LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM: JENNIFER FALLON

Please do not add any organisation logos

Please insert your response below

I am strongly opposed to the proposed Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill which will remove the eligibility to claim charitable relief from non-domestic rates from mainstream independent schools.

I will declare that I am the parent of two children being privately educated in Edinburgh but my reasons, as listed below, reflect the contribution which independent schools make to Scottish society.

- Any substantial rates increases will inevitably have to be funded by an increase in school fees. It is a completely false perception that parents who have chosen private education can afford to pay any sum of money. There are many families who sacrifice expensive cars, houses and holidays to be able to afford school fees and a substantial increase will result in families having to move their children into the state sector. Scottish Government figures indicate that educating a child in a state school in Scotland costs on average £6,500. Each child removed from an independent school due to increased fees, will be an additional cost to the taxpayer. In addition there will be further pressure on class sizes, school buildings, school catchment areas, and teacher numbers and recruitment – it is well-publicised that Scottish schools are already struggling and this will merely add to the problem.

- There is no guarantee that any additional revenue raised by the proposed change will benefit state education in any way.

- Tax-payers who choose to educate their children in the independent sector still pay taxes which contribute to state education.

- Independent schools in Scotland have to undertake a strict public benefit test which has led to high numbers of means-tested fees assistance. Any increase in rates would also lead to an increase in fees for families of pupils who are attending these schools with fees assistance therefore reducing access to educational opportunities.

- The proposed bill will also lead to a huge knock-on effect will on community partners and others who use school premises and facilities (e.g. music teaching and rehearsal space, careers events, and especially sports coaching or facilities). These facilities benefit large numbers of community organisations at reduced rates. If independent schools are charged non-domestic rates at the same level as commercial bodies, it will be hard for them to avoid charging out facilities at similar commercial rates.
Further to this, the Scottish Government is committed to creating an active Scotland and reducing childhood obesity. The proposed bill will likely lead to less access by the wider community to quality sports facilities.

Scottish Independent schools employ thousands of support staff as well as teachers who will all potentially be impacted by this proposed bill.

The proposed bill is targeting independent mainstream schools out of 24,000 Scottish registered bodies, some profit-making, who currently are eligible to claim charitable relief from non-domestic rates.

In conclusion, this is an ill-thought out proposal which will negatively affect Scottish education and the wider community.