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Moncton, N.B. E1A-6T7

Madeleine Dubé, Minister of Social Development

P.O. Box 6000

Fredericton, N.B.

E3B-5H1

October 24, 2013

Dear Minister Dubé,

Please accept this letter as an official appeal concerning my mother, Pauline Mattison, being refused the government subsidy because she was a "3A" patient entering a "3B" specialized care home.

My mom is a twenty- eight year kidney transplant recipient who has been on dialysis since the winter of 2011. She also has advanced macular degeneration. After being admitted to the George Dumont Hospital on April 25, 2013 for a fractured tailbone, mom subsequently fell, breaking both her hip and elbow. As she began to rehab in July we were asked specifically by Dumont administration to research the availability of both nursing home and specialized care home beds for mom.

In short order it became readily apparent that a specialized care home was the only option as both Spencer's and Monarch were full with significant waiting lists. In fact, due to the province withholding the transportation subsidy for dialysis patients over the summer and early fall, the large nursing homes were officially refusing to even place dialysis patients on their waiting lists. To compound the backlog, on mom's 4F dialysis ward, there were six or seven patients who were waiting between twelve to eighteen months for placement. It is common knowledge that dialysis patients are "cherry picked" by the nursing homes as they are considered more work. As soon as they move to the top of the waiting list they are "leapfrogged" by a less demanding patient. An admissions officer at Monarch told us that unless a patient stipulated Monarch as their number one choice, their application was automatically rejected. It was during this series of phone calls that we discovered that as a 3A patient (in mom's post surgery condition, there was never a chance that she'd be classed as a "level 2" and for anyone to suggest so is not being forthright) she would not qualify for the government subsidy in a 3B specialized care home unless she was diagnosed as having slight dementia, which is not the case.

With no nursing home beds available and this 3B admission criterion as a backdrop, I approached a Dumont official on July 22, asking if the family secured a specialized care home 3B bed, would the

Dumont sign off on mom having slight dementia in order to qualify for the subsidy. After a discussion about the only alternative, a year plus wait at the Dumont, I was given assurances that when mom's rehab plateaued, a condition of slight dementia would be signed off on.

When mom plateaued, she transitioned from the 3F Rehab floor back to 4F, the Dialysis floor. At this point, we confirmed a bed at McNair Manor and my sister Paula flew home from B.C. to facilitate mom's release from the Dumont and the move into McNair's on October 1, 2013. Paula and I met with three Dumont officials on Tuesday, September 24 to coordinate mom's release, including accelerating her assessment which we had been assured could be completed in two or three days if a bed was secured. The mood was a jovial one as details were worked out and a plan to order a bed, mattress, wheelchair, and walker to accompany mom to McNair was put in place.

That afternoon, while Paula was firming up details and confirming Mom's needs with Dumont staff, there was an abrupt shift in sentiment. She was told verbally that a 3B admission criterion was now changed to include "sundowners" or "wandering". This policy change was so new that none of the 3B specialized care homes had been notified. It was also conveyed that the assessment could no longer be completed quickly and we would have to wait up to two months. This turn of events was in no way acceptable to the family. We did everything that was asked of us and then had the proverbial rug pulled out from underneath us by the Department of Social Development (DSD).

After a series of very intense phone discussions with the Dumont administration on Wednesday, Sept.25, it was agreed that mom would be assessed within twenty four hours and that the Long Term Placement Review Panel (known as panel) would reconvene and rule whether mom would be admitted into McNair and qualify for the subsidy. My sister and I were asked to meet with Dumont administration on Friday, Sept.27 at 10 AM for a decision. Before the meeting started we were asked to sign a waiver that was hastily presented to us with no background or context. We refused. Our request for mom to go to McNair's with a subsidy was officially denied. Interestingly enough, the highly scripted response from Dumont officials and later repeated pretty much verbatim by DSD was; "we're very concerned that your mother would not receive the proper level of care at a specialized care home and her health would be at risk". Of course, this was a non issue with the family as we had researched McNair Manor and were totally at ease with their facility and highly professional staff. Another smokescreen created by DSD was their public messaging that 3A patient should not mix with dementia patients, as doing so, will further confuse them. There are no medical studies that support segregation. In fact, public literature from the Alzheimer's Society dismisses segregation as a non concern.

Ironically, if we had signed the aforementioned waiver, which we subsequently discovered was a "private pay waiver," mom, quite conveniently from DSD's perspective, could then go to any 3B, specialized care home she wished to. As long as the family paid, the concern over her level of care conveniently disappeared.

After this exhausting bureaucratic nightmare, to say that we are disillusioned would be an understatement. From the outset, our understanding was that by securing a specialized care home bed for mom, the Dumont would win as the huge patient backlog on 4F wouldn't be increased, McNair's

would win as they would fill an empty bed, and of course our mother would win as her only request was to be placed in a specialized private care home in Moncton with a garden.

My parents, over the years, have been very careful with their money to ensure there would be some money left over for senior care. My dad, who has advanced prostate cancer and early onset of macular degeneration can't afford to pay more than \$2000 per month. With DSD's ruling, mom's only option was to stay at the Dumont and get in line behind the other dialysis patients that no nursing home wants to admit. The family wasn't about to let that happen, so my siblings and I all cashed out retirement accounts to allow mom to move into McNair's as of October 8. Upon reflection, this was the option that the province and the DSD bureaucrats, by eliminating choice, crassly pushed upon us from the beginning. Actions speak louder than words; it is crystal clear that the NB government's public policy that a senior will never be forced to sell their residence to be eligible for long term care, is being skirted by DSD bureaucrats. By unilaterally changing the 3A regulations and restricting both choice and subsidy, they have implemented a classic "end around play" that now forces hundreds of NB seniors and their families to private pay. Of course, in most situations, this necessitates the selling of the family residence.

As a family we are infuriated at how we were "played" throughout this entire ordeal and the level of stress placed upon us by countless layers of bureaucracy, who changed the rules on a whim, using strategic tactics of delay, deny, and confuse. I'm equally upset as a taxpayer in that a specialized care home can deliver a bed 50% cheaper than a nursing home. No one disputes this; in fact, Dumont administration confirmed it to my sister and me.

The financial cost to my family is enormous. Besides the \$4650 for mom's monthly care, there is another \$8000 for a custom bed, mattress, wheelchair, and walker. Under the private pay stipulations, the cost of necessary health care products also have to be shouldered by the family, to the tune of several hundred dollars per month. To add insult to injury, after confirming to Dumont administration that we had decided to private pay, we were informed that since we didn't qualify for the 3B specialized care home subsidy, mom's thrice weekly dialysis trips to the Dumont were no longer subsidized, costing us an additional \$500 per month. Even the private pay waiver form has been amended to now prevent us from ever claiming a subsidy while mom resides in a specialized care home. The previous waiver covered only a twelve month period. These policies are not only unfair but appear to be blatant human rights violations.

To ensure transparency, I'm requesting that DSD advise in writing that there are no other 3A patients in N.B. that are currently receiving the provincial subsidy while residing in a 3B home.

The Mattison family is only asking for what is fair; that the province reverse the May 2012 regulation that shifted from a care based assessment to a diagnostic based assessment, which only served to eliminate both choice and subsidy to 3A patients such as our mother, wanting to enter a 3B specialized care home.

Sincerely,

Mark Mattison