LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM: PHILIP CHURCH

My objection to the proposed removal of eligibility for independent schools to claim charitable relief from non-domestic rates is based on 2 points I outline below:

1. Taxpayer affordability

Scottish Government figures show that educating a child in a state-maintained school costs on average £6,500 (not including some PFI and other costs). For each child that is removed from an independent school due to the increase in fees that these schools will be forced to pass on to parents, will be an additional cost to the Scottish taxpayer. Also, in a sector that only recently averted strikes by the Educational Institute for Scotland, I question how the teachers and sector at large will cope with an influx of pupils from parents no longer able to afford school fees, leading to yet further pressure on class sizes, school campuses, catchment areas and teacher recruitment. I know many families who are only able to educate their children at independent schools thanks to means tested fee assistance and will send their children to a local state-maintained school next school year if fees rise as a result of this move.

In addition, no reference is made to the knock-on effect that a fivefold rates rise will have on community partners and others that uses independent school premises, facilities and resources ranging from music teaching and rehearsal space, careers events, sports coaching or facilities, as well as social or community activities. 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.

2. Fair treatment across the charitable sector

I believe that no other charities have been subjected either to the collective public benefit test or the measures proposed by the Barclay Review. Why are 56 schools being singled out from over 24,000 Scottish registered bodies (including other fee-charging, restricted admission education charities)?

Regards,

Philip Church