LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM TINA HANKIN

Any decision to remove charitable status from independent schools does not stand up to financial scrutiny and is merely an attempt to advance an ideological view that independent schools advance inequality – which is simply not the case. In an ideal world independent schools would not be required but we do not live in an ideal world and parents that do choose to send their children to be educated independently should not be financially punished for doing so.

If fees were to rise, even nominally, it could be enough to push some families (myself included) into making the difficult decision to remove their children from independent schools. We know that state schools are over-subscribed, particularly in my ward. Can Edinburgh City Council confirm that they would be able to place significant amounts of children coming from the independent sector?

Looking at the figures - it costs local government around £6,500 per annum to educate one pupil. In an independent school which might have to pay an additional £500,000 in non-domestic rates it would only take the 78 pupils to move into the state sector to cancel out any “supposed” financial advantage to local government. That could be as little 30 families moving to the state sector and is not, in anyway, inconceivable if they are facing two or three sets of fee increases.

More children moving into the state sector will, in real terms, cost the local government considerably more than would be generated by removing charitable status. In reality we know that the amount generated will be nowhere near enough to cover the additional costs so standards and facilities will fall for all.

If independent schools were to lose their charitable status then they would not be subject to the vigorous oversight that they currently enjoy nor would they be under any obligation to make facilities available to the local community or provide bursaries, everyone would lose out.

The proposals make no sense, and will punish people like me and my children, a single parent family, who scrape everything together to give my two children the best possible start to life, while at the same time reducing my impact on the local government and council budgets. I hope, if the rate increase goes ahead, you have plans to build extra school facilities in Ratho to support the numerous extra children requiring education.