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

SUBMISSION FROM JENNIFER KIRKNESS

I am writing in response to the proposed Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill, in particular Section 10. As an employee in the Independent Sector, I am writing to express my concern of your proposal to take away rates relief from Independent Schools in Scotland.

Independent Schools are not huge profit-making organisations but are businesses run to provide an excellent all-round education for their pupils. Many parents, (myself included) make huge sacrifices to have their children educated in these schools. Many of the children we see coming through our doors, especially over the past few years, have arrived because they are not receiving the support they need or deserve in order to access their learning from the state schools, (my child included.) Many people chose the private sector if their child has special needs as there is a small pupil to staff ratio and specialist teachers, which helps those children reach their potential at school. In our school we see children thrive who have previously failed in a state school due to lack of support or who have slipped through the net because of the class size, composite classes or open planned classrooms.

Parents therefore chose to pay for their education, on top of what they already pay through their taxes. The proposed rates increase will lead to increased costs in the budgets and will therefore make an increase in fees necessary. Not all families will be able to cope with such an increase.

The demand on the state schools is very high in terms of class sizes, recruitment of teachers, cutting support staff hours to help deal with children with needs. They are not coping at the moment. You will be adding to these demands and putting more pressure on to them if you take away the charitable status from Independent schools. The loss of 1 in 30 pupils from the independent sector to the state sector would cost the Scottish taxpayer more than the entire rates increase proposed by the Bill.

It seems to be wrong to be putting more pressure on state schools – not just financial but on the teachers and other staff too. And to take away the choice hard working parents have at the moment to educate their children in the Independent sector.

I, therefore, think it would be wrong to take away the Non-Domestic rates on Independent Schools in Scotland.