. You're telling me it's fair? It's not. When I hear the LHINs coming along, I see my sisters and brothers who work in the hospital; they're going to be treated the same way. You're telling me, "We can get maybe an MRI or a hip replacement; we could do about 20, 50." How far do they have to travel? Are you thinking of the family that has to go with them, miss work? That's not fair.

Right now this generation -- I'm 55; if I have to take care of everybody -- I can't miss work, because I'm full-time. Most of the home care people have two jobs, three jobs, just to support. Do they have a family life? They don't. I'm talking about experience now. I'm talking to my co-worker, as a home care person, a PSW. People don't understand. We travel; do I get paid for travelling time? No. Do I make a lot of money? No; I make $12 an hour, and I'm not even sure if I have a job tomorrow. My hours could go up; my hours could go down. Why do I do it? Because I love it. I love the people and I think they deserve more than that. When people are sitting in the office -- I'm talking about the heart right now -- making judgements, making decisions without even walking in their shoes, that's not fair. That's not fair at all. I have to bid. Every three years I have to go up in front of a stranger again and offer my service again. I'm 55. I'm tired. I'm exhausted from selling myself to the lowest bid all the time. I don't get gas. People are not paying for my gas. Sorry, I have to apologize -- I do get 22 cents a click, and sometimes I have to travel 30 minutes, 35 minutes. Is that fair? And if I don't do it, my boss is on my ass -- sorry, my

shoulder -- and I hate that. I'm always under stress all the time. I go in to see that client: "Get moving, lady." "Sir, move it." You've got to remember, they're fragile; they're old people.

Again, I have to beg you, please don't go for the bids, because people do not understand. If my sister and brother have to go through what I went through, you won't have any more home care. You won't have anybody who wants to work for a hospital. Why? Because it's not worth it. The lowest bid all the time? I don't have benefits; I don't have a pension. I've got nothing. But I do have a heart. Is that recognized? Nobody cares. Nobody cares. That's why I'm very thankful that you guys let me talk. Finally, somebody is going to listen to us. Don't do the bid, because it's not worth it. You're losing life.

I'm going to tell you a true story. My father died, because what happened that time -- in 1996, my father could do everything for himself. He didn't want a homemaker; he didn't want a nurse: "I can handle it." The CCAC came to him, and says, "Mr. Sabourin, you need somebody to help you with your medicine." He knew what to do. We'd coax him, "Come on, Dad, you need that." Finally, he agreed. Four years down the road, they took away his service. My dad was confused. He didn't know which pill belonged, because he needed the dosette. The nurse had prepared his pills. He didn't know.

I remember fighting; I went to see my MPP: "Please, do something. Have an investigation. Do something." Well, they did. Tony Clement made sure the CCAC was accountable. They came to my father's house. He had cancer, he was diabetic, he was blind -- what more do you want from him? He qualified. I asked the question: "Who made the decision that he was not qualified?"

And you want me to take the bids? You want me to go for the LHINs? You guys are going to decide that my dad was not worth it? Well, when they did an investigation, it was, "Oh, we made a mistake." But it was too late: My dad passed away because he got confused with his medication.

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Are you waiting for these things to happen again? When we lose a bid, we have to give our clients to another agency. In the process of doing that, there are missed visits, up to six weeks. I know; I visit those people. Why was it not reported? They're afraid that you might take away their service. That's the sad part. Do they have a voice in this LHIN? Do we have a voice?

You guys are going to have to understand that bids are no good, because you're hurting a lot of people. It's sad. I don't have much money; I only make $12 an hour. I have to pay for my gas. I have to travel 30 minutes for one hour or work, and I found out they want to reduce that to 45 minutes. Would you like to take a shower in 45 minutes? Would you like me to give you a shower? You wouldn't like it, because I have to push you in, and that's a lot of stress on us. We get injured, and that's the sad part.

When the other bids came in, Red Cross lost the bid. Everybody cried. We didn't want to go to the other agency because we were well treated by Red Cross. The other agency didn't have an office. That lady was doing her work from the basement. I remember going in one time -- they finally found an office -- and they had a big box and all the clients in there. "You want to work? Pick your client up." Where's the confidentiality in there? There was none. Did somebody come and look at it? People don't care, and it's about time we start caring for people.

I'm talking about the handicapped too. Who's going to defend them? Who's going to do something about them? It's not the money. You're taking away their pride; you're taking away their dignity and their respect. I feel awful if they have to do that at the hospital. What chaos are we going to have? What tragedy are we going to have? We're going to have a lot.

That's it.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation. We have about a minute each. I'll start with Ms. Wynne, please.

Ms. Wynne: Thank you very much for coming to tell your story. I just want to clarify that there's nothing in this bill that expands the competitive bidding process. I don't know where that information is coming from. There's nothing that says that's what we're going to do. I just want to assure you of that.

Ms. Lebrun: But could you have it in writing that it will not happen? That's my biggest concern, because I saw the disaster the bidding did. The homemakers are fighting among each other. I want our hours; I want to survive.

Ms. Wynne: I hear your issue, and we've certainly heard it from a number of folks coming to talk to us from the unions. I know this is a piece of information that is in the community. But what you need to know is that the legislation doesn't expand competitive bidding, and it's not our intention to set up a situation where competitive bidding will be expanded. That's the reality of the legislation, and it's also our intention.

The Chair: Thank you. Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson: Well, it begs the question, then, how are you going to acquire services? I think that's what they want to know.

Ms. Lebrun: Yes.

Mr. Wilson: We'll take the blame for the past, but we also didn't make the promise to get rid of the competitive bidding process. The Liberal Party did, and you haven't done it. So you do have an obligation to be honest and say how you are going to acquire services in the future, and it's my job in opposition to point that out.

Ma'am, I appreciate your emotional testimony. Obviously, you've gone through it first-hand with your father. Some of what you said is a problem with the way bids are; some of it, in defence of the government, is rules that are set at Queen's Park. I'm an MPP and a former health minister, and I can't get my mother two baths a week. She won't mind me saying that publicly, because she's going to go public one of these days, and I'm her MPP. I've met with the executive director of the Simcoe county CCAC -- Anne Bell, a wonderful person -- but all she did was send the case manager for reassessment. At the end of the two-and-a-half-hour reassessment, she still can't get a second bath a week. So we're not all immune to what you've gone through. Yours was more serious.

Keep pushing, and maybe we can ask, through the Chair, for it in writing: How is the government going to acquire services in the future? You can stay silent in a bill, but you can't stay silent forever. Eventually, these things will be set up. If it passes in Parliament, you're going to have to tell people how you're going to do this.

The Chair: The request has been made, and the letter will certainly be coming to us. Then it's up to us to decide who to share it with.

Ms. Wynne: Except there is an answer. Accountability agreements that now exist between the service provider and the ministry will be between the LHIN and the service providers. That is the answer. I'm not sure you need a letter in order to get that.

The Chair: That's fine. He made a request, and we'll go through the normal process. Madame Martel.

Ms. Martel: Thank you very much for a very powerful presentation. It couldn't have been said any better than you have said it why cutthroat bidding has been so disastrous and why it should end.

Here's what we know: The Conservatives brought in cutthroat bidding, and the Liberals have kept cutthroat bidding in home care. They've been there for over two years now. There is nothing in Elinor Caplan's report that will end it. We see no evidence that Minister Smitherman will end it. It will continue in home care, and it will continue to be just as chaotic as it was under the Conservatives.

The second thing we know is that there is nothing in this bill that says competitive bidding will be used. There's nothing in this bill that says it won't. If the Liberal government means what it says, that LHINs will not acquire or purchase services through competitive bidding, then put it in the bill. I plan to find a way to move an amendment that will do just that, and then we will see how the Liberals vote and then we will see what the real intentions are of the government. If you don't want competitive bidding, move an amendment, put it in the bill, and make it clear that cutthroat bidding will not be used by the LHINs to purchase services.

The Chair: I wanted to say thank you for your presentation. I thought it was a very good presentation.

Ms. Lebrun: Thank you for hearing me.