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

SUBMISSION FROM: ROSEMARY ROUTLEDGE

I am writing in response to the proposed Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill, Section 10, which removes eligibility to claim charitable relief from nondomestic rates from mainstream independent schools.

As an employee in the Independent Sector and a parent who chose to send their child to an independent school, I am astounded by this current Government’s intentions.

St Marys’ school, in the Scottish Borders, currently educates approximately 170 children. By sending their children to St. Mary’s, parents have effectively ‘freed up’ approximately 170 places in what are already overcrowded local state schools.

Whilst Independent schools receive a relief of 80% when compared to State Schools, no money changes hands between state schools and the council, which means that it is not a cost that has to be met by a state school. If the bill is passed independent schools will have to meet these additional costs and this will have to be passed onto parents.

Not all parents who choose to educate their children privately have a high income, many choose to make financial sacrifices to ensure their children have a good education. A number of children have been moved by their parents into private education due to the inability of local state schools to provide adequate support for children with additional needs, due to a reduction in support staff and increasing class sizes.

Any increase in school fees could result in these parents sending their children back to local schools. It would appear that the Government has not taken into consideration this potential increased financial burden to local councils as a result of more children requiring a state education and the further pressure on class sizes, school buildings’ infrastructure and maintenance and teacher numbers.

If only 1 out of 30 children currently being educated in the independent sector moved into the state sector the cost to the Scottish taxpayer would be more than the income generated from the entire rates increase proposed by the bill. I failed to find this fact in the financial memorandum.

Scottish taxpayers already pay more than their counterparts in other areas of the UK and I can see future tax increases being necessary to fund the potential increased demand on the education system if this bill is passed.

I would like to voice my opposition to Section 10 of the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill.