LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE  
CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL  
SUBMISSION FROM GARRET BURNS

There is a belief that it is only the privileged few that go to private school. Well, I can assure you, we send our three kids to private school and have had to make very significant sacrifices in order to do so. We do NOT consider it a privilege, we consider it an absolute necessity. It was decision we made because of the quality of our local schooling (with our local secondary school bottoming-out in the National league tables). If our local school had been up to scratch, we would never have considered sending our kids to private school. But when your local school suddenly starts making the lower end of the National League table, our hand was forced.

We have made considerable sacrifices in order to send our kids to this school, both financially and personally. As it stands, we struggle to raise the money for fees. Your proposed changes would push us over the edge and leave us with no choice but to remove our kids for the private school sector.

What impact would this have on the Scottish state sector?

In Scotland, it costs an average of £6800 to educate a secondary school pupil in a state school. By implementing your proposed measures, if 10% of the pupils could no longer afford the fees (and I fall into this category, with three kids at the school), then these kids would need to be accommodated in the state school sector. So, some very basic maths calculations paint an unusual picture. Let us say that your new measures will result in 10% of private school pupils not being able to afford the fees (and therefore having to leave the school and be accommodated in the state sector):

10% of 2000 pupils = 200 pupils.

200 pupils * Average cost to educate a Scottish pupil

200 x £6800 = £1.3 M

So, for the ESMS schools alone, your measures will gain you 550K in additional business rates, but will cost you and extra 750K because you'll now need to accommodate the pupils that can no longer afford the school fees.

The above example is for one school only, multiply this by the number of private schools in Edinburgh and across Scotland and then you further compound the issue.

Being forced (because of your proposals) to remove my kids will have a detrimental effect on their mental health and wellbeing as well as also having a significant effect on their potential educational achievements (especially as two of my kids will be doing NAT5s and Highers next year).

I would also recommend that you go and speak to some private school parents. You
will find that, in the majority of cases, we are just normal hardworking selfless people, trying to do the best for our kids, at huge financial and personal sacrifice. It’s not a story of posh cars, posh houses, posh ski holiday, it’s more the struggle with the monotonous daily grind, trying to raise the cash required to pay for the already substantial school fees.

Finally, in making your final decisions, I would ask that you consider the following:

The impact on the kids that will need to leave the school as a result of your proposals, in terms of:

- Disruption to their education
- Stress of having to move school so late in their schooling
- Stress caused to the parents that have struggled so hard to pay fees.

The Increase in demand for local state school places:

- Your proposals will place further pressure on a state school system that is already struggling.
- 25% of pupils in Edinburgh are educated at private school. How could the state system cope if 10% of private school pupils (all of a sudden) needed an emergency placing at one of your state school? How would you plan for this? Has this been thought about?

What is the actual purpose of your proposals?

- If it is not to make money, what is the actual purpose of your proposals?

What impact will your proposals have on the smaller private schools?

- Will some of them have to close?

In conclusion, I would ask that you apply a common sense approach to your proposals (and scrap them). You should also take into consideration the significant benefits that the private school sector brings to Scotland. ESMS offers an ‘Access To Excellence’ scheme (for less privileged kids), they provide their facilities for community use while also reducing the educational burden on the state (by removing 25% of pupils that would otherwise be at state school)

Finally, you should be looking at measures to encourage more kids to enter the private school sector (thereby reducing the burden on the state). Can I suggest that you consider making school fees tax deductible?

Regards

Garret Burns